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The Meaningful Contradictions of Our Hidden Identities: A Response to Reviewers

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Abstract

In this essay, I respond to my reviewers by expanding on some of the core themes I develop in my book, *Anonymous: The Performance of Hidden Identities* (2023). I argue that anonymity and pseudonymity are in constant tension with personal identity. By putting on a mask of some sort or donning a fake name, we act as though the distinction between the cover representation and the "true" self is meaningful, and in doing so, we make the meaningful contradictions between the hidden and the visible central to our interactions with various audiences. I reflect on my argument and the method of social pattern analysis, the misleading distinction between performance and personal identity, the moral significance of my analysis of different cases, the centrality of power in the performance of hidden identities, and some issues related to typification and the analysis of anonymous acts.

Keywords: Anonymity; Pseudonymity; Performance; Self; Identity.

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As I write this essay, masked U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents are hunting people in U.S. cities, acting as nameless and faceless representatives of the state while patrolling neighborhoods and abducting residents, violently removing them from their families and communities. Tom Homan, Border Czar for the Trump administration, has argued that masks are necessary to protect ICE agents and their families from doxxing (the act of publishing identifying and sometimes private information about a person online, often to facilitate harassment) and from other threats to their safety as they do the dangerous work of law enforcement.[1] However, critics of this policy argue that having an anonymous police force undermines core tenets of democracy, namely that public officers must be accountable to the people they serve. By preventing personal identification, masking prevents such accountability, freeing ICE agents to act without restraint and against the public good without fear of consequences. In line with the principles of public accountability, U.S. police officers — from local cops to federal Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) officers — have regularly conducted the dangerous work of policing with exposed faces and without shielding their personal identities. Judges and politicians are sometimes attacked in their homes,[2] yet the idea of masked judges or masked lawmakers still seems strange, associated with a perversion of justice and law, not its preservation. So, what is going on here? How should we understand the masks of our secret police force who attack immigrants and citizens on the streets of U.S. cities? To begin to provide a sociological answer to this question, we must dig deeper on multiple levels. What does the mask, or more generally, what does anonymity do?

Anonymity protects the actor behind the mask. But it also allows them *to perform their own need for protection*. In other words, the masks of ICE agents allow them to act as a persecuted group and to cast immigrants and their supporters as dangerous perpetrators. Like political activists who wear masks to express their opinion about a policy, the masks of ICE agents create the meaning of their vulnerability as they don them to do what they should otherwise be able to do in the open. Furthermore, as we know from the character of many online interactions, anonymity allows actors to escape the social forces and pressures that normally hold people in line with normative expectations on behavior — to temporarily divorce their actions and personal reputations from social control. In this sense, masks also have a subversive capacity. They allow actors to do what they would otherwise *not* do and to undermine the normative order in the process. In the case of ICE, masks facilitate the subversion of the norms of behavior in a civil society. They allow cops to violently abduct parents who are waiting to pick their children up from public schools, fire pepper balls at religious pastors and reporters,[3] and to do all of this and more without personal accountability to the communities in which they themselves live. Moreover, masks force us to attribute the actions of federal agents to "ICE"

1. See, for example, Tavernise, S. (2025). ICE Agents Are Wearing Masks. Is That Un-American? *New York Times*, September 5. https://www.nytimes.com/2025/09/05/us/ice-agents-wearing-masks.html. ICE agents often face protests from people who disagree with the nature of their attacks on immigrants. On September 24, 2025, an ICE facility in Dallas, Texas, was the target of a sniper attack. See: https://www.dhs.gov/news/2025/09/24/dhs-issues-statement-targeted-attack-dallas-ice-facility.

2. See Jeyaretnam, M. (2025). Investigation "Ongoing" After House of South Carolina Judge Criticized by Trump Administration Burns Down. *Time*, October 7. https://time.com/7323442/south-carolina-judge-diane-goodstein-house-fire-trump-political-violence/. See also Arango, T. (2024). Man Who Attacked Paul Pelosi Is Sentenced to Life in Prison. *New York Times*, October 29. https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/29/us/man-attacked-paul-pelosi-sentenced-life-prison.html.

