

Weapons of the Weak and Quotidian Politics

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NOT FOR QUOTATION

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I. Introduction: Another Theory of Power?

In the 1990's the work of James Scott generated considerable debate across the social sciences and humanities concerning his theories of power, domination, and resistance. Interdisciplinary and comparativist scholars engaged his work not only for its ethnographically nuanced and detailed account of individuated subaltern resistance to inequitable labor regimes in Southeast Asia, but for its conceptual richness. Innovations on existing concepts such as "moral economy", along with the creation of new concepts such as "weapons of the weak", infrapolitics, and "Brechtian modes of resistance" were part of the critical apparatus Scott utilized to make claims about power and powerlessness that extended well beyond his field sites. Over the course of three books, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* Scott's perspective grew increasingly more sympathetic to what could be characterized as voluntarist, individuated responses to conditions of labor exploitation. One of Scott's ambitions was to provide a more general account of how individuals of less powerful socio-economic and cultural groups responded to ongoing processes of material and communal domination. In these works Scott adeptly underscores the false polarity of resistance vs. subsistence and highlights the dynamic, relational and interactive aspects of political contestation and conflict.

Scott's work has, at the very least, reminded political scientists of the continued relevance and importance of interpretive methods and ethnographic research for analyzing modes of power in human dynamics that are impossible to measure in survey research on

attitudes and public opinion. Interpretive, ethnographic approaches to power are more than a complement methodology to survey research and aggregate data. Scott's theory of peasant resistance emerged from a critical method that bound theory to context and situated peasant "Brechtian modes of resistance" in everyday life in order to appreciate the full range of possibilities and limitations under conditions of inequality. Ironically, Scott's approach to understanding modes of political contestation among the working poor under a variety of economic circumstances shares more than a few *prima facie* methodological affinities with the social theorist whose formulations happen to be the principal object of his critique -- Antonio Gramsci. Furthermore, his implicit claim for the continued relevance of ethnography, history and interpretive methods to identify and discern political behavior places him in the company of a qualitative methodological tradition that includes such diverse figures as Charles Taylor, Sheldon Wolin and Clifford Geertz. I share Scott's view that "structurally similar modes of domination will bear a family resemblance to one another"ⁱ and that "to the degree that structures of domination can be demonstrated to operate in comparable ways, they will, all other things being equal, elicit reactions and patterns of resistance that are broadly comparable."ⁱⁱ Scott's understanding of *infrapolitics* and *subaltern resistance* more generally has already informed the historiography of U.S. African-American Studies, particularly the work of Robin D.G. Kelley

Scott and subsequently Kelley's use of the "weapons of the weak" concept to examine modes of informal political resistance generated significant debate in Southeast Asian studies, cultural studies and African-American Studies, and among students of cross-national comparisons in general. For scholars and activists more accustomed to viewing politics in the form of explicit (even if clandestine) mass mobilization, open conflict and full articulation of grievances in the public spheres of civil society (even if the protagonists of such conflicts are not

citizens themselves), Scott's view of peasant and subaltern political agency was received with a mixture of post-modernist enthusiasm, materialist skepticism if not outright ridicule, and within some circles of political science, questions about Scott's "true" disciplinary home. Most of these polemics, however, ignored the attempt to develop a theory of contemporary power relations and a more expansive definition of politics involving populations who, in sociological terms at least, might resemble Southeast Asian peasants or U.S. African-American working class people.

What follows is a dialogical -- rather than polemical -- engagement with the more theoretical and conceptual features of Scott's and Kelley's approaches. I am aiming for a theoretical account of the "gray area" between outright acquiescence and social mobilization that is not provided for in the debates surrounding the work of both scholars. I am attempting to develop what sociologists and political theorists conventionally refer to as "middle range" theory of subordinate group power relations, political agency, and identification. Like Scott and Kelley, I am interested in private and public spaces where personal ambitions, a sense of outrage over slights real and imagined, squabbles large and small, chicanery, denial, affinities, and aversions congeal and can contribute to the production of micro-politics, macro-politics or both. As I will argue below, there are several aspects of Scott's understanding of 'hidden' and 'public transcripts' that rely on analytic distinctions between public and private spheres that are not sustained in actual social relations and power dynamics. Scott also has a tendency to conflate and consequently neglect the temporal and spatial dimensions of power dynamics between individuals, and between individuals and figures of authority. The degree to which Kelley accepts Scott's initial formulation without conceptual qualification means that Kelley's use of the "weapons of the weak" model shares Scott's methodological and interpretive limitations, not as historiography, but as a theory of working-class resistance.

I believe that there are several unexplored and underexamined assumptions in the weapons of the weak argument that have great relevance for black political thought and questions of political agency, especially the implicit assumptions, correlations, and causal relationships concerning collective and individuated (the so-called voluntarist) action. If African-American and other black political cultures in Western nation-states are still subaltern political cultures (and I believe they are), what are the relative strengths and weaknesses of Scott's approach for an understanding of their macro- and micro-politics? Second, how does an examination of these modes of politics in relation to Scott's approach help sophisticate our ideas about non-quantifiable but nonetheless observable articulations of power and powerlessness?

As part of my investigation of two different forms of "party" in black political thought, I will attempt to answer these questions by undertaking three tasks in this chapter. My purpose here is not to review the full range of responses to Scott's theorizations of subaltern resistance, but to highlight several key concepts within his formulation for their portability and mutability in other non-peasant but nonetheless subaltern forms of political articulation and response to situations of dominance. For a more theoretical account of politics among the less powerful, greater care has to be given to the distinctions of material conditions between bourgeois liberal-democratic societies with sparse histories of ethnic and racial conflict, peasant societies structured by colonial regimes and economies, with their own histories of ethnic and racial conflict, and societies such as the United States, which combines a liberal-democratic and republican political history with the institutionalization of racial apartheid until 1965. Whether it is Eugene Genovese's application of the concept of hegemony to U.S. slave culture, or Scott's application of the concept of infrapolitics to Southeast Asia, the application of concepts and

theories first conceived to explain different empirical circumstances requires not only attention to differences in context, but to the limits of applicability of any theoretical model.

Thus, I will first offer an assessment of Scott's key concepts and their limitations for a more general account of subaltern resistance. Second, I will reexamine cases of subaltern resistance provided by Scott and Kelley alongside my own examples of hidden and public transcripts culled from U.S. African-American and Latin American popular culture, in order to track the unity of themes of informal politics in these examples as well as highlight how differences in critical method produce distinct accounts of subaltern resistance. The examples of quotidian resistance culled from power dynamics in contemporary U.S. African-American public culture will be examined alongside similar forms of quotidian articulation of political protest to conditions of inequality from other national cultures. The purpose of this exercise is to insert black cultural politics of the United States into a more comparative framework for understanding the broader implications and limitations of subaltern modes of political activity. Lastly, I will develop an alternative account of quotidian resistance based on my conceptualization of four components of quotidian micro and macro-politics – displacement, parallelism, coagulation and aggregation.

II. Infrapolitics, Collective Action, Incrementalism and Power

As Scott's view of peasant-landowner class relations and the importance of infrapolitics evolved over the course of three books, his ambitions for a more generalizable theory of power relations involving subaltern groups increased. This generated attention and criticism not only among area studies specialists, but among scholars critical of the original concepts upon which

Scott rendered his innovations, particularly E.P. Thompson's notion of a "moral economy."ⁱⁱⁱ These criticisms can be arranged into three broad areas. Although Scott's account of power is non-positivist, one commentator has argued that Scott's representation of peasant politics in the mythical village shares at least one methodological affinity with models that posit politics as a series of rational actions.^{iv} In political science, the theorist/comparativist Timothy Mitchell has teased out the ways in which Scott's distinction between thought and practice is symptomatic of the mind-body distinctions in Western thought. **Scott's attempt to differentiate peasant public compliance from peasant private subversion a means to argue for the identification and appreciation of a cognitive resistance to landowner ideological hegemony and outright domination.** I will develop further certain aspects of Mitchell's critique in my alternative theorization of a quotidian politics of subaltern groups.

The third area of critique places Scott in a long line of romanticists who describe essentially good, almost pre-political subjects in their accounts of class conflict in Britain, slave culture and revolt in the New World, and scholarship that is loosely encompassed by the term subaltern studies. As Charles Tilly writes, the "populist turn" in U.S. sociology and history in the 1960's led a generation of scholars and their successors to emphasize "history from below", "empowerment", and "agency".^v Much of this scholarship juxtaposed the normative schema of slaves and other subalterns against the rationale of capitalist bosses and slaveholders (sometimes both), who often viewed their subordinates as childlike, cunning perhaps, but certainly not rational. Rationality, an alleged hallmark of modernity, was in full display in scholarship which depicted subalterns not as willing dupes of their own subordination, but as agents of change within the realm of the possible. Scott, in my view, imputes a rational agency to peasants not because he is enamored with a Comtean positivist view of rational actors but because he is

interested in identifying and deciphering how subalterns create and maintain an alternative sense of community and political agency under materially and ideologically stultifying conditions.

Many of the key examples utilized in Scott's original formulation focus on relations of domination in non-wage and outright unfree labor (slavery, feudalism, serfdom). Conditions of labor certainly affect not only the calculus of separation by subordinate group members of the two transcripts, but the degree to which the public expression of hidden transcript sentiments and perspectives would even be possible. A key correlation in Scott's split-screen model of peasant political behavior is that the higher the stakes involved in public articulation of discontent, the greater the importance of the hidden transcript. It is under such bleak and meager conditions that a peasant, subaltern politics of resistance focuses on reciprocity and off-stage acts of class retribution, rather than class and societal transformation, when the nearly feudal responsibilities of landowners to peasants are increasingly ignored in the mechanization of agricultural production. Under such conditions, revolt is seen by peasants as highly unprofitable, with little prospect of overturning relations of domination, despite the claims of political organizers in the region who view the actual villages upon which Scott's *Sedaka* was based as ripe for proletarian or Maoist revolution.

For Scott, Kelley, and other students of everyday forms of working-class resistance, everyday life is but a bubbling cauldron in which anger over injustice bubbles against a seemingly fastened lid of status quo norms, rules, regulations and social graces. Absent the possibility of overtaking either the sites of producing or distributing commodities, the tactical rationale of the public transcript is to produce false trails of obedience at the end of which lies resentment, anger (some of it personalized) and an often clear-eyed view of the injustices before them. Scott sees such acts of subversion as forms of resistance that have the incremental capacity

to provide peasants, working classes, and members of ethnically or racially oppressed minorities with a basis for an even more radical resistance to domination: “Just as millions of anthozoan polyps create, willy-nilly; a coral reef, so do the multiple acts of peasant insubordination and evasion create political and economic barrier reefs of their own.”^{vi} Scott argues, “If we think, in schematic terms, of public transcript as comprising a domain of material appropriation... a domain of public mastery and subordination...then we may perhaps think of the hidden transcript as comprising the offstage responses and rejoinders to that public transcript. It is, if you will, the portion of an acrimonious dialogue that domination has driven off the center stage.”

