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Therapy, Silence, and War: Consolation and the End of Deliberation in the "Affected" Public

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Strategy Study

Therapy, Silence, and War

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> The memories of a great tragedy linger here. And for all who knew loss here, life is not the same. The 184 whose lives were taken in this place – veterans and recruits, soldiers and civilians, husbands and wives, parents and children – left behind family and friends whose loss cannot be weighed. The murder of innocents cannot be explained, only endured. And though they died in tragedy, they did not die in vain. . . Their loss has moved a nation to action in a cause to defend other innocent lives across the world.
>
> — President George Bush at the Pentagon
> September 11, 2002

> We have seen the images so many times, they are seared on our souls. And remembering the horror, reliving the anguish, re-imagining the terror is hard and painful. For all Americans it has been a year of adjustment, of coming to terms with the difficult knowledge that our nation has determined enemies, and that we are not invulnerable to their attacks. . . . We resolved a year ago to honor every last person lost. We owe them remembrance, and we owe them more. We owe them and their children and our own the most enduring monument we can build: a world of liberty and security, made possible by the way America leads and by the way Americans lead our lives.
>
> — President George Bush at Ellis Island
> September 11, 2002

1 What is striking about these two passages from otherwise generic speeches is the movement in them from emotional identification to collective action, from memory of tragedy to national mobilization for war. Horror, anguish, and the struggle to measure a "loss that cannot be weighed" are invoked as the coalescence of a unified national will to vengeance. The transition happens so quickly that dissenters from the buildup to war easily become confused with people who have no sympathy for the grief of those who lost loved ones in the terrorist attacks. There is no separation between grief and policy, emotion and reason here. The only way to adjust appropriately to the shock of U.S. vulnerability is to resolve to act against those that targeted us for terror. Any other adjustment – for example, the desire to study the history of U. S. foreign policy to discover what abuses have generated the terrorists' desperation – is suspect.

2 As social philosopher Dominick LaCapra has noted, "When absence is converted into loss, one increases the likelihood of misplaced nostalgia or utopian politics in quest of a new totality or fully unified community" (1999, p. 698). In this sense, the politics of war offered by President Bush on the anniversary of the September 11, 2002 attacks hastily convert absence into loss in order to construct a fully unified national community. LaCapra adds, "This conflation tends to take place so rapidly that it escapes notice and seems natural or necessary. Yet, among other questionable consequences, it threatens to convert subsequent accounts into displacements of the story of original sin wherein a prelapsarian state of unity or identity – whether real or fictive – is understood as giving way through a fall to difference and conflict. It also typically involves the tendency to avoid addressing historical problems, including losses, in sufficiently specific terms" (p. 700).

3 As I argued in my book *Control and Consolation in American Culture and Politics* (1998), there are important imbrications of the therapeutic, nationalism, and affect in U. S. public culture. In a chapter on the war of emotions during the 1991 Persian Gulf War, I wrote, "During the Persian Gulf War, U.S. television news played a key role in domesticating dissent by rearticulating political outrage as personal anxiety and reconfiguring the will to resist as the need to support our troops. The mobilization of the themes and language of psychological crisis and emotional support domesticated the home front because images of families quietly coping with the treat of war served as the key icon for the manufacturers of appropriate public response. . . . During the war,

the American nation was itself figured as a unitary body – the body anti-politic – in need of comfort and reassurance" (pp. 85-86). Since September 11, 2001, this rhetoric of national therapy has re-emerged with a vengeance, defining an American public in terms of emotional support and consolation rather than political deliberation, debate, or weighing of alternatives to war based on in-depth knowledge and critical thinking.

Muffling Academic Speech in Emotion

4 At the University of Texas, where I teach, the voices of progressive faculty were smothered in the thick consolatory space of mourning that followed September's terrorist attacks. Several days after the attacks, journalism professor Bob Jensen published an op-ed in the *Houston Chronicle* (2001). Jensen argued that if we found the indiscriminate targeting of civilians to be beyond justification on U.S. soil, we should also find it to be so in Afghanistan, where U.S. bombs killed more tan 3000 civilians, according to some estimates (Milne 2001). In response to Jensen's editorial, the President of the University of Texas, Larry Faulkner, published a scathing response in the *Chronicle* (2001). Faulkner's letter, apparently provoked by a great deal of negative mail regarding Jensen's piece, attacked Jensen as a "disgusting" "undiluted fountain of foolishness" whom no one takes seriously anyway.