3. Anderson, M. (2025). Tackles, Projectiles and Gunfire: Many fear ICE Tactics are Growing More Violent. *The New Republic*, October 9. https://newrepublic.com/post/201531/pastor-shot-head-ice-sues-trump-first-amendment.

or to "the government" and not to the individuals who carry out its mission, further releasing them from ethical scrutiny. In other words, they homogenize the force so that we see "ICE" and not people, typified agents of state violence. This typification also serves to make agents more ominous and threatening. Like the hooded actors of the American Ku Klux Klan, ICE agents look like terrorists — like militarized commandos to be feared.

Of all the many cases I address in my book *Anonymous* (2023), the one that comes to mind as the closest parallel to the case of masked ICE agents is the case of anonymous medical professionals who carry out state executions.[4] In both cases, state-sanctioned anonymity allows people to act in ways that violate mass sentiments about moral behavior, and therefore to do what they would otherwise not do. In the case of executions by lethal injection, state authorities justify the anonymity of doctors and nurses who serve as execution team members by arguing that they need to be protected from the consequences of their actions — protected from the public knowledge of what they do when they act on behalf of a criminal justice system to take someone's life. They need to be protected from the scrutiny of the people they are supposed to serve. In other words, the actions of state executioners and ICE agents are unpopular and morally repugnant to many, if not most. While many people may oppose the idea of illegal immigration, most do not support separating mothers from their families, or attacking beloved community members and deporting them to horrid prisons in foreign lands. What does it take to be the person who carries out such morally heinous actions? What does it take for a doctor to kill someone who begs for life? What does it take to launch a Hellfire missile from a drone into a populated area? It takes a mask of some sort.

I am thrilled that my book, *Anonymous: The Performance of Hidden Identities*, is the subject of this author-meets-critics forum in *Sociologica*. I am especially honored by the deep readings and critical insights offered by three scholars who I admire and respect. I appreciate their engagement with the text, and with the topic of anonymity, and will humbly respond to their comments and criticisms here. Echoing the collegial spirit of their essays, I offer my response with hopes of advancing the conversation about this morally and politically salient topic, which is not just timely but also somewhat timeless.

For the purpose of clarity and focus, I have organized my response into thematic sections below. Because the three essays presented here are so rich and deeply engaging, I cannot possibly address every point they raise. However, I hope to hit the main issues and provide some further insights into what a cultural and interactionist sociology of anonymity entails, in the process.

1 Anonymity and Pseudonymity: Argument and Method

Anonymity and pseudonymity are achieved when actors shield their personal identities with what I call cover representations. While they obscure personal identity, cover representations carry their own symbolic significance. They are signifiers that stand in place of the signifiers usually connected to personal identity, and actors use these cover representations to make meaning in the world. This is the key that ties together the dozens of cases I discuss throughout the book, despite their otherwise (and sometimes many) significant differences. With this unifying point in mind, I approach the questions of anonymity and pseudonymity with the method of social pattern analysis, which requires me to foreground the connections between cases — the formal patterns they share — and to consider the differences among them as variations on a common

4. See DeGloma (2023, pp. 121–125).

theme.[5] To address a criticism raised by Seth Abrutyn, who is confused by the relationship between anonymity and pseudonymity in the book, this is the answer. The most fruitful way to grasp the relationship between these two variants is to understand that both involve acting with a cover representation. Anonymous actors use non-specific or generic covers, while pseudonymous actors use more specific covers, such as fake names or recognizable avatars. The latter type can be regarded over time and therefore allows actors to develop parallel reputations that are not associated with their personal identities. But from a cultural and interactionist perspective, anonymity and pseudonymity are variations of a common form of meaningful social engagement. The book explores both aspects, and this method of stressing the connections and shared characteristics of otherwise different cases shows us a great deal about the social significance of hidden identities that other methods would fail to see.[6]