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The logic of Scott’s formulation, largely consistent throughout and across examples ranging from peasant struggles to the popular dismantling of the Berlin Wall, is as follows:

hidden transcript/private sphere---public transcript/public sphere---public utterance/ collective sentiment---open contestation and unveiling of hidden transcripts---transformation of dynamics of power and powerlessness.

Iia. Cumulative, collective and individuated resistance, naturalism and politics

My critique of Scott’s understanding of subaltern resistance will focus on his and Kelley’s reliance on the separation of public and private, the incrementalism of “cumulative effects”, naturalism, and the temporal and spatial coordinates of power dynamics. Scott’s metaphor of the barrier reef provides the clearest, albeit figurative declaration of Scott’s intention to portray infrapolitics as a form of political expression and articulation that is constructed and constituted by subaltern populations. Scott’s metaphor conveys an ecological sense of politics.

His analogy assumes a cumulative, almost architectonic effect of Brechtian forms of resistance. Not only does the most recent incident rest upon the previous one, but knowledge of previous acts of resistance constitute the cumulative archive of conscious recalcitrance shared among those who resist. Are such barrier reefs to be understood as the accumulation of self-conscious acts, or merely acts which, in some coincidental way, occur naturally? The naturalism inherent in the metaphor could be read as positing a certain pre-determination, a congenital pre-disposition to the creation of such reefs, a survival instinct of subalterns. But human beings are not polyps, and thus the analogy elides a basic question regarding the distinction between collective and individuated resistance, insofar as we can not be certain, in Scott's formulation, whether the construction of the barrier of resistance is a self-conscious act, or if those who participated in its construction were aware of its construction during the process of construction itself. Perhaps Scott is conceptualizing the strategic space between individuated and collective resistance, as members of subaltern groups learn to behave strategically in response to conditions of material and political subordination, and occupy a more nebulous political space between mass movement and mass acquiescence.

The architectonic metaphor here is important, for it leads us to a critical question concerning the relationship between practical activity and consciousness of modes of resistance that distinguishes individual activity from collective activity, and comprehensive, accumulated knowledge and interpretation of experience. The accumulation of knowledge and experience is one thing, collective action based on shared meanings is quite another. Scott's metaphor presumes an accumulated historical unity of a type of resistance, experienced as individual but when read over time, acknowledged as collective. **Conflated at this moment in Scott's interpretation is metaphor as analytic category ("barrier reef") and actual politics,**

the disparate practices of Southeast Asian peasants which Scott classifies as political acts of resistance.

The “weapons of the weak” conceptualization tends to ignore the amoral and instrumental features of politics. Weapons of any sort, it should be remembered, are instruments designed to mediate the relationship of violence involving two subjects. It is just as plausible to find “weapons of the weak” in the hands of dominant actors. The powerful (states and elites) certainly use rumor and gossip (remember the Red Scare or alternatively, certain Committees for the Defense of the Revolution in many communist countries) to vanquish rivals and quell popular insurgency. One of the normative perils of Scott’s argument is the *naturalization* of certain political activities among subaltern groups. The “dozens” for example, played for several generations of U.S. African-Americans, have been used to critique white supremacy and racist domination, but also used to make fun of poor people’s mothers, covet other’s spouses,^{viii} put down those with whom the dozens player has petty, jealous grievances. Just because such practices are employed by subalterns does not make them noble. It must be remembered that “weapons of the weak” can also entail collective action of the sort outlined in **Chapter ?** -- proto-liberal, anti-political rebellions without a program or strategy to transform relations of domination that put a scare in the minds and hearts of the powerful, as examined in the stories of Michael Kohlhaas and Coalhouse Walker. Equating certain modes of clandestine activities with “weapons of the weak” requires the suspension of a certain degree of analytic precision thanks to the suggestion that only *certain* groups utilize certain types of resistance to status quo processes and activities. It would be more accurate to posit that certain populations engaged in particular forms of wage or peasant based labor have moments or instances of discretionary influence upon the logic or outcomes of *instances* of political and material contestation.

I would like to turn, finally, to the role of language in Scott. My point not only concerns the limitations of the assumption that “speaking truth to power” constitutes successful collective action, but also the problems entailed in upholding the liberal/Enlightenment presumption that discourse and the expression of opinion in the modern world is tantamount to political power, or at the very least, empowering. This idea is operative in the discourse-centered approach that is particularly evident in *Weapons of the Weak* and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. **At their most fundamental, Scott’s hidden and public transcripts suggest legibility, a form of written truth or account of power and the rationale for resistance in this world and no other, making the hidden transcripts of the weak thoroughly modern and mostly secular.**

For all of the distinctions Scott makes between thought and action, hidden and public transcripts, why does language, after all, connote a direct challenge to power in ways that more silent political responses to conditions of inequality do not? If subordinated/subaltern political subjects are not the ideal-typical liberal individuals either in a material or formally political sense, how does free and frank expression empower them? Scott, I would argue, clings to this prospect in the hope that when hidden transcripts become public, collective action can proceed in roughly the same manner in which social groups and movements have undertaken public challenges to state and economic power in the modern age. Yet if there is one cross-national lesson to be learned from the politics of subordinate groups even in liberal-democratic societies, successes or failures of popular protest have not hinged on the ability or efficiency of, for example, indigenous groups in Australia, New Zealand or the United States in the public presentation of a hidden transcript. Coercion, vast resettlement schemes, swindles and mass slaughter have been visited upon these populations in spite of, not in the absence of, reasoned debate between elite representatives of subordinate and dominant groups. If, in fact, a theory of

subordinate politics can emerge in relation to the transition from hidden to public transcripts, then the role of violence and state coercion needs to be foregrounded, rather than *parrhesia* or frank speech.

III. Robin D.G. Kelley's Race Rebels

Robin D.G. Kelley has already produced an impressive body of work on topics ranging from U.S. African-American cultural politics, social history and popular culture, to the linkages and intersections of U.S. African-American experience with leftist, Pan-Africanist and Euro-modernist aesthetics and macro-politics globally. More than any other historian of U.S. African-American history of his generation, Kelley's body of work has successfully fused a range of interdisciplinary literatures with conventional historical methods of investigation and interpretation to situate U.S. African-American popular culture, history "from below", and political struggle within a global perspective. Kelley's use of Scott's perspectives on subaltern resistance is consistent with those aims. In *Race Rebels: Culture, Politics and the Black Working Class*, Kelley applies Scott's understanding of subaltern resistance to U.S. African-American quotidian politics that have largely remained unaccounted for in much of the history of the civil rights struggle in the United States. The motivating question for Kelley in *Race Rebels* is, "How do African-American working people struggle and survive outside of established organizations or organized social movements? What impact do these daily conflicts and hidden concerns have on movements that purport to speak for the dispossessed? Can we call this politics?"^{4ix} This formulation, and the historical examples of unorganized resistance presented and interpreted by Kelley, provide an opportunity to evaluate the relative advantages and disadvantages of Scott's "hidden transcript" model, as well as the possible value of what I have called coagulate politics

as an explanatory model for quotidian politics in U.S. African-American and other subordinated groups engaged in micro and macro-politics, or, to use Scott's term, infrapolitics.

Though grounded in the historiography of comparative radical history and inspired by the work of historians such as E.P. Thompson, C.L.R. James and W.E.B. DuBois, Kelley takes his conceptual cues from James Scott's notion of "infrapolitics".^x Though he does not diverge from Scott's framework, Kelley does acknowledge that the "hidden transcript" model of infrapolitics, which posits a progression from seemingly quiescent public accommodation and private contestation to public expression of the previously private/hidden transcript, does not encompass the range of open and spontaneous contestation of racial domination in the public sphere by working class blacks. What I shall call aggregate politics is a form of political articulation and coalition which is neither entirely individuated nor entirely collective. Rather than view this kind of politics as "unorganized", it might be characterized as self-mobilization – literally, a mobilization of the self, in order to address situations of inequality. **In the spaces of public existence where immediate legal or political representation would avert imminent danger or an injustice, people engaging in a politics of self-mobilization must react "on the spot" as it were, but not entirely spontaneously.** Aggregate and coagulate politics incorporate responses to circumstantial violence and, as I will explore in my own examples below, situations of perceived injustice and inequality. Instances of political coalition and articulation often appear as behaviors at the middle of a continuum with quiescence at one end and elite representation in the public sphere on the other. As the examples I have utilized above indicate, working class people often utilize experiential knowledge based on their own personal or collective archive of acts of injustice, and frame potential, imagined and extant conflicts against that backdrop of injustice. The use of a personal archive of experiences becomes part of an activated collective memory,

which becomes part of a moral economy of black agency which, if my theory of aversion in Chapter One has any validity, can be found across class and status roles of U.S. African-American experience.

Like Scott, Kelley's intention goes beyond finding historical and cultural evidence of resistance to class and racial domination among the vast segments of working poor, whether in Southeast Asia or the United States, who are not organized by union, syndicate, party, or social movement. More ambitiously, he wants to change the manner in which scholars interpret resistance and quiescence among black working class subjects who do not engage in macro-politics. Kelley brilliantly intuits the theoretical implications of his own experiences as a minimum-wage worker in McDonald's, and links his and other black workers' repertoire of rebelliousness and insubordination in relation to managers and owners to the social and cultural history of black resistance within spheres of productive, wage-based labor. Like Scott, Kelley is interested in how "power operates, and how seemingly innocuous, individualistic acts of survival and resistance shape politics, workplace struggles, and the social order generally."^x Kelley uses Scott's model of resistance to articulate the implications of Scott's argument for black cultural politics and the political economy of everyday life, beginning with an autobiographical account of his own labor experiences as a worker for the fast food behemoth McDonalds:

Like most working people throughout the world, my fellow employees at Mickey D's were neither total victims of routinization, sexism, and racism, nor were they "rational" economic beings driven by the most base utilitarian concerns...If we are to make meaning of these kinds of actions rather than dismiss them as manifestations of immaturity, false consciousness, or primitive rebellion, we must begin to dig beneath the surface of trade union pronouncements, political institutions, and organized social movements... We have to step into the complicated maze of experience that renders "ordinary" folks so extraordinarily multifaceted, diverse and complicated. Most importantly, we need to break away from traditional notions of politics, We must not only redefine what is "political" but question a lot of common ideas about what are "authentic" movements and strategies of resistance.^{xii}

Both Scott and Kelley use individual cases to make broader generalizations about how contemporary scholars utilize concepts of power, politics and domination. Kelley in particular places great emphasis on forms of protest and rebellion expressed in song and folklore. It should be remembered that song, poetry, folklore and other expressions of popular culture serve multiple purposes, as conveyors of love, betrayal, individual enmity, or odes to the vertically challenged, among other things. From Francois Villon of France, Shakespeare of medieval England, Sembene Ousmane of Senegal to Buche Emecheda of England by way of Nigeria and Kabuki theatre in Japan, there is ample evidence suggesting that the tendency to caricature, even desecrate, the powerful is a human, universal tendency. Many forms of expression draw from the experiences of individual and collective misfortune when confronted by powerful people and institutions. I believe this universal tendency also reveals two other truths that are relevant factors to consider in an evaluation of the effectiveness of cultural critique as a mode of macro-political articulation in black politics, whether in the United States or elsewhere. First, the cultural critique of the powerful articulated in forms uninhabited by subjects and institutions of power is not only an expression of dissent, but the emergence of what I shall call political parallelism, the expression of political perspectives and views that operate alongside but nonetheless outside the processes of politics of dominant groups. These expressions first emerge in the parallel realm before (if ever) entering the institutions, lexicon and discourse of the powerful. Certain forms of rap music, graffiti and other visual arts are perfect embodiments of this mode of political articulation. In the era of globalization and hyper-commodification of consumer culture in the United States, these expressions of parallel politics enter civic discourse and its symbolic systems as objects of consumption first, and only later -- if at all -- enter into formal political discourse. **(Tipper Gore's tirade against rap music is the penultimate point**

in the circulation of cultural artifact, commodity form, taboo subject and ultimately bane of the right).