5 Many of us among the progressive faculty found this public denunciation of a member of Faulkner's own faculty to be quite chilling. Faulkner's letter was an emotional diatribe that did not respond meaningfully to the arguments and evidence Jensen's writing presented. Rather, Faulkner cast Jensen out of the University community, designating his own employee as outside the fold. Interestingly other faculty and alumni shared Faulkner's view on the basis of defining community in emotional terms after September 11. The Chair of the Faculty Council, for example, told me that he thought Jensen was right to raise questions, but he should have waited a respectable number of days or weeks before violating the bubble of mourning. It was unclear in his remarks how long one should wait, as a nation prepares for and executes a war, to raise questions of life and death.

6 In the summer after the attacks, I published an alternative pledge of allegiance in the University of Texas student newspaper (Cloud 2002a; see Appendix). My version of the pledge omitted subservience to God and articulated solidarity with ordinary people around the world, including those in Afghanistan, Iraq, and

Palestine. This attempt at critical-rational intervention into public discussion was met almost univocally by emotional responses by fax, email, and phone. Most of them – hundreds of them – were angry and hate filled. Under the heading "Eat a Bag of Shit," someone wrote, "How about I print this out and shove it up your ass when I visit Austin in August?" Another critical thinker replied with name-calling: "Wow, are you a typical liberal jackass?" Still another expressed fear and threatened my physical safety: "You are a scary woman. Scary in the sense that you might reach one student with pro terrorist and communist leanings. A heads up to you, comrade, liberalism and communism died on 9/11. Your email was posted on a very popular website; expect major backlash over your manifesto of America hatred. If you hate America so much, why not move to Indonesia, Palestine or one of the other countries you listed? It would be a good first start, covering your face with a burka [sic]. You should be ashamed of yourself."

7 Some responses were gendered and sexualized. With the subject head "Lesbo Butch," a person wrote, "Dear Butch: I feel sorry for you. What a warped view of things you have. But I'm sure you think you are "enlightened." If you hate America so much, hike up your skirts and head for the border. Go somewhere and start a marxist, atheist, lesbo-feminist commune. Please." It is striking in my correspondence that my detractors align my unconventional gender and sexual identity with being outside the national fold.

8 As several theorists have noted, gender, nation, and race are closely intertwined in public discourse (McClintock 1997; Youval-Davis, 1997). One's own nation state is often figured as feminine during wartime; the domestic "home" front belongs to women and children, who keep emotional order as men fight abroad. Allied nation states are gendered as feminine, passive victims, so that aggressive action against them by enemy states can be figured as a "rape" – as in "the rape of Kuwait." Such labels whipped up emotional support for the Persian Gulf War in 1991. While an enemy nation's men often represent "the enemy," moreover, the women of that same nation often are represented as needing rescue from the men of their society. One can feel pity or responsibility for the women in images of the Other in war, even though they still occupy the position of members of an inferior, colonizable civilization. It is beyond the scope of this essay to analyze other gendered texts of the war on terrorism. It is clear, however, that the responses to my letter demonstrate a common gendered trope regarding colonialism in war, namely, the figuring of the imperial nation as a (white) female body vulnerable to

penetration by evil. When a woman on the home front challenges the imperial project, she must be figured as something other than the real woman/nation. This hypothesis might explain the sexism and sexual charge of many of the responses I received.