However, as Robin Wagner-Pacifici correctly points out, my focus on performance across these multiple and otherwise different cases allows for a rich exploration of the social character of these acts but does not allow me to probe the more personal motivations or rationales of the actors themselves. Abrutyn raises this issue too, with his questions about motives and what he calls "complicated anonymity". There is indeed a range of questions that beg further exploration, and any author can only hope that their book will inspire others to take up these questions. How do actors understand their anonymous or pseudonymous actions over time? Are their motivations more complex or multifarious than they seem when we analyze the meanings that they create with their cover representations? We get some answers from the cases I address in which actors reflect on their own hidden identities (for example, through published interviews with the person writing as Elena Ferrante or the psychologist John Ercel Fryer, who acted as Dr. H. Anonymous to challenge the American Psychiatric Association's stance on homosexuality in the early 1970s) but even these reflections can be interpreted as continuations of their performances. Future work should delve more deeply into the social psychology behind the masks that actors use to craft their hidden identities.

2 Reflections on the Notion of a Core Self: Performance and Personal Identity

What does anonymity say about the *self* behind the mask? Both Wagner-Pacifici and Abrutyn raise this point in different ways. If anonymity is a performance, and some core self is able to act unseen by an actor's audience, what is the nature of that core self? Or, as Abrutyn puts it, what does this book say about the distinction, pondered in different ways by Erving Goffman, between "virtual and real identities?"

The answer is complex. First, the very act of obscuring personal identity in social interaction requires actors to perform the distinction between the real and the virtual — to bring this distinction to life in their situations and circumstances. In other words, by putting on a mask or donning a fake name, we act as though the distinction between the cover representation and the "true" self is meaningful, and in doing so, we make the tensions between the hidden and the visible central to our interactions. In the process, we bolster a social curiosity about a "core" self by shielding our personal identity from recognition, reinforcing the significance of its ex-

5. Zerubavel (2007 & 2021); DeGloma & Papadantonakis (2020).

6. Of course, the title of the book, *Anonymous*, suggests that there is something more basic about anonymity, implying that pseudonymity is of secondary concern. This is an unfortunate effect of the fact that the title *Anonymity and Pseudonymity* was simply less catchy and succinct.

istence beyond our actions and performances.[7] Second, and relatedly, because our personal identities take narrative form, obscuring personal identity with a cover representation allows us to temporarily step out of this narrative — to act without a personal past and to sidestep the future implications of our actions for this personal narrative identity.[8] This very act of *stepping out* preserves the integrity of the personal narrative we create and reveals that we do indeed care to protect it. Whatever this core personal identity may be, we curate it for audiences.

Finally, we need to keep in mind that our audiences are often fragmented. While those who act anonymously or pseudonymously typically do so for a particular audience, there are often others who are aware of the personal identity of the actor(s) behind the cover. For example, "the personal identity of the artist Banksy is unknown to many but not to all, as the artist has an inner circle of confidants and assistants who are well aware of what others desire to know".[9] Likewise, "when members of the Ku Klux Klan don hoods and robes, they may be anonymous to their victims and to the general public but remain aware of one another's personal identities and hold each other accountable to the normative expectations of the group".[10] In these cases and many more, audiences are multiple and fragmented. As we shield personal identity by acting with a cover representation for one audience, we perform the act of shielding of our identity and the orchestration of anonymity or pseudonymity for another audience that has access to different information (but remains an audience nonetheless).

In other words, performances of anonymity and pseudonymity are always multilayered, and the distinction between the "real" and the "virtual" is a moving target for the analyst. We bring both into being in their *meaningful contradiction* with one another, even though we may do so differently for different audiences. Neither stands outside of the social dynamics of performance. Any conception of a "real" or "core" self is orchestrated in social interaction and coded by our work to preserve its integrity.