(Adolph Reed critique in volume on Malcolm X).

Kelley's Race Rebels provides a historiography of 20th century black working-class resistance to racism and white supremacy, gender bias, and capitalist wage-labor. Early on, Kelley expresses sympathy for Scott's infrapolitics (though unlike Scott, Kelley has no direct engagement with Gramsci's version of the concept of hegemony), as well as their imputed implications for resistance more generally. Like Scott, Kelley posits that infrapolitics "have a cumulative effect on power relations."^{xiii} Kelley's examples, ranging from the zoot suit riots of the 1940's, Malcolm X's normative and cultural transformation from hood rat to member of the Nation of Islam, to the role of the unorganized black poor in the civil rights movement, suggest that violence, whether mediated by the state or white citizens and economic interests in society, has been a far more commonplace factor in the daily life of the black poor than their black middle-class counterparts, and certainly more so than for whites of various socio-economic backgrounds. Consequently, the quotidian politics of working class blacks have necessarily entailed the negotiation of violence meted out by the state, racist organizations, individuals, and in labor relations. Responses to state and other modes of violence vary by gender, region, city and personal disposition, but the frequency with which violent altercations involving black citizens and whites occurred in segregated Birmingham, Alabama, for example, provides a sense of the role of what I shall call gratuitous expressions of power in quotidian politics. Gratuitous expressions of power are acts of violence precipitated and practiced by dominant actors (in this instance whites) to remind less powerful groups of their subordination in society. Gratuitous power has a capricious character. Unlike a conventional definition of power such a Robert

Dahl's classic formulation (A gets B to engage in behavior B would not otherwise do), wherein violence and coercion are utilized by dominant actors to force subordinate actors to modify their behavior, gratuitous expressions of power are characterized by modes of violence and coercion that do not seek to modify present or past behavior, but primarily to *punctuate*, adding an exclamation point to a condition of relative powerlessness among a subordinate population. In slave societies throughout the New World, and in the incompletely liberalized societies which emerged from these colonial societies in the aftermath of slavery, violence imposed on slave and freed populations was a means of not only inducing immediate coercion, but also a means of producing terror and anxiety among the subordinate population which served to intimidate other members of slave and freed populations and limit the possibility of their resistance to racial domination.^{xiv}

A combination of gratuitous and conventional understandings of power can be found in Kelley's analysis of violent altercations on the Birmingham public bus. Public transportation is an apt choice for an analysis of quotidian politics among black or other working classes, because in most U.S. cities (New York and Boston being two exceptions), the preferred mode of transportation is privately owned automobiles. Class, age, infirmity and income often determine who takes public transportation, and who does not. Movement through the public sphere, whether by foot or via public transportation, increases the likelihood of encounters and interactions with various parts of the "public"^{xv}, which are, in fact, a diverse range of publics. Such movement also increases the likelihood of interactions with representatives of the state. Increased contact with both the state and with individuals increases the possibility of negative, indifferent and positive encounters. In a society such as the United States, where racism has been a fact of life for several centuries, the public sphere is a site in which interactions with various

publics in daily life increases the prospects for racist encounters. Kelley writes that in 1941 alone, there were 176 reported incidents of racial conflict on Birmingham streetcars and buses. Many of these incidents involved black working class women and were largely attributable to conflicts between white and black passengers, between black passengers and white conductors, and more specifically, between black passengers and white conductors over passengers being shortchanged.^{xvi} There were also altercations over seating and the racial compartmentalization of the bus or streetcar seating arrangements, a standard practice during apartheid era U.S. Kelley rightly refers to these spaces as “small war zones” where class and racial conflict congealed.

As a middle-aged African-American male raised by Jamaican-born parents in New York city, I have witnessed and been involved in encounters in the public sphere myself to know that daily acts of resistance by U.S. African-Americans (as well as by blacks originating from other parts of the world) to racial domination are commonplace, even if, as Kelley rightly points out, they have been neglected by scholars with more elite-driven accounts of the civil rights struggle. The work of Charles Payne and John Roemer, for example, provide rich examples of everyday resistance to white supremacy among black communities in rural Mississippi. For my purposes here, however, I am less interested in the historiographic implications of Kelley’s account.

What interests me more are its theoretical implications for the U.S. African-American case and for extrapolating about subaltern politics more broadly. Kelley’s sophistication and intuition as a historian of popular culture (among other things) leads him to stop short of employing Scott’s explanatory model to account for *all* forms of black working class resistance, for the evidence analyzed resists such neat encapsulation. But there are other implications as well -- theoretical and analytic -- that serve to lay bare some of the interpretive problems inherent in reliance on the categories of public and private to house the sorts of public demonstrations of

contempt for white supremacy displayed by working class blacks throughout the country during the era. Racism under the more severe structural constraints of unfree labor leave fewer opportunities for alternative labor, a condition quite distinct from the majority of wage earning and salaried blacks of all class levels in the United States (or most other groups laboring under more outright capitalist forms of labor payment, regardless of race or ethnicity). This leaves subaltern groups laboring under such conditions with fewer opportunities to make hidden transcripts public. This may be one of the distinguishing features of the prospects for making hidden transcripts public -- or closer to public -- in post-industrial capitalist societies.

The public-private split that Scott is so reliant upon, cannot be sustained, for two reasons. **First, in the spatial and temporal aspects of power, the working class men and women who decide to directly confront white citizens or those in positions of authority are not engaging in a politics of displacement or parallelism, though they might engage, with the help of accomplices, coagulate, aggregate politics. Second, the unity of thought and action further erodes the hidden –public transcript distinction, though like Mitchell, I was never convinced by the idea that “thought” occurs in one sphere (the private) and “action” (the public sphere) another.** Like Scott, Kelley writes of the cumulative effect of U.S. African-American infrapolitics without actually identifying or pinpointing their specific effects on power relations. Like Scott, Kelley’s application of the concepts of infrapolitics and hidden transcripts to U.S. African-American experience neglects the temporal and spatial aspects of power dynamics identifiable in processes of displacement and parallelism.

Most of my commentary in response to Kelley’s reading of U.S. African-American popular political culture, especially the political culture of working class people in daily life, will focus on the role of racist violence in their lives as one of the legacies of racial slavery, but also

as a gratuitous expression of power that has shifted and changed in the period after slavery and state-mandated apartheid. Racist violence, whether meted out by the state or by racist individuals, explodes the public/private distinctions central to the concept of infrapolitics. Since violence has been so central to the maintenance of apartheid, feudalism, serfdom, and slavery, as well as the proletarianization of labor in both industrial and colonial societies, theories of violence should be brought to bear on situations of inequality involving subordinate populations in these societies, not only to better identify and comprehend gratuitous expressions of power or policing mechanisms of state and capitalist control, but also to understand popular responses to state and individual racist violence. Black working class responses to the violence of daily life in places like Birmingham, Alabama (as well as many other parts of the republic) provide a window through which to view self-mobilization in coagulate and aggregate politics. Hannah Arendt, Michel Foucault and Frantz Fanon each offer important contributions to my theorization of violence in quotidian politics, meant to provide an alternative account not only of coagulate politics among U.S. African-Americans, but also of several classic ruminations on violence in U.S. African-American Studies. I would extend part of Kelley's remonstrations against the dominant historiography of the U.S. civil rights movement to make explicit a critique of an inherent moralism in the study of violence in U.S. African-American experience. Students as well as activists of the U.S. civil rights movement have tended to imbue violence with either a good or bad character, depending upon how it is used, rather than treating it as a feature of politics more generally.

I begin with Arendt, because of her concern with the tendency to attribute meaning to violence independently of politics, without first coming to terms with the intentions undergirding violent acts, intentions mediated by socio-economic structures, institutions, organizations and

individuals. Hannah Arendt, in her magisterial, though deeply flawed^{xvii} account of violence as politics in the black struggle in the United States, writes that “violence is by nature instrumental; like all means, its always stands in need of guidance and justification through the end it pursues. And what needs justification by something else cannot be the essence of anything.”^{xviii} Fanon’s belief that violence produced by the earth’s wretched could bring about the catharsis necessary to transform subjugated populations and ultimately, the societies, peoples and states that subordinate them, is precisely the sort of perspective that Arendt critiques:

For if the last shall be the first, this will only come to pass after a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists. That affirmed intention to place the last at the head of things, and to make them climb at a pace... the well-known steps which characterize an organized society, can only triumph if we use all means to turn the scale, including, of course, that of violence.^{xix}

The violence-as-progress narrative is where Sartre, and to a lesser extent Debray, differ from Fanon, whose advocacy of violence, even under highly restrictive circumstances, was presented as a way out of the colony in both mind and body, an existential breakthrough. Arendt specifically charges Fanon and several other thinkers with projecting violent prophecies that “would not result in changing the world (or the system) but only its personnel.”^{xx} Arendt’s critique comes not from some evangelical ideal of a conflict or violence-free world, but from a firm conviction of the elusively transpolitical character of violence.