9 Many of these responses appeared in the newspaper. In addition, vilification of me preoccupied the conservative web sites frontpagemag.com and freerepublic.com. A local student conservative group's discussion board was full of calls for my head and my job. I was invited to do interviews on right-wing radio, and I did speak there. I heard through the grapevine that I won over a listener to the Michael Medved show. I also responded on the web sites, much to the surprise of the freepers (members of the Free Republic internet community) and other conservatives, who apparently didn't know they let people like me on those web sites. In a published op-ed, I replied to my detractors:

10 Ben Franklin wrote that when a nation prioritizes security over liberty, the consequences could be dire for democracy. Contrary to my correspondents, I do not believe that order is the ground from which all liberty springs. History teaches quite another lesson – it took a civil war, for example, to end slavery. And "order" is a god term not of democratic societies but of fascism. Unfortunately, I believe that in this extremely sensitive time people are all too willing to embrace a notion of security – not only against terrorists but also against critical ideas and thoughtful dialogue – over liberty. I hope that this set of expanded arguments makes for more thinking and fewer personal attacks. Of course, I hoped to provoke a response and I welcome debate and dialogue. I do not feel like a victim and I am not complaining about being criticized. However, I hoped to get a *real* response, not just hate and intimidation in the name of freedom. I encourage activists with views similar to mine to come out into the light of day. The urgency of speaking now far outweighs the flak we will get for standing up (2002b).

11 This controversy points up the ways in which security and affect are discursively aligned. The will to order often arises from an emotional state; when one feels that one's basic security is threatened, one is likely to respond out of fear and hatred. These emotions are not the proper basis on which to found a discussion of U. S. foreign policy in a democratic society. Yet these emotions have been the mainstay of both popular and political discourses since September 11, 2001.

The *Affected* Public

12 To describe the work of these discourses, I have coined the term "affected public." In using the word "affected," I mean to invoke several layers of meaning. "Affected" can mean addled, as in affected or touched in the head. "Affected" also can mean constructed, put on, or artificial, as in an affected accent. Finally "affected" can be used to refer to the influence of emotion or affect on a situation. *The affected public demonstrates all three of these features: It is an irrational artificial social construct that enforces emotional identification over heterogeneity and dissent. An affected public – a public artificially constructed in terms of shared affect rather than shared interests or shared reasoning – is potentially a distorted and imperiled one.*

13 I am not arguing that all emotional appeal is necessarily suspect. Emotion may be mobilized not only for conservative but also for transformative and democratic ends. Classical scholar Barbara Koziak has argued that emotion enables moral perception and evaluation and undergirds valued practices such as friendship. Working from Aristotle's writings on emotion, Koziak attempts to recover the cognitive and rational features of emotional response so that scholars might better distinguish between democratic and reasonable uses of emotion from more sinister ones (2000, pp. 14-15). While I agree with Koziak that emotion and reason may not be neatly severed, I wonder by what criteria one might endorse some appeals to emotion over others. Aristotle claims that one should feel anger for the right reason, in the right manner, at the right time (Koziak, 2000, p. 82). But who is to say whose anger is just and whose is not? Given the inevitability of human emotion in all political affairs, this judgment can only come from conscious alignment with particular groups and their interests. The questions at hand, then, are: in whose interests are the emotional appeals dominant today in U.S. public life; and, to what ends are they put? Today the forces of social stability have far greater access to and control over the content of commercial mass media, where appeals to fear and national belonging subvert critical thinking about war and democracy.

14 Left activists and scholars charge conservatives with mobilizing unreason in the service of oppression, exploitation, and unjust war. Against an unthinking nationalism, leftist writers offer evidence of contradiction between claim and reality: There are no weapons of mass destruction in Iraq; the United States built up the

dictator Charles Taylor in Nigeria, just as it did Saddam Hussein in Iraq; the Taliban were once U.S. allies. To me, this strategy of exposing contradiction and offering counter-evidence seems to be more than pitting one emotional appeal against another. Some attachments are held in the face of contrary evidence simply out of unreasoning blindness. This warrants an appeal to reason as a democratizing impulse. Appeals to fear enforce order with profoundly undemocratic consequences. It is not simply a matter of greater effectiveness by the right wing at this historical moment in mobilizing emotion in the public sphere.