With all of this in mind, there are certainly cases, as Abrutyn points out, in which actors are motivated to avoid stigma, retaliation, and reputational damage that would come if their personal identities were revealed. Think, for example, about those who shield their personal identities to criticize a powerful fascist regime, or those who do so to discuss issues related to addiction and recovery. However, there are also just as many other cases in which the revelation of personal identity would bestow an honor or elevate the actor in some way. Think here, for example, of the fame and glory that would fall upon an actor if they were credited with a celebrated artwork that was previously unattributed. The point is that there are always tensions between the performances of anonymity and pseudonymity, on the one hand, and the revelation of personal identity or threat thereof, on the other hand. However, those tensions manifest differently on a case-by-case basis. Moreover, this tension between concealment and revelation is part of the performative character of anonymity — part of the meaning that is conveyed — and certainly an important part of the reason we feel captivated by anonymous actors.

Continuing to address a criticism raised by Abrutyn, I do not think that we should see anonymity as a confidence game. While considering the connection between the con artist and

7. My point here is in line with the argument put forth by Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein (2000), who argued that the self exists because we act as though it is important to us, and we defend it from a barrage of outside forces, and in doing so we bring our selves into being.

8. On narrative identity, see Ricoeur (1998 & 1991); DeGloma & Johnston (2019).

9. DeGloma (2023, p. 18).

10. DeGloma (2023, p. 15).

the anonymous actor can be interesting, we should acknowledge that anonymous actors have various motives that do not align with our conventional understanding of the con game. For one, some anonymous actors are motivated by fears of persecution. Consider Saudi women protesting male guardianship laws online. Are they conning audiences by holding placards over their faces? What about the anonymous accusers of the *#MeToo* Movement? Alcoholics? Would we say that the bureaucrats operating behind institutional covers are con artists? Certainly, drone operators benefit from the protections of anonymity, but are they conning us? Is that their motive? The concept of the con does not fit any of these cases. Yet, all these actors and more, across countless different cases and situations, shield their personal identities in various forms of social interaction. That said, my discussion of the FBI Counter-Intelligence Program (COINTELPRO) gets at the point Abrutyn is making. When discussing the FBI's "subversion of subversive activity", I make a distinction between "sincere representational" and "deceptive misdirectional" forms of subversive anonymous action.[11] FBI COINTELPRO agents, as exemplary of the deceptive misdirectional type of subversive anonymity, are indeed like con artists. However, many other anonymous and pseudonymous actors are not. We should not use Goffman's concepts as the standard when they do not fit many of the cases. Rather than forcing fit, the theory must emerge from the analysis of lots of real-world situations, events, and circumstances.

3 Analytic Standpoint and the Moral Significance of Anonymous Acts

Robin Wagner-Pacifici raises an interesting and important issue. In my approach to the analysis of anonymous acts of all kinds, at different times and in a range of different circumstances, I attempt to bracket any moral assessment of the cases I address. Yet, as she correctly points out, the book inevitably bumps up "against the ethics and morality of choosing to be anonymous". I agree. The moral and ethical issues associated with these cases are striking and powerful, and my position regarding them seeps through in various ways. At times, I was surprised by how my position on anonymity aligned with political forces. For example, in a way that links to Wagner-Pacifici's discussion of Hannah Arendt's reflections on the value of appearance in public spaces,[12] which is ultimately an argument that recognizes personal accountability to be a necessary condition of freedom and a real democratic politics, I found myself agreeing with both the liberal and conservative sides of the American anonymous speech debates. Yes, the liberals are right that anonymous speech is needed for a minority to express itself in tyrannous or oppressive conditions. We have countless examples (see, for example, my discussion of Dr. H. Anonymous in the book's opening pages). However, such conditions are, by definition, far from egalitarian or democratic. Anonymous speech is not the measure of an ideal society, nor should it be an ethic that we uphold and celebrate as anything other than a temporary necessity stemming from a repressive state of affairs. In other words, masks are bad for good faith relationships, and they are bad for democracy.