As Anne McClintock has suggested, Fanon’s advocacy of violence as progress is a decidedly masculinist posture, a posture that synthesizes manhood, freedom and sovereignty with a language of nationalism.^{xxi} In Frederick Douglass’ account of his fateful encounter with one Edward Covey, a notorious “negro-breaker” who specialized in taming recalcitrant slaves through excessive brutality, the great abolitionist provides a narrative of existential transformation that in some restricted ways, evokes Minh, Sartre, and Fanon. After a series of

frightful beatings at the hands of Covey, Douglass decided to resist further punishment. After a struggle that by Douglass' estimate lasted two hours (which seems exaggerated), Covey's attitude towards Douglass, and Douglass' self-perception changed:

This battle with Mr. Covey was the turning point in my career as a slave. It rekindled the few expiring embers of freedom, and revived within me a sense of my own manhood. It recalled the departed self-confidence, and inspired in me again with a determination to be free. The gratification afforded by the triumph was a full compensation for whatever else might follow, even death itself. . . My long-crushed spirit rose, cowardice departed, bold defiance took its place; and I now resolved that, however long I might remain a slave in form, the day had passed forever when I could be a slave in fact.^{xxii}

What is a stake for Douglass, specifically, are notions of manhood, dignity, courage. The fight with Mr. Covey is Douglass' liminal ritual phase, through which he passes and is transformed into a free spirit, if not immediately a literal freeman. Several scholars have challenged Douglass' account. Douglass' equation of his manhood with the ability to successfully defend himself provides a heroic dimension to the narrative that Douglass—and the abolitionist movement—so desperately needed to project, in order to convey that there were truly significant people being squeezed under slavery's thumb.

This part of the Douglass narrative, along with other accounts of individual acts of physical resistance to racial slavery and racist violence, has often been utilized as a rallying cry for black mobilization. As Arendt's critique of Fanon suggests, however, violence cannot be a strategy, only an instrument of strategy. When mistaken for a political project, violent struggle is symbolically represented as moral. Morality, however, does not fight. It is men, overwhelmingly, who have articulated the desire for violence as a political project, whether in the Black Power movement of the United States, or in the struggle for national independence in Venezuela. Like

nationalism and sovereignty, heroic masculinity is a highly overrated concept. Such responses might momentarily liberate an individual, in the case of Douglass, but never an entire group of people.

???? missing transition here

The subject of sovereignty leads me to Foucault. Foucault's methodological precaution against viewing power as an artifact of sovereignty, and not the other way around, is useful here. Rather than focusing on systems of rights, juridical law and the concept of sovereignty, Foucault decided to focus instead on power's "outer limits at the point where it becomes capillary: in other words, to understand power in its most regional forms and institutions, and especially at the points where this power transgresses the rules of right that organize and delineate it, oversteps those rules and is invested in institutions, is embodied in techniques and acquires the material means to intervene, sometimes in violent ways."^{xxiii}

Despite his rejection of the concept of sovereignty and a theory of rights as a means of framing power relations in modern nation-states, Foucault's theory of domination, when fused with Hobbes' classic description of individual and state sovereignty, provides a means of explaining the actual practice of state racism in relation to matters of individual sovereignty. The key difference between state racisms, and racisms of all sorts without the support of strong states, or racisms in societies where the state does not condone and will not support popular racism, is in the sense of corporal privilege state laws, practices and policies provide to dominant group members. One can think of many cases where the juridical systems of South Africa, Brazil, Germany, Australia and New Zealand, the United States, the Netherlands as well as many colonial regimes have secured and upheld convictions against members of racially and ethnically subordinated groups who dared to contest the violence visited upon them or members of their

community. Such decisions have often acknowledged the death of subordinate group members by the hands of dominant group actors, while simultaneously, through jury or judge decisions, absolving dominant group members from societal guilt or conviction of a crime. In such instances, racial supremacy and rule of law have an interlocking relationship, and the former has often been given priority by the juridical dimension of the state apparatus over the latter. Under these circumstances, law often follows, rather than precedes, violence, much in the way that Agamben describes the interrelationship of law and violence under the state of exception in Nazi Germany (see **chapter ?**).

In the case of U.S. African-American resistance to violence, self-mobilization in response to racist violence links to matters of sovereignty, in the traditional sense of state and citizen, but also in terms of racial subjectivity. Hobbes wrote that “every Sovereign hath the same Right, in procuring the safety of his People, that any particular man can have, in procuring the safety of his own body.”^{xxiv} Thus, each man (or woman) is his own state, each state its own man. Hobbes’ description of sovereignty, however, introduces a paradox for those outside the body politic of the national-state, for “procuring the safety of his own body” may in fact lie outside the condition of sovereignty itself. This is what Foucault recognizes. Though there is sovereignty of the state and citizen there is no absolute guarantee that the state’s imposition of sovereignty, or the racist individual’s imposition of corporal sovereignty upon the unincorporated, marginalized subjects, will result in a “victory” of the superordinate state or citizen. Many acts of self-defense and violence against racially empowered individuals, such as the zoot suit riots or confrontations on public buses and trolleys in Birmingham, remind us of the limits of state power and racial supremacist logics in relation to subordinate subjects. The linkage between racist logics and concepts of sovereignty is evident in most masculinist accounts of black male agency, ranging

from Frederick Douglass, Malcolm X, and Frantz Fanon to many other black world male intellectuals, who have equated the ability to exact violence as a mode of self-defense or revenge as an expression of sovereignty. It must be remembered that sovereignty is an essentially “public” concept. There is nothing hidden about it.

Self-mobilized racially subordinate subjects might not be able to overturn the concept of right or the concept of sovereignty, but they can at times halt the march of the individual, group or even institution invested with the dual power of racist supremacy and state power. Such instances are processes of displacement generated by the dynamic outcome of the “victory” of the subordinate group member. Though they may be judged and convicted afterwards for either committing an act of violence against a white person, or for transgressing laws against violence of any sort against anyone, such judgment occurs after the racially empowered citizen has been immobilized or otherwise halted in their attempt to impose their presumption of dual authority (racist and statist). This is part of the reason why vengeance tales are an integral part of subaltern political culture, and almost invariably there is at least one popular folk tale (that later becomes part of a popular novel or film) about an individual or group who took on state or popular dominant group violence and won, even if they were ultimately punished by the state for their acts. From Australia there is “The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith” and “The Tracker”; “Sweet Sweetback’s Badass Song” and “The Harder they Fall” in Jamaica; “Once Were Warriors” of New Zealand, “Serafina” of South Africa, “Lumpiao” of Northeastern Brazil.

Kelley’s and others’ novel interpretations of everyday resistance during the era of U.S. apartheid remind us that working-class resistance to racial and class domination did not necessarily yield to the demands of either white supremacy, with its prerequisites of subservience and acquiescence, or to the dominant tactics of the civil rights movement, which required civil

disobedience and a renunciation of violence that often cost people their lives. Working-class resistance to violent practices of racial domination did not automatically transform Birmingham's black consumers of public transportation into activists, intellectuals, and sloganeers reflexively advocating violent responses to state and individual racial domination, in the mode of a Robert Williams, H. Rap Brown or Eldridge Cleaver, or in the tradition of black and third world intellectuals ranging from Frantz Fanon, Albert Memmi, Jomo Kenyatta or Ho Chi Minh, who engaged in more sophisticated examinations and urgings of political violence among the world's dispossessed.

Neither acquiescent nor "activist" in the conventional sense, examples of everyday resistance to racist violence must be viewed as tactical, on-the spot responses to processes of domination under apartheid. Yet it is precisely for this reason that these responses to apartheid's processes of domination cannot be viewed as the building blocks for overthrowing those systems of domination. Such a perspective entails the undigested belief that the intentionality behind the response to the insulting bus driver or token booth operator is the same as the real or imagined response to more "cordial" or non-violent racist, or to a system of domination as a whole, or to the belief that society itself could or will be transformed. Vague and general descriptions of macro- and micro-politics among subaltern populations such as "human will", the "agency of the working-class", and "black working class resistance", provide little guidance concerning the actual formation and development of political strategies to patterns of domination. If responses by subalterns to racist violence are context and even site-specific, then they are responses to very particular conditions of potential coercion. Part of the normativity of the "weapons of the weak" argument is exposed in the implicit and explicit assertion that resistance to an instance of domination begets other instances of resistance which, in turn, provide a coherent ensemble of

retaliation. Absent the momentum, coordination and multiple valences of social movement mobilization in a particular epoch such as the civil rights era, when competing claims were often made simultaneously (Black Power and SCLC, for example), the coagulate and aggregated politics of U.S. African-American experience are best illustrated by Gramsci's claim that "The history of subaltern social groups is necessarily fragmented and episodic.... Even when they rebel and rise up: only "permanent" victory breaks their subordination, and not that immediately. In reality, even when they appear "triumphant", the subaltern groups are merely anxious to defend themselves..."^{xxv}

IV. Lowku, or Brechtian modes of resistance by another name

I will now draw out the ethnographic overlap between the examples I provided above and Scott's and Kelley's accounts of infrapolitics, as well as the divergence between their respective conceptualizations of informal working-class resistance and my own delineations of micro- and macro-politics, first elaborated in Chapter 1. There are certain parallels between my accounts of coagulation in quotidian politics and Kelley's reading of U.S. African-American labor sabotage in historical and contemporary perspective. The actions of these two workers would conceivably be more defensible in the context of charges of racial discrimination against black consumers. Though each worker could be accused of company theft and sabotage, neither one of them benefited from the actual exchange in material terms. In temporal terms, it could be argued that the time spent providing me with "customer service" was in fact a loss of company time, engaging in tasks not encompassed in their job description. The examples are consistent with Kelley's description in *Race Rebels* of the importance of a sense of dignity and cultural identity

in black working-class labor processes. The incidents recounted below are just two of many I experienced over several years involving black women and men in service and service-related positions. These incidents triggered a series of ruminations about the relationship between black labor and resistance in relations of service, and encouraged me to revisit some of the literature and debates of the 1990's about the synergies between injustice and collective action,

Before the scandal unfolded in the 1990's that exposed its automotive repair division as a cheat of its customers' hard earned money, there was a service-oriented, popular department store that advertised its own brand of fail safe car batteries for sale. Their television advertisements featured cars starting with these batteries in the climatic equivalent of the Alaskan tundra, under conditions seemingly so frigid that one could envision wolves and polar bears with chattering teeth off camera. In 1990, a car battery I purchased from this store and had installed in my car only weeks earlier went dead. Perhaps it was the sweltering Texas heat, not the Alaskan tundra, that transformed my die-hard battery into a die-soft one. I accompanied the tow truck and car to Sears. In keeping with its advertising at the time, I assumed I would immediately be given a new battery as a replacement. The manager however, informed me that my old battery would have to be charged first before I could receive a replacement battery, just to insure that the battery was not faulty. This was not quite in keeping with the stated and advertised policy, I explained, since the battery was obviously weak, as the store's own gauges attested, and had refused to start my car, sufficient evidence of the battery's limitations and my need for a new one. My old -- though new -- battery would have to be recharged first, the manager insisted. I would be given a new battery only if the old one did not retain the charge.