15 Both left and right should adhere to a simple ethical standard in using emotional appeals. Emotional exhortations should be connected to reasoned cases for action or identification; and these should presented in forums that enable dialogue, challenge, and deliberation over alternatives. But in the *affected public*, there is little deliberative space; and exhortations to war substitute emotion for the reasoned case, rather than enabling the conjoint workings of reason and emotion. In the affected public, appeals to emotion render debate and deliberation unthinkable, as illustrated by my experience recounted above. Emotion is a weapon against dissent and grants credence to lies. As I suggest below, the left must use the resources of demystification – which means countering emotion with reason – in the process of building a counter-hegemonic movement. Emotion is not irrelevant to that project, but neither can it be central if one is to win people to a movement for cause rather than faith.

16 Robert Hariman and John Lucaites have argued that the "modern civic order is based on muted affect – that is, on the containment of emotionality, and especially negative emotions, to private life and its institutions of family, church, clinic, and television" (2001, p. 6). They suggest that dissent is discredited in the media by associating it with emotional display, whereas politics proper is conducted under the standards of reason and decorum. While it is true that the ideal of bourgeois civic life as constituted in modern times rests upon a Cartesian separation of reason and emotion or desire (and attendant suspicion of emotion and desire as motivators in the public realm), I must disagree with Hariman and Lucaites' claim that the civic order is, in reality, characterized by muted affect. First, it is impossible to separate television from political life and the public sphere in the world today. When television evokes and deploys emotional response, it often does so in politicized contexts and in a medium that links audience

members together in shared meaning and experience.

17 More important, however, is my observation that contemporary public life, especially as it is constructed around national identity and war, is heavily imbued with legitimated emotion. The lines between public and private here are blurred. Emotion is encouraged and expected in public after experiences of collective trauma. In these instances, absence of emotion is what is rendered suspect, not its presence. The figure of woman is no longer simply a private-sphere icon. On the home front, women become vessels of collectivity, of shared caring put into the service of national political goals. Hariman and Lucaites argue that relegating emotion to the private sphere, and thereby discrediting "cries of protest" "can have anti-democratic consequences" (p. 17). I believe this insight is accurate. Yet I also think that infusing political life with emotional imperatives that silence the voice of reason also carries profound anti-democratic potentiality.

18 As Hariman and Lucaites note, emotion is a set of intersubjective – not psychological or interior – phenomena. Thus emotions are co-created in communication, and we can examine how emotions are deployed rhetorically to create identification in various social spaces. Emotional expression is treated differentially in public life depending on whose expression it is and to what ends its display is put. We should take note of *whose* emotions are allowed to appear without stigma in public and under what circumstances. Nationalism may be a special case in which strong emotion – even negative emotion such as anger, grief, and hatred – appear most legitimately in political contexts.

Epideictic as the Form of the Affected Public

19 The affected public is a national sphere that relies on the epideictic – discourse of praise and blame, belonging and exclusion, ceremony and remembrance. Rhetoricians have long been aware of the power of epideictic discourse, the rhetoric of consolation, identification, and social unity around shared values, to bring a divided public together. Recently Gerard Hauser (1999) has explored the didactic function of epideictic in laying the ground for political action. Hauser argues against critical scholars who bemoan the inherently conservative tendencies in ceremonial discourse. Instead he notes the democratic potential of epideictic. Discourses of praise and blame can instruct publics in moral rectitude and establish common ground for action, and sometimes

epideictic can be a vehicle for controversy and insight.

20 Unlike Hauser, I tend to regard epideictic discourse, as least as it happens late in capitalist society, as inimical to or containing of *krisis,* the moment of judgment and action that depends upon its cognate, criticism. When collectives are mobilized for war, especially, epideictic warrants a more skeptical approach. Without condemning all epideictic discourse, I would suggest that in such situations, it can be profoundly undemocratic, as it rules inappropriate and unwelcome anyone offering questions, criticism, or a plea for rational thought.

21 Today it is impossible to watch television, go to a movie, drive down the street, or listen to politicians talk without being sucked into the imagined unity of American nationalism. Images of the American flag accompany appeals to grief and fear in a wide range of venues. In the post-9/11 episode of the television program *West Wing* (2001), White House staff engage in therapeutic dialogue with visitors from a high school in response to queries about terrorism. At the end of the popular film *Spiderman* (2002), which ostensibly has little to do with current political issues, Spiderman lands on an American flag, encouraging a political mapping of the mythical Green Goblin onto the rhetoric of the war on terrorism. In 2001 and 2002, my bank issued only check and debit cards with an image of the American flag on them. Despite a growing and vocal anti-war movement (most visible in Washington, DC on April 20, 2002), there is not much cultural space for critical thinking or dissent about the war on terrorism. Meanwhile the United States has completed another war on Iraq and is engaged in a long-term occupation, itself surrounded by discourses of praise and blame.