I decided to follow the procedure, resigned to a shift in the rules of the game. I assumed I had no other choice. What would I do, buy yet another battery? Ok, I said, take the battery out of

the car. All the while another employee, a young black man roughly about my age at the time (mid-thirties), also stood behind the counter, several yards away. Out of the corner of my eye, I could see him watching our exchange even as he attended to another customer. After finishing with the customer, he walked towards us. After his raised eyebrows informed me to follow him, he approached his manager and shot me a quick look of indifference. "I'll take care of this," he said to the manager, before leaving the counter and heading toward the store parking lot, where my car had been towed. Once the glass door shut he muttered "These white people are something else," out of the left side of his mouth. "Do you know how many people I have seen him give a new battery to?" he asked rhetorically as he lifted up the hood of my car and began the quick and grimy task of extricating the battery. "All a white person has to do is act like their battery isn't working, and he gives it to them. A brother like you comes in," he said, anger rising in his voice, "and you get the policy" and pausing for effect, "that really isn't the policy." Before pulling out the battery from the engine's side he said, "I tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to act as if the battery is charged, but I'm not going to charge it. Then when you come to pick it up it won't be charged and he'll be forced to give you a new battery!" With that he closed the hood, hoisted the battery into the crook of his right arm, and led me back to the reception area where I filled out the requisite paperwork. I returned several days later. The battery I originally purchased, I was told, did not charge. I would be given a new battery. After the new battery was installed, I spotted the young man in one of the garage pits, and gave him some money encased in a handshake. We wished each other luck and went our separate ways.

The second incident occurred in a now-defunct department store in New York City. A store noted for offering value instead of high prices, I made several purchases there over the years, and returned disgruntled only once, to return a wool blazer which, after one trip to the dry

cleaners, was transformed into a fabric that more resembled seersucker, with countless wrinkles and folds. When I returned to the men's suits department with the jacket I was greeted by a friendly but non-cooperative department manager, who informed me he could neither return my money nor exchange the jacket. He even told me that he had similar problems with a jacket he bought from the store -- his employer-- and he had not bothered to return his jacket, so why should I, notwithstanding the fact that the store did have a return policy with the customary temporal constraints and proof of purchase requirements.

Watching alongside was a young black male stock clerk loading garments onto displays. As soon as the manager walked away he confidently walked up to me and said, "Come with me," relieving me of jacket and receipt. I followed him to another part of the store, where he searched in vain for someone. "Not here," he muttered, and headed for another destination unknown to me. We went into the women's department where a glint of recognition flashed across his face as a black woman in her late 30's, a department assistant manager, approached him. He walked up to her with my coat and receipt in hand, with me walking dutifully behind, as he explained to her that I needed a refund for a defective jacket. When the woman asked him if I had gone to the men's department first, he replied with a yes and a look that generated an equally scornful gaze in return. She quickly extricated a pen from her jacket pocket, wrote an authorization for the refund, and sent us on our way. Finally, he led me to the refund desk in the basement, where the authorization slip, jacket and receipt were hand delivered to the refund clerk (also black). Within minutes she refunded my money. I thanked the clerk profusely, shook his hand, and left the store.

These incidents provide partial evidence of how racial difference serves to trigger and offset a series of practices and procedures that would be considered, under other circumstances, "reducible" to dynamics of class inequality. Of course, some might read the above examples and

argue quite forcefully that they are more anecdotes of class warfare that working class peoples have engaged in across races, genders and cultures. There is the distinct possibility that in both instances the initial motivation for the interventions of these young men was largely gendered. What incidents like these underscore, however, is how minorities sometimes act, across class and other boundaries, not in the name of some vague “racial solidarity”, but in specific response to a perceived injustice against a member of their own "race" under conditions which, in theory, should not only be democratic but the most banal and procedural, like the act of purchasing or returning a car battery. It means not only that racism lurks in the minutiae of daily life, but recourse to such inequalities can be found therein, not in the expression of a particular political ideology or program within a minority community, nor in the fora of elite representative political participation in civil society. Working-class blacks who provide the kind assistance described above are engaging in forms of coagulate, aggregate politics. In anticipation of those who might such individuals of undermining the ethos of public good, I would simply suggest that they learned such behaviors from their bosses and co-workers. In a society such as the United States, the working-classes, more than any other class, learn first-hand how to travel the distance between the rhetoric of meritocracy and the realpolitik of nepotism and comparative disadvantage. There is full irony in the fact that they had to flout the store’s practices and treatment of some of its customers in order to ultimately provide good customer service. This is no surplus, no gratuitous feat, but a necessity, a mechanism of subsistence. Such responses also acknowledge that a gap exists and persists between rules and norms; both the written and unwritten rules are applied differently. Whites often receive surplus satisfaction when returning an item or product; blacks rarely receive even the minimum service whites do. What if I could

not afford another battery and needed it to drive my car to a meager paying job? What if that suit jacket were the difference between my appearance or the postponement of a job interview?

As brilliantly outlined by de Certeau in the concept of poaching^{xxvi}, there are popular though highly selective practices developed by working people within the process of production that are designed to extract commodities or valuable labor time from that process. Whether it is a piece worker in one of the various garment industries of the world who takes odd fabrics to make a dress for independent sale or exchange outside the system of production, a dockworker who “discovers” a broken crate of frozen steaks from Japan or Argentina, or the mechanic who decides to repair a friend’s car for free on his break from work at the local gas station or car dealership, such activities lend credence to poaching as one of the modular forms of “weapons of the weak.” Such activities, however, do not actually lead the car dealership, gas station, dress manufacturer, or commercial port to financial ruin, or to a fundamental reordering of relations of production. This is why such industries have insurance for graft (though in most instances the wage workers are the least egregious perpetrators). Ultimately, it is the worker who must pull additional human and material resources (more labor) from their production and production site to introduce their labor or products of their labor into other circuits of economy (bartering or “boosted” sales).

Though the relations of production are largely pre-determined by the forms of labor people engage in, the type of service accorded to consumers varies widely in any given marketplace, dependent upon company policy as well as individual discretion. In other words, though working-class people might not be in a position to alter the conditions under which they labor, they can impact the extension and mediation of their labor and production in the marketplace. It is individual discretion that I want to focus on here, as exemplified in those cases

when I was the beneficiary of an often momentary discretionary authority, in which a black person in a service position decided to provide me with a refund, discount or repair that, inconsistent with a company policy, was consonant with a broader logic of commerce, racial inequality and justice. Rather than view these interactions as symptomatic of the class character of race relations, I would argue that they illustrate the materiality of racial logics and consciousness, as some members of racially subordinate groups within service-oriented enterprises view the market of profit and deficit, recompense and loss along racial parameters.

The circuitous routes to consumer satisfaction I have undertaken suggest, among many things, that when given the opportunity, some black working-class people in service sectors of the economy interpret the mistreatment meted out to black consumers as a double inequality or, put another way, the transactional dimension of racial inequality articulated in the circulation of production. Not only do blacks receive unequal treatment but unequal recompense. Workers' interventions insure that at the very least, black consumers receive service and satisfaction in accordance with the verbal or written policies of their employers. Ironically, they have to circumvent hierarchies and procedures to insure that those very policies are met. Here we return to the radical potential of black transgression in daily U.S. life. Like those who sat at lunch counters, blacks (and their similarly committed compatriots in struggle of all colors), must circumvent tacit and written laws in order to receive equal treatment.

Behavior like that displayed by the young man at the Sears tire shop might appear in a variety of places and circumstances, so that one could plausibly argue that, taken as a whole, such acts are collective. Yet the critical difference here is that these acts were not *undertaken collectively*, but individually. These acts were not predicated on pre-formed ideas, but on the job, so to speak. Due to the distinct nature of their job tasks, the young man at Alexander's and the

young man at Sears could not engage in identical modes of resistance. Their “on the job training”, as it were, prepared and socialized them to engage in modes of resistance suitable for the discretionary realm of their influence. To put it most baldly, the young man at Sears could not exchange my jacket; nor could the young man at Alexander’s provide me with a new car battery. Only under circumstances wherein these young men could be identified as part of a group of men and women engaged in similar service-oriented occupations who have decided, amongst themselves, to engage in such activities could it be plausibly argued that their activities be conceived of as collective action.

This “barrier reef” of black quotidian struggles is highly circumstantial and phenomenological, even if it presents itself with some regularity. It is not something that can be relied upon in every instance, or in most instances. The tactics are much closer to De Certeau’s concept of “poaching” in which neither the boss nor the norms are ever directly confronted. They are sidestepped through a fusion of transgressive action and moral principle. There are other circumstances where people would not have the propitious conditions to engage in such activity. Conversely, there are black people (as among any group of people) who would not engage in such activity under any circumstances, and would in fact oppose “poaching” altogether in an almost Kantian fashion. How would the young black man in the automotive department provide me with a new battery, in keeping with company policy (and his own) if he were relegated to another department in the store? What if the young man in Alexander’s happened not to be walking by the men’s suit department on that particular day, at that moment? What if one of them had gotten caught and reprimanded for such actions afterwards or at some other instance?

V. Coagulate Politics

To reiterate what I first alluded to in the introduction, Scott's "weapons of the weak" is characterized within my model as a form of contextual micro-politics with macro-political implications. The concept of political coagulation, also briefly mentioned in the introduction, represents what could be characterized as the half-way point between micro and macro-politics. Political coagulation occurs within micro-political situations when individual political actors assume positions of ephemeral power that enable them to exert influence upon the outcome of a particular encounter, transaction or exchange, as in the case of the return of my faulty jacket and battery. Those actors are not invested with political power more generally, and may in fact occupy subordinate positions within an overall political economy. Yet they are coagulants in the sense that they infuse a relatively self-contained instance with their own notions of justice, equality and redress to significantly affect micro -- and sometimes macro -- political outcomes in daily life. What makes these coagulants instances of aggregate politics and not-quite collective action in the more conventional social science definition is that the conditions in which they appear are highly unpredictable and precarious. They are the embodiment of a synergistic relationship between political opportunity and circumstance. In general, such individuals have few opportunities to express their political beliefs. and They might not be revolutionaries, but they certainly provide the counterpoint to image of the backward, acquiescent, immobile wage-laborer.

The Oxford English dictionary categorizes the word coagulate as a transitive verb (v.t. and i) for which it provides the following definition: "Change from fluid to more or less solid state, clot, curdle, set, solidify." Coagulation is one of its cognates. In terms of politics, I would like to characterize certain forms of political behavior on the continuum of individuated and

aggregated politics as coagulate when the following phenomena are involved: a) previously disparate political actors operating randomly in an environment are linked through episodic circumstances; b) linkage of disparate political actors under specific though episodic circumstances produce coalitions which assist in the structuring of circumstances within an immediate environment to increase the likelihood of positive political outcomes for one or both actors; c) the implications and consequences of their actions are limited to the immediate circumstances of the political environment therein.

The two incidents I detailed above have all the characteristics of coagulate politics. The randomness of the interaction at the point of service in both incidents is underscored by three presumptions: a) under identical circumstances not all black employees would have engaged in “Brechtian” behavior; b) the actors themselves may not have engaged in such behavior with other customers, perhaps not even with black ones at other times; c) these two actors do not influence the outcome of sales or return transactions all the time, nor are they motivated to.

Moving to a more abstract, generalizable level of theorization, it could be said that these two individuals engaged in a politics that straddled the border between micro and macro-politics without fully inhabiting either category. Their responses to each instance could be characterized as fully voluntarist but also structuring, insofar as their interventions subtly but significantly altered the decision-making of their superiors, without their superiors being cognizant or aware of their activities. To continue the metaphor of coagulation, their activities limited the hemorrhaging and loss of my investment in two separate commodities. Their interventions rendered their hidden transcripts public, based on some combination of intuition, experiential knowledge and Gramscian/Kantian “good sense” (a sense of how they believe the environment in which they live and/or work *should* function). Yet their activities provide little indication of

how they operate politically in other circumstances. Neither actor provided a partial, much less comprehensive political ideology, perspective or project, even though one or both actors might have a partially or fully developed political perspective on redistributive justice more generally (reparations or socialized medicine, for example).^{xxvii}

The advantage of the concept of coagulation is that it provides a means of explaining clumps or clusters of political interventions that are neither entirely individuated nor aggregate, though they are plural. Second, the situational and circumstantial character of coagulate/quotidian politics does not necessarily lead to or unfold into collective action. Actors engaged in coagulate politics minimize risk and loss by retreating into their hidden transcripts of the private sphere lives, without assuming that their activities *should* lead into public social mobilization in the form of collective action. To extend the metaphor of coagulation and the body, coagulate politics stops the material “bleeding” of subalterns in conditions of unequal access and recompense. These activities are distinct from other forms of Brechtian resistance, ranging from the petit marronage of slave rebels to De Certeau’s poaching, because of their more resolutely interstitial dimension. Coagulate politics take place within public spheres and worksites in full view of superordinates, but is largely contingent upon the encounter/interface between subaltern members, divided by the conditions of labor (agent and consumer) but united by a perceived commonality of subordination.

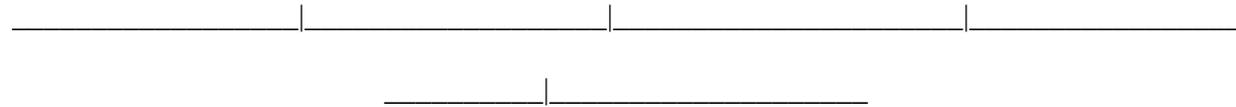
Two anticipatory comments here. First, some readers might call into question my classification of these two incidents as coagulate politics and therefore a frontier of micro and macro politics. Some might suggest that such interventions render superfluous the need for definitions and distinctions of micro and macro politics, or that the model I have provided to provide a continuum of forms of politics privileges macro/aggregated politics at the expense of

micro and coagulate politics. The larger question, here, is where to locate “weapons of the weak” in a broader account of quotidian politics. I offer the chart below as a modular complement to the distinctions made between individuated (Brechtian) and aggregated modes of resistance.

Figure XX. Individuated, Aggregate/Coagulate and Macro- Politics

I - Micro-Politics	II Coagulate Politics	III-Macro-Politics		
Acquiescence	Aggregate Politics	Social Protest	Revolt / Rebellion	Revolution
<i>Absolute domination Fatalism, Compliance, Extreme Anomie</i>	<i>Weapons of the Weak, covert (Brechtian) resistance, Petit Marronage</i>	<i>Organized dissent against a particular regime, policy or practice of state or economy which leads to collective action and possible extension of social and political networks to political and social actors outside of immediate network/matrix. States, elites and labor interests perceive threat to overall stability.</i>		
Political Outcomes:				
<i>Status quo /Disparate Modes of Dissent. No agglutination</i>	<i>Less powerful actors may alter immediate, circumstantial instances of inequality in daily life. Powerful actors respond with neglect, Isolation, Repression of</i>	<i>Reform, Isolation of conflict, localized Resolution of conflict, state/elite/capital collusion</i>	<i>Potential for Nationalization/Expansion of Conflict</i>	<i>Regime Change, Repression Negotiation Cooptation of local and/or national leaders</i>

	<i>Individual or narrowly coalitional dissent</i>			
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Least resistance

Most Resistance

Continuum of Resistance

The chart above outlines the continuum of resistance from absolute compliance, generally non-existent, and open rebellion, revolt and revolution. This chart is not designed to valorize collective action (aggregated politics) at the expense of individual volition (individuated politics), but to trace the dynamics of reaction and response involving dominant and subordinate groups and individuals. A key operative assumption of the chart is that individuated and aggregated politics often occur simultaneously, and may indeed operate in relation to one another. One of Scott’s key assertions, which I believe is correct, concerns the emergence of covert/Brechtian political actors at moments of revolt/rebellion and revolution who engage in outward, direct manifestations of protest at propitious moments, mostly when elites and status quo institutions are in disarray.^{xxviii} The second key assumption is that few subordinate political actors resemble the “fatalistic peasants” who made a brief, convenient appearance in the behaviorist-based modernization literatures in the 1950’s and 1960’s, in the work of scholars like Edward Banfield. Though such actors exist in a variety of political and economic

circumstances, we should not assume the complete absence of what Scott calls “the hidden transcript.” At the same time, revolutions of the 20th century have rarely brought about the radical transformation and freedom its architects, from Castro to Havel, have circulated within the shared dream of a new society. **Thus, individuated and aggregated politics might be said to more accurately operate on a narrower continuum within the continuum outlined above.**

There are, nonetheless, longitudinal as well as more immediate analytic implications as a result of the distinctions between micro-politics, agglutination, and macro-politics. **The key distinguishing feature of macro-political, collective response to inequality is that states and economics, in their response to direct action and protest, define the limits of their capacities to either incorporate or quell protest. With coagulate politics, the student of “weapons of the weak” knows neither.** Nor does she or he know how effective or reliable Brechtian actors would be in times of revolt. To return to two examples I have provided, if the young man in the automotive department and in the now defunct department store were to be transferred to another part of their respective places of employment, they would have to engage in other types of coagulate politics, if they were able to do so at all. They would certainly not announce to their supervisors or managers that they engaged in the sort of aggregate politics of redistribution in their prior departments. Nor would such a declaration be appropriate or useful, for example, under circumstances in which black workers decide to make demands upon the general manager or store ownership to institute an examination of the implementation of policies when dealing with black customers. Such a declaration would undermine collective initiatives and reduce their moral claims to the claims of criminals. What I am suggesting here is that the “Brechtian” political actors would have to develop and engage in a different type of politics. Just as the macro-politics of revolt, rebellion, and revolution are not translatable to the politics of everyday

life, coagulate politics are not easily grafted onto open, social protest, except perhaps, in instances of violence. They are two distinct modes of political articulation and protest. The former is necessary for dreamers and politicians, the latter for the survival of common people.

VI. Displacement and Parallel Politics

Kelley in particular emphasizes the importance of popular culture as a site and vehicle for the articulation of dissent in black working-class public deliberation. He is certainly not the first to make this claim, but the depth and complexity of his vision for a radical historiography of black popular culture calls out for an assessment of popular cultural forms, inside and outside the United States, that may or may not express political dissent.^{xxix} Again, I am concerned with the specific effects of popular culture articulations. Rather than asserting that popular culture *necessarily* involves politics, a claim that is part of a popular culture-as-resistance narrative found across the social sciences and the humanities, or denying outright any possibility that popular culture shares pride of place with collective action, social mobilization and representative electoral politics, I am interested in examining what popular culture as a site and vehicle for political expression, can and can not do, for the articulation of any politics, regardless of ideological position. The examples of expressions of dissent in popular culture that I analyze below come from two distinct genres and parts of the New World -- Terry Callier, a folk-blues practitioner originally from the south side of Chicago, and the Chilean poet Pablo Neruda. Both works highlight the tensions of the politics/popular culture nexus manifest in political parallelism. Both Callier's and Neruda's art asks us to imagine and exceed our capacities for empathy and understanding of the horrors of two disparate events.

First analyzed is Terry Collier's ode to Amadou Diallo, the Senegalese immigrant who was killed by four New York City police officers who pumped 41 bullets into his body right in front of an apartment door, on the *suspicion* that he was armed. The police officers were acquitted of charges of murder and commended by Sir Rudolph Guiliani, then mayor of New York, for conserving the peace and protecting the city from potential violence. Callier's lament follows:

Lament for the late AD

Yo Manhattan, There's a secret hidden just behind your smile
Stopped my dreamin'
And it really messed me up for quite awhile
I wish I could express it, but i must confess i just don't have a clue
New york, New york
I thought I could depend on you

What's up harlem
Child my heart goes out to you like no one else
'Trane is gone now so we'll have to find the answers for ourselves
Honey, don't you hear the thunder
Makes me wonder what this world is comin' to
New york, New york
I thought I could depend on you

Bronx is burnin'
People stand and watch in silent rage
Some folks care not
Others dare not try to read the printed page
Ah, but I have seen a message
With a meaning that you just can't misconstrue
New york, New york
I thought I could depend on you^{xxx}

In keeping with Scott's thesis of *Weapons of the Weak and Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, Callier's indictment of the city of New York song is subtle and indirect. Indirection

as a rhetorical strategy is an integral part of U.S. African-American and other black world popular and political cultures, employed particularly during the era of slavery.^{xxxix} The murder of Diallo is expressed as disappointment with the city, rather than an outraged, detailed account of the actions that preceded, constituted and followed the murder. The indirection gives a vague, diffuse quality to the lyrics, at the same time that it conveys a broader, more comprehensive indictment of the city itself. The refrain “New york, New york, I thought I could depend on you” suggests surprise either that such an incident could occur in New York, or that four police officers could be acquitted of so blatant (at least to this observer) a case of murder. The killing of an unarmed black male in the United States, given the national history, is not surprising. What seems to surprise Callier, however, is its occurrence in New York. As a consequence, he is forced to view the city differently, to interpret “the secret hidden just behind your smile”, an unanticipated malevolence in a city he thought he could depend on. Yet, just what precisely is that upon which Callier could depend? There are features of black urban life in the United States that are peculiar to the U.S. African-American experience, while at the same time resonant with the experiences of other ethnically and racially marginalized groups in cities throughout the world that have undergone vast waves of immigration, expansion and industrialization. The movements of these group members are brought under surveillance in ways proportionate with the degrees of anxiety the symbols of their corporality produce in the imaginaries of the dominant groups. Thus, Algerians in Paris, Indo-Pakistanis in English cities like Bradford and London, Bantus in Pretoria or Capetown, or Palestinians in Israel move at times in accordance with, at other moments in dialectical relation to, the state surveillance apparatus’ preoccupation with them. In this way at least, several classic sociological studies of the city, as well as the poetry of the monumental Walt Whitman, which presuppose the city’s provision of anonymity

and “blended in-ness” quality, have to be modified when considering the relationship of the ethno-nationally marginal to urban spaces. As evidenced by anti-loitering laws specifically designed to discourage black congregation in cities like New York, Chicago, Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo after the abolition of slavery, municipal regimes have historically implemented laws to adjust to the influx of pariah populations for the purposes of labor. Codified and de jure segregation with just the right dose of coercion serves to ensure that members of these populations labor in these cities and are able to do little else comfortably without the authoritative gaze of civic leaders.^{xxxii} In this way, Callier’s disappointment comes from the recognition that the city of Manhattan is not safe for him, or people who look like him. He had been fooled all along.