Political Economy of the Affected Public

22 It is not the genre of epideictic by itself, however, that is to blame for uncritical nationalism. The impulse to national unity is a product, in part, of the tight-fisted corporate control over the media. Ninety percent of United States media outlets are owned and controlled by just four corporate media conglomerates. Media scholar Robert McChesney writes, “The corporate media system, in conjunction with the broader trappings of a modern capitalist society, necessarily generate a depoliticized society, one where the vast majority of people logically put little time or interest into social or political affairs” (1999, p. xxxi).

23 The influence of corporate media in cultivating depoliticized citizens is backed up, as Antonio Gramsci suggested long ago, by the power of the state in its crackdown on civil liberties at home and abroad. "You are with us or you are with the terrorists," Bush said, effectively criminalizing dissent and questioning. The war on terrorism has required not only media propaganda but also massive witch-hunts, secret detentions, round-ups of thousands of Arab and Arab American immigrants and citizens; military tribunals; proposals for legalized torture, retinal id cards, and internal passports; harassment and discipline of students, professors and media reporters who speak out; a new racial profiling that has led to attacks and deaths; delay in visa processing for thousands of innocent immigrants; and many other repressive acts. The USA Patriot Act allows sweeping anti-democratic actions, including searches of citizens and non-citizens without probable cause, detention of immigrants without hearing, email and Internet spying, and tremendous expansion of government powers to spy on and prosecute political protesters, dissenters, and organizations (Cohn 2002, pp. 19-20).

24 Thus the American culture of consolation that gives language to the affected public – antagonistic to controversy, history, and evidence-based reasoning – is cultivated even more strongly during wartime. I do not mean to blame ordinary people themselves, whose grief, shock, and horror on and since September 11 are understandable. Of course, some consolation is appropriate under such circumstances. The cultivation in politics, the news media, and popular culture of an addiction to epideictic is another matter. Identification feels good. It is like a drug.

Antidotes to the Affected Public

25 In this context, rhetoricians need to play a detoxifying role. We must pose certain key questions for deliberation about war. First, *what are the actual U. S. motives and goals in this war?* There is some evidence that the United States had been pressuring the Taliban in Afghanistan long before September 11 to cooperate with plans for a new oil pipeline from the Caspian Sea through the country. The world, its people, and its resources are fair game for trans-national corporations. But these corporations still have national home bases to which their profits inexorably flow. When a nation-state's economic or geopolitical interests are threatened by an upstart dictator, competing nation states and their interests, movements for social justice, or political and economic instability,

military intervention often results. War is the face of globalization that reveals it to be little different than the imperialisms of any other capitalist period. But as during the Persian Gulf War, the public is not encouraged to think beyond the stated motives of vengeance and elimination of terrorism.

26 Second, *what are the actual and likely consequences for ordinary people of this war?* It is not likely that the war on terrorism will end terrorism. More likely, it will exacerbate the anger and despair of Arabs and others in countries affected by the austerity required of ordinary people by globalizers, the rain of bombs, the cruelty of sanctions, and the support of the U.S. in the Middle East for what should be named for what it is: colonialism and apartheid. In the process of achieving its economic and geopolitical aims, the United States has already caused the deaths of thousands of innocents, including as many as 3,800 people in Afghanistan, according to University of New Hampshire economics professor Marc Herold. As the London *Guardian* reported, "Based on corroborated reports from aid agencies, the UN, eyewitnesses, TV stations, newspapers and news agencies around the world, Herold estimates that at least 3,767 civilians were killed by U.S. bombs between October 7 and December 10. That is an average of 62 innocent deaths a day – and an even higher figure than the 3,234 now thought to have been killed in New York and Washington on September 11" (Milne 2001, p. 16).