Pablo Neruda, in contrast, uses direct, violent language in response to Richard M. Nixon and the U.S. government’s meddling in the internal affairs of the Chilean nation. He criticizes U.S. intervention into the democratic election of Salvador Allende to the presidency of the Chilean Republic and the ultimately successful engineering of a coup d’etat and subsequent counterrevolution.

Pablo Neruda:

Comienzo Por Envocar A Walt Whitman

Es por accion de amor a mi pais
que te reclamo, hermano necesario,
viejo Walt Whitman de la mano gris,

para que con tu apoyo extraordinario
verso a verso matemos de raiz
a Nixon, Presidente sanguinario.

Sobre la tierra no hay hombre feliz

nadie trabaja bien en el planeta
si en Washington respira su nariz.

Pidiendo al viejo Bardo que me invista,
assumo del soneto terrorista,

porque debo dictar sin pena alguna
la sentencia hasta ahora nunca vista
de fusilar a um criminal ardiente

que a pesar de sus viajes a la luna
ha matado en la tierra la pluma se arranca

al escribir el nombre del malvado
del genocida da la Casa Blanca.^{xxxiii}

I Start by Invoking Walt Whitman

It is for the love of my country
That I invoke you, my necessary brother
old, grey hand Walt Whitman

so that with your extraordinary support
verse by verse we will kill at the root
Nixon, bloody president

There is no happy man on earth
No one works well on the planet
If in Washington his nostrils still breathe

Asking the old Bard to invest me
I assume my duties of a poet
Armed with terrorist sonnet

For I must dictate without any punishment
The unprecedented sentence
Of shooting an ardent criminal

Who in spite of his journeys to the moon
Has killed so many people on earth
That the paper flees and the pen stops

When writing the name of the genocidal,

evil one of the White House.^{xxxiv}

Genocide, murder, killing, bloodiness are vivid terms used to characterize the Nixon regime's role in the usurpation of the body politic of the Chilean people and the death of its head of state. Neruda is responding to an activity undertaken by a specific regime against another, democratically elected regime. Unlike most songs and poetry deemed to be "political" by virtue of a mere mention, indeed description, of an unjust practice, Neruda is actually calling for a reaction and collective response. That he evokes the name of the poet Walt Whitman complicates the often simplistic "the United States of America versus the rest of the Americas" politics undertaken by many opponents of U.S. state policies towards Latin America and other regions of the world (**see chapter ?**). Neruda suggests instead opposition to a regime and its advocates, rather than to an entire population.

There are similarities between these two pieces of art in terms of the creation of parallel politics. This particular song's and poem's existence is reliant on the actions they critique. Both forms of art evoke, rather than intervene in, circumstances which the authors are hopeful, but ultimately powerless, to change. Neruda can critique the U.S. government's role in Vietnam and Chile, but cannot intervene to alter the course of events. He can summon the poetry, politics and memory of Walt Whitman to kill Richard Nixon, yet Augusto Pinochet exacted a heavy toll on his own people nonetheless. The fact that these events occurred are certainly not the fault nor the limitation of the poet or the songwriter.

In this collection of poetry, Neruda is a drum major attempting to lead the troops into battle, but his army is understaffed and its weapons are relatively useless on the other, more literal than figurative battlefield. This speaks to the dilemma of political articulation in parallel

politics more generally. If the troops are not behind the drum major, if they are already defeated before even joining the battle, or argue amongst themselves to the point of disintegration, we must acknowledge that the artist as drum major is perhaps better prepared than the troops for battle. Much like the helpful stockperson in Alexander's, Neruda makes his claims against Nixon and his call to poetic armament from a site other than that in which the original mandate for the economic and political strangulation of Chile took place (Nixon's White House and Pinochet's military offices). In both cases, the dynamics of political articulation and displacement are in place.

I would now like to juxtapose my reading of Neruda's poetically vituperative attack on Richard Nixon against Scott's reading of a moment in Chilean television that shares some of the attributes of what is commonly referred to as "speaking truth to power", one of the rhetorical strategies of subordinate and weaker political actors in dealing with powerful institutions, practices and individuals. The incident, chronicled in the New York Times, occurred fifteen years after Pinochet's initial, unlawful installation as President General of the Chilean Republic. Ricardo Lagos, a socialist opposition leader, openly castigated Pinochet during a live interview on Chilean television. Lagos' stern, remonstrative tone and gaze was directed at the television camera, which helped convey the sense that he was speaking directly to Pinochet and the Chilean body politic. As interviewers tried to clip his tirade, Lagos responded. "You'll have to excuse me. I speak for fifteen years of silence."^{xxxv}

Scott characterizes this moment as an instance of political actor rendering a hidden transcript public, and elaborates on the journalist's reportage which likened the outburst to "an earthquake":

when Lagos says 'I speak for fifteen years of silence', what he clearly means is that his is now speaking directly to Pinochet more or less what thousands of Chilean citizens had been thinking and saying in safer circumstances for fifteen years. The silence he breaks is the silence of defiance of the public transcript. Part of the political electricity, the high drama, of the moment is also the enormous personal danger Lagos courts when he breaks this silence.... The moment when the dissent of the hidden transcript crosses the threshold to open resistance is always a politically charged occasion.^{xxxvi}

Scott assumes that Mr. Lagos' moment of speaking truth to power is a cumulative event in response to years of authoritarian rule under Pinochet. At the very least, Lagos's outburst is a representative utterance for "what thousands of Chilean citizens had been thinking and saying in safer circumstances for fifteen years." The distinctions between public and private behaviors and thoughts, as well as the distinction between thought and action itself, frame Scott's interpretation of the utterance against the backdrop of contemporary and recent Chilean politics.

Neither the fortitude and risk assumed in Lagos' outburst, nor the silence induced by years of terror, are in question. Using my conceptualization of displacement to underscore the temporal and spatial dimensions of power's unveiling, however, I would like to point out the ways in which Lagos' intervention, and Scott's reading of his intervention, are premised upon an enduring but nonetheless static apprehension of the symbolism of the power holder in question, namely, Pinochet. Mr. Lagos' outburst was an expression of sentiment against a harsh regime and its ongoing legacy, yet like Neruda's poetic assault on the Nixon administration, the intervention is ultimately a rhetorical strategy of denunciation. It is not, by itself, a halt, detour or rerouting of the first "move" of Pinochet to overthrow Allende, but a response to a distinct phase or moment of the power processes unleashed by authoritarian rule (limitations of public, spontaneous and voluntary assembly, limits on freedom of speech, torture and intimidation). In historical terms, neither Lagos, Neruda, nor those who were sympathetic to their views in Chilean society, could reverse the act of the coup or the instantiation of a political culture of

terror. I believe it is important for a more clarified understanding of power and oppression to distinguish between these acts of power, for they are not one and the same. To use the metaphor of family lineage, the political culture of terror in the Chilean case was a descendent of the coup, but authoritarian power was not just born, it had to be created. Given the range and diversity of coups and in their aftermath, the consequences for societies and civil societies differ according to the strength and durability of the coup maker's regime, and its intentions. How a population responds to a coup and a period of dictatorial rule are really two distinct reactions, even though in most cases, the two are inextricably linked.

Within power dynamics involving two contending actors such as the Chilean state and society under Pinochet, the stakes for each actor within the process change, even if the actors remain in their respective dominant and subordinate positions throughout the process. Consequently, each actor must respond to different moves by the other actor or, attempt to shift the course of an aspect of their interaction. Though Mr. Lagos or Neruda's reactions to the coup and dictatorship respectively were informed by those two events, neither reaction was determined by them. And their reactions provide no guarantee that others will follow them in their public condemnation, nor a guarantee that any subsequent collective action on the part of Pinochet's critics would bring an end to the regime. As the powerful documentary by Pablo Guzman conveys, competing memories of authoritarian rule in Chile pit critics and victims against largely middle-class supporters of Pinochet, and the national history of the "lessons" of the Pinochet period remains contested.^{xxxvii} At different moments, Neruda and Lagos are like drum majors who hope to lead a yet-unformed army to battle, tapping out a call to arms, when neither arms, nor the people, may be enough to alter history, or less ambitiously, stem a slaughter. Though their individual agency may have inspired others to write poetry, or to more

openly criticize the regime in public forums, such actions also helped underscore the silence induced by the military regime. What does it say about the repression of public protest in Chile that a pivotal moment in the articulation of dissent against *El Senor Presidente* occurs 15 years after the coup, on television? Scott's reading of this example of the hidden transcript made public is paradigmatic of displacement and parallel politics.

VII. Conclusion

Renewed interest in qualitative approaches to the study of power dynamics needs to be accompanied by more challenging interpretations of existing interpretive methods and their utility and rigor in making sense of non-quantifiable data, as well as the development of new research methods. Scott's theorization of infrapolitics and, to a lesser extent, Kelley's application of the concept explicitly reject an oppositional juxtaposition of more formalized notions of institutional politics, political agency and collective action against informal contestations of political domination. To the extent that Scott and Kelley reject the modern leftist trajectory and telos of collective mobilization, in which political agency and progress emanate solely from class struggle, their advocacy of infrapolitics is part of a critical methodology of non-formal political resistance that could be said to be post-modern. Yet their *trajectory* for infrapolitics, which involves building momentum and taking coherent form in an eventual public transcript, is decidedly modern. Though I share their desire to retain a modern rather than post-modern sense of political agency and collective action, I am more doubtful of their trajectory. Though my data base is limited, I believe I can safely posit that infrapolitics are certainly politics. If as Linda Zerilli suggests, politics refers to something besides itself and is constituted in the relationship

between two distinct entities, then coagulate politics is a form of politics. Yet much like infrapolitics more generally, it is no more a guarantor of collective mobilization in societies with multiple political communities and distinctions than are class politics and trade unionism.

Even Scott's conclusions acknowledge the last-stance character of the weapons of the weak, "the best we can hope for", in the aftermath of the Soviet bloc's implosion, the fall of the Berlin wall, proclamations of the end of ideology coupled with the predominance of neo-liberal solutions for the political economy of non-metropolitan nation-states. Subsequently, resistance to G-8 policies displayed in rioting at the Geneva, Seattle and Genoa meetings, suggest new modes of struggle and coalition against the seemingly relentless process of capitalist rationalization. These are weapons of the weak, but of a decidedly distinct order from the "hidden transcripts" proffered by Scott as the bulwark against the obsolescence of peasant, wage-laborer resistance. Social movement scholars and polemicists such as Negri and Hardt have theorized about the possibilities of post-Soviet bloc modes of cross-national strategies among the poor, the landless, and the underwaged. Fortunately, in my view, the "weapons of the weak" may not be the final sigh of the dispossessed.