27 In a widely-discussed article, conservative Sebastian Mallaby (2002) suggests that the U.S. need for a stable international scene and the failure of aid and development programs such as those overseen by the IMF and World Bank warrant a new imperialism in which the U.S. should impose its aims by force in every troubled nation. Mallaby argues that the U.S. might benefit by engaging in neo-colonial nation building. The discourse of foreign policy makers is clear in its statement of motive, clear in identifying the United States as an imperialist power at the center of geopolitics today, and clear in defending the right of U.S. to maintain its position by force.

28 Meanwhile poststructuralist theorists deny the significance of United States imperialism altogether. Hardt and Negri argue in their popular book *Empire* (2000) that economic globalization has brought with it a new form of sovereignty. In the postmodern global economy, the important phenomena for scholarly examination are not political and economic in nature. Rather the production of social life in culture takes center stage. Even as the

U.S. readies its forces in the Middle East without endorsement from the United Nations, Hardt and Negri claim, the sovereignty of nation-states has declined. Rather than posit a critical rational sphere, such as the one that can and does develop in oppositional social movements, they argue that we ought to celebrate the resistance that is already everywhere in the expression of marginal subjectivities organized around multitudinous shared identifications on the plane of immanence. Late capitalism is "beyond refusal," they write (p. 204). It is beyond rational intervention.

29 The spectacle of fear that holds together the postmodern, hybrid constitution and the media manipulation of the public and politics certainly takes the ground away from a struggle over the imperial constitution. It seems as if there is no place left to stand, no weight to any possible resistance, but only an implacable machine of power. It is important to recognize the power of the spectacle and the impossibility of traditional forms of struggle, but this is not the end of the story. As the old sites and forms of struggle decline, new and more powerful ones arise (p. 324).

30 But they do not say where, when, or how these new struggles will take shape. They do not say how any can raise voices and fists against the falling bombs if they cannot name the United States as the center of modern empire any longer. It is not clear how nomadism and miscegenation will disarm the war machine.

31 Like wartime propagandists in a therapeutic culture, poststructuralist theory too often substitutes identification for reasoning, image events for dialogue, and dissemination for deliberation as the key terms to describe how persuasion happens in late capitalism, replicating the dominance of epideictic over deliberation in American public life (DeLuca 1999; Greene 1999). These theorists suggest that we resign ourselves to charting a hyper-mediated and irrational reality that is not, in any deep sense of the word, democratic. This work may accurately describe existing communicative practices in late capitalism. Yet according to such scholarship, the best we can do is to describe the strategies at work in public discourse. Appeals to standards for critical-rational deliberation are only so much pie-in-the-sky.

32 Yet there can and must be other, different, practices. University of Texas professor Jim Fishkin (1991) found in a widely-publicized experiment in deliberative polling that, when ordinary people are provided with enough information to deliberate and form well-

reasoned opinions, they do so (Wolf 1996). As I write in the spring of 2003, the anti-war movement is galvanizing the public: Millions of U. S. citizens, and 2 billion people around the world have demonstrated against the coming war on Iraq. These events are the product of, and offer openings to, critical interventions into public discourse by activists and scholars. Rhetoricians have the resources to foster the dissemination of information from multiple points of view in public. In addition, we have the skills of criticism to expose propaganda and consolation as inadequate forms of discourse in a democracy. I believe, however, that we cannot limit our work to descriptive analysis as our leaders and entertainers substitute identification for reasoning.

33 Without a normative ideal of deliberation, such as the one put forward by Jürgen Habermas (1989), we cannot have a democracy. For this work, we need the tools of modernist ideology critique, including depth hermeneutics. *Depth hermeneutics refers to the idea that there are some knowable realities underneath ideological discourses and that critics ought to be in the business of digging through the dirt to find them* (Thompson 1990, p. 281). Given that we cannot know those hidden realities without understanding them in systems of signification, depth hermeneutics can expose and analyze contradictions in the answers we find for important questions. Especially during a war, hegemonic rhetorics exhibit the characteristics of propaganda, an old-fashioned but useful word for opposition-silencing, agenda-obscuring texts.