The larger question here is where to locate "weapons of the weak" in a theoretical account of a moral economy of resistance to unjust wages, material conditions and overall life circumstances imposed upon poor populations. In several key respects, Scott's initial formulation and Kelley's application of infrapolitics and weapons of the weak concepts represent an effort to redefine phenomena as political that sociologists of the previous generation referred to as "pre-political". The weak may utilize overt as well as covert forms of resistance, but not necessarily in the same manner as those employing instruments of state power. In more abstract, analytic terms, "weapons of the weak" can be thought of as the employment of socially constituted implements

by subordinate, relatively powerless agents to indirectly contest more powerful political actors and institutions. Instruments and/or behaviors of quotidian resistance are effected in cases in which neither the state, dominant institutions or powerful individuals have a direct, immediate reaction or response. The consequences of weapons of the weak are more often than not indirect, disparate, and non-cumulative.

In developing an alternative account of quotidian politics, I seek to avoid several pitfalls I believe are common in debates about power relations involving subordinate groups. First, populist oriented accounts of working-class resistance tend to equate individuated responses to unequal relations of power with macro-political resistance on grand scale, thereby blurring analytic clarity concerning types of resistance, scale, individual versus collective resistance. An offhand comment by C.L.R. James criticizing Herbert Aptheker's "very bad"^{xxxviii} historiography of slave systems is an implicit critique of a tendency to indiscriminately assign the term "revolutionary" to any act that counters the interests of dominant groups. James provided the following commentary on Aptheker's historiography of slave resistance: "When two workers get together in a tree he says 'You see, the blacks are revolutionary.'"^{xxxix} Scale of protest and the articulation of dissent are crucial components of a more discriminating view of the dynamics of domination that enables scholars to distinguish among categories and types of resistance.

Second, economic models of power dynamics reduce politics to machinations and consequences of the economy, with the state merely doing the bidding of elites and dominant classes to reproduce and maintain class hegemony. Under these models, individual acts of resistance to status quo machinations of power are the equivalent of flipping a middle finger to the hangman before a descent into the gallows at the end of a noose. A third related pitfall is the more restrictive view of politics found in liberal and conservative political theory, wherein

politics solely emanates from the state. This view was commonly held by several key figures of the late 19th and early 20th century German sociological tradition, including Schmitt, Hegel, Mannheim and Kant. This view of the state as the source of all politics has devolved in many liberal democratic societies (as well as in societies with similar formal aspirations) into the popular and elite view that politics is entirely coincident with the state, its representatives and elite re-presentation of mass opinion and electoral choices. This is in part why, as Schmitt rightly points out, the average person in many representative, liberal polities views politics so disdainfully, a practice one avoids whenever possible, rather than a constitutive element of human interaction.

The fourth pitfall is a Foucauldian one, where power, viewed as discursive practices with material and institutional implications, is reproduced and reconstituted in such a way that precludes the possibility of more egalitarian social orders, and allows simply for role reversals. The Foucauldian web neglects the possibility that a distinctive normative matrix upheld by some members of subordinate groups would lead some group members to behave differently, in a more egalitarian manner, than their power superordinates. At the same time, however, I want to avoid treatment of these normative possibilities as somehow “natural” or given to marginalized groups, who are also quite capable of atrocities and injustices in quests for power and authority.

I would like to return to a view of power dynamics as an interactive, context-specific process, where crises of authority and power can be induced not only by economic downturn or state fragility but demands around issues not entirely related or encompassed by the formal economy or state power. The obvious examples are nationalism and ethnic mobilization, which resist easy correlations between the degree of political competition and contestation and the health of a particular state or economy. As argued by Kymlicka and Taylor in the case of

Quebecois nationalism in Canada, Carens in his assessment of ethnic conflict in Fiji, or in Beissinger's account of nationalism's emergence and the Soviet state's demise in the former Soviet Union, state-based and economic accounts of political crises in these three countries attempt, unsuccessfully, to reduce these cases of political transformation to a single variable or institution. Another way of posing my attempt at a theorization of quotidian politics is as an effort to make sense of the political implications of phenomena often excluded from the category and conceptualization of the political in state and materialist accounts of power and politics.

A theory of quotidian politics must consider the possibility that subordinate resistance to dominant actors can occur *within* the power dynamics between two contending political actors, groups or organizations. If we accept the classic definition of power dynamics as relational, rather than absolute phenomena, subordinate actors necessarily have both a stake and role in the dynamics of dominance and subordination. A theory of quotidian politics must be cautious not to indiscriminately characterize moments of resistance within processes of domination as resistance *outside* of relations of dominance and subordination. Otherwise, the spatial, temporal and conceptual problems of formulations that do not distinguish between micro and macro-politics, scale and type of resistance, and practices of subsistence versus practices of rebellion and revolution, will continue to frustrate attempts at more comprehensive theories of subordinate, quotidian politics, infrapolitics, and weapons of the weak. As Scott, Kelley and my own examples illustrate, the response of subordinates to conditions of dominance are rarely, if ever, pre-determined. The wildebeest does occasionally gore the attacking lion, as the bull does, on occasion, the matador. Yet in order to rid their species of the ongoing possibility of attack and consumption by their predators, wildebeests and bulls would need to curtail and limit the attacks

of lions and matadors as a *group*. Successful individual encounters with predators have no cumulative effect on the safety of the group.

This leads us to reconsider just what constitutes collective action. Is collective action the pre-mediated coalescence and formation of formerly discrete individual agents? Can collective action be the spontaneous response of disparate individuals to similar dynamics and circumstances of inequality? If so, what are the possible “cumulative effects” of Brechtian acts of resistance? Below, I sketch some possible hypotheses concerning cumulative effects:

- 1) Overturning conditions and mechanisms of domination due to the cumulative effects of coagulate politics (aggregate politics, poaching, Brechtian acts of resistance).
- 2) Partial amelioration of conditions of domination due to the cumulative effects of coagulate politics.
- 3) Contingent amelioration of certain conditions of domination, and not others, with the prospect of recidivism and reflux, or further erosion of conditions of domination
- 4) Increased repression by the state, institutions of civil society, economy and individuals in positions of power and dominance.

Of these four projected outcomes of aggregate politics, I believe the first is the most unlikely. It would be possible only under conditions in which a dominant group with superordinate positions in the state, civil society and/or society, military and economy, is weakened to such an extent that increasing incursions and interventions by subordinate group members in coagulate politics leads to both mass mobilization and the collapse of a dominant group as a hegemonic, authoritarian or totalitarian bloc. This outcome, then, is predicated not on quotidian politics

solely, but a combination of factors and variables which would combine to weaken a dominant group's position in society as a whole, not just in their daily interactions with subordinate group members. The Portuguese in Lusophone Africa, or the fall of the Soviet state, are two rare examples of this form of quotidian political activity that resembles Scott and Kelley's hidden transcripts becoming public with societal, national-popular, collective implications.

The overwhelming majority of subaltern politics cases, however share some combination of attributes of outcomes 2, 3, and 4. Developments ranging from the political recognition of Dalits in India, U.S. African-American and Native American civil rights movements, the formation of laws acknowledging distinct histories of injustice and denial, cultural practices such as religious observance and holidays, nationalization of previously ethnic or racially specific heroes (Marcus Garvey in Jamaica, Zumbi in Brazil), to the creation of laws devised to combat ongoing practices of racism, programs such as affirmative action, and anti-racist and defamation laws and organizations, are all examples of changes in plural societies brought about by a combination of quotidian and formal, organized resistance. These changes have not obliterated racial domination, but have helped lessen the manifestation of certain overt forms of racial domination in many societies, while making, ironically, proponents of racial hierarchies practitioners of hidden transcripts as well. Weapons of the weak are also weapons of the strong.

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- ⁱ Scott, 1990, p.x.
- ⁱⁱ Ibid, p. xi.
- ⁱⁱⁱ See E.P. Thompson, 1971.
- ^{iv} See Hunt and Mitchell, 1990.
- ^v Tilly, 1991.
- ^{vi} Scott, 1990, p.xvii.
- ^{vii} Ibid., p.111
- ^{viii} Levine, 1978 and Gates, 1988.
- ^{ix} Kelley, 1994, p. 8.
- ^x Ibid, p. 8.
- ^{xi} Ibid., p. 9.
- ^{xii} Ibid., pp. 3-4.
- ^{xiii} Ibid, p. 8.
- ^{xiv} **Cuba's La Escalera Rebellion of 1844**; See DuBois' view of Sam Hose's knuckles in Atlanta in DuBois, 1989.
- ^{xv} See my discussion of Agamben in chapter ?
- ^{xvi} Kelley, 1994, p. 59.
- ^{xvii} For example, Arendt makes the following claim about the emergence of violent protest during the student movements of the 1960's: "Serious violence entered the scene only with the appearance of the Black Power movement on the campuses. Negro students, the majority of them admitted without academic qualification, regarded and organized themselves as an interest group, the representatives of the black community" (Arendt, 1969, p. 18).
- ^{xviii} Ibid, p.18.
- ^{xix} Fanon, 1968, p. 37.
- ^{xx} Arendt, 1969, p.21.
- ^{xxi} McClintock, 1995.
- ^{xxii} Douglass, 1963, p.74.
- ^{xxiii} Foucault, 2003, p.28.
- ^{xxiv} Hobbes, 1968, p.394.
- ^{xxv} See Gramsci, "History of the Subaltern Classes: Methodological Criteria" in Gramsci, 1971, p. 53.
- ^{xxvi} De Certeau, 2002.
- ^{xxvii} For a discussion of minimalist and maximalist approaches to the study of domination and resistance in peasant studies, see Hunt, 1988.
- ^{xxviii} See especially chapter 7, "Beyond the War of Words: Cautious Resistance and Calculated Conformity" in Scott, 1985.
- ^{xxix} See Iton, 2000 and Reed, 1999.
- ^{xxx} Callier, 2001.
- ^{xxxi} See Levine, 1978, Gates, 1988 and Thompson, 1984.
- ^{xxxii} See Katznelson, 1994.
- ^{xxxiii} Neruda, 1973, pp.11-12.
- ^{xxxiv} **English translation by the glorious E.**
- ^{xxxv} See Shirley Christian, "With a Thunderclap, Leftist Breaks Chile's Silence", The New York Times, June 30, 1988, p.A4, in Scott, 1990, p. 207.
- ^{xxxvi} Scott, 1990, p. 207.
- ^{xxxvii} Guzman, 1978.
- ^{xxxviii} See "Interview with C.L.R. James" in Abelove et al., 1983, p. 274.
- ^{xxxix} Ibid.