34 As noted above, Koziak (2000) suggests an additional corrective: the recovery of *political* emotion. Instead of bifurcating reason and emotion, she argues, we might do as Aristotle did and see utility in the reasonable political uses and expressions of emotion. She notes that even for Marx, who privileged rational action based on shared interests over irrational national identification, alienation is the emotion that "makes plain the inhumanity of factory labor" (p. 11). Some emotional repertoires are better than others, according to Koziak, and it is this point that gets overlooked in current debates over the role of emotion in political life. There are other political emotions besides patriotic fervor. The answer, for Koziak, may not be to trump emotion with reason but to find alternatives to what she calls the "reigning emotional repertoire" (p. 30). Thus she concludes her book with an endorsement of a feminist ethic of care.

35 Koziak's work is a provocative challenge to the little Habermas

who resides in my soul. Yet I am not sanguine about the possibility of mobilizing love – the same emotion that Koziak says undergirds patriotic fervor – to rational ends without interpreting emotional repertoires from the standpoint of political commitments and a rational assessment of our interests and those of others. Thus I believe that we also need a guiding normative ideal of critical rationality if we are to challenge the nation's consolation addiction. On what other basis can we evaluate competing emotional regimes? It is difficult, if not impossible, to tell people that what they are feeling is an inadequate basis for judgment and action. The alternative is a perilous relativism.

36 Poststructuralist discourse theory takes what is in the true, in other words what is accepted as true, as what must be accepted as true in a relativized world. On this view, there are no truths "behind" or "under" the discourses that constitute what counts as truth. Thus there can be no finding out about Conoco's interest, backed by the U.S. government, in an oil pipeline route through Afghanistan from the Caspian Sea. There is no point in discovering that the U.S. was planning an intervention in Afghanistan months in advance of 9/11. We cannot count the bodies of dead people if they are less than human in the reigning imaginary. We cannot name the war, constructed as a war for freedom, as a series of futile atrocities in the interests of oil companies. If Hussein and bin Laden are the dictators *du jour*, it is pointless to point out that the Taliban and Saddam Hussein were once friends and beneficiaries of the United States, or that there are countless other dictators equally oppressive who have been installed and buttressed by U.S. forces.

37 *Deliberation includes the capacity to seek out and entertain multiple positions on a given event, the capacity to historicize events, the capacity to weigh competing evidence and reasoning and discard the less credible, the capacity to probe the motivation of discourses and adhere to those with the fewest privately motivated sponsors, and the capacity to take action based on this deliberative process. When pieces of what is "in the true" contradict one another, we must enable students and other citizens to decide who most probably is lying.*

38 Beyond that task, we have to find venues and media to encourage critical thinking among publics at large. We must also take up and re-circulate the counter-hegemonic voices that can and do find spaces for dissent in an affected culture. Any cursory review of modern history would show clearly that nationalism does not

always trump reason and dissent in the United States or around the world. The very large movement against this recent round of wars peaked on February 15, 2002 in world-wide demonstrations against war in Iraq. The movement did not stop the war or the occupation, yet it built publics within which counter-discourses continue to circulate. In LaCapra's (1998) terms, this movement inside and outside the academy has the capacity to foster ethical remembrance, a kind of working-through-trauma that does not reify its terms. We must disrupt the equations of grief with vengeance, war with justice, and dissent with terror. In a society of therapeutic rhetorics, we must take on the counter-hegemonic task of rebuilding political publics as the nation goes, once again, to war.

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Appendix: Pledge for the Workers

I pledge allegiance to all the ordinary people around
the world,
to the laid off Enron workers
and the WorldCom workers,
the maquiladora workers

and the sweatshop workers
    from New York to Indonesia,
who labor not under God but under the heel
    of multinational corporations;
I pledge allegiance to the people of Iraq,
    Palestine, and Afghanistan,
and to their struggles to survive and resist
    slavery to corporate greed,
brutal wars against their families,
    and the economic and environmental ruin
    wrought by global capitalism;
I pledge allegiance to building a better world
where human needs are met
with real liberty, equality, and justice for all.