In his minority opinion for the U.S. Supreme Court case *McIntyre v. Ohio Elections Commission* (1995), conservative Justice Antonin Scalia argued that anonymity protects people who seek to perpetrate harms by "eliminating accountability, which is ordinarily the very purpose of anonymity".[13] In a free society, he was saying, speech needs to be open and aboveboard rather

11. DeGloma (2023, pp. 99–102).

12. See also Adut (2018).

13. 514 U.S. 334 (1995) 385. See also DeGloma (2023, p. 39; Constantine, 1996, pp. 469–470).

than obscured and marked by attributional elusiveness. I have never in my life agreed with the late Justice Scalia, yet after studying anonymity and anonymous speech for years, I am swayed by his arguments. Like the French and American revolutionaries of the late 18th century, we may need anonymity and pseudonymity when fighting against tyranny, but when we win, they become obstacles to freedom and progress. Along the same line of thinking, protestors today may overuse masks. If we have, or are fighting to protect, the right to free speech, we should boldly claim it, not retreat from it like we have something to hide, lest we risk losing it via our very own performative politics. We should act openly, so that we can advance social and political forms of democracy and embody the very freedoms we claim, rather than the constraints we seek to overcome.[14] There is a paradox here, as Wagner-Pacifici so keenly sees. Even though we can see many circumstances in which we might appreciate the need for the protections afforded by anonymity or sympathize with the subversive stance of anonymous agents working to overcome repressive conditions, anonymity seems to run counter to all that is good about an honest notion of freedom and democracy. But who makes the judgment about when masks are necessary and when they obstruct the social and political conditions necessary to advance freedom?

4 Anonymity and Power

These ponderings about the ethics of anonymous speech ultimately concern the relationship between anonymity and power, and they raise serious questions about our case involving the masked U.S. ICE agents. On this note, I must admit I am a bit puzzled by Abrutyn's assertion that the "vast majority" of my examples "highlight power dynamics from the bottom up". He then raises the example of ICE agents as state actors, along with bureaucrats working for governments or corporations and the anonymized inhabitants of total institutions like militaries and prisons, as countertypes of cases that I might have explored to provide another angle on anonymous activity. Yet, I present such an analysis of power, along with several exemplary cases, in Chapter 4 on "the anonymity of social systems", where I illuminate how large and powerful institutions and social systems, including states and corporations, serve as cover representations. I examine the case of Wall Street and the "big banks" as anonymizing institutions during the 2008/2009 economic crisis that was sparked by profiteering in the U.S. housing market, as well as dark corporate money in politics after the 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* U.S. Supreme Court case, distance killing technologies used in warfare, state executions, and the top-down phenomenon of digital surveillance systems driven by powerful alliances between states and technology corporations. I also elaborate on some of the themes Abrutyn raises in my Chapter 5 on the "anonymity of types and categories", where I have an extensive discussion of typification, anonymity, and social power in dynamics of war and colonialism, class relations, interactions around assigning sex and gender designations, race and police violence, and more.

The main argument here also applies to the case of ICE. Actors use large and powerful systems as cover representations not only to accomplish their objectives but also to define the situation at hand for broad audiences. They define and enact the power of the system while ducking personal responsibility for their actions, leaving us with the often frustrating, and at

14. By the same logic, addicts and alcoholics might more openly claim a pride in their recovery rather than embodying the shame socially imposed on addiction by hiding their identities in underground recovery spaces. See DeGloma (2023, pp. 56–58).

times bewildering and infuriating, sense that no one in particular is accountable, and we have nowhere to turn. One thing I will add, though, is that I wish I had read Isaac Reed's (2020) *Power in Modernity* before I sent *Anonymous* off to press. Reed's important formulation of the rector-actor-other dynamic provides a conceptual vocabulary with which we can further grasp the anonymity of social systems at multiple levels of power — ranging from those who shape the objectives and steer the directions of powerful social systems like states, religions, and corporations, to those who carry out their operations on the ground, bringing them to life in various social interactions and circumstances.

5 Analytic Distance and the Performance of Purity

Wagner-Pacifici raises another issue about the moral connotations of anonymous action by highlighting the example of anonymous charitable contributions, arguing that "one's decision to remain anonymous *signals* either preoccupation with being blamed for an action that will be judged negatively or demurral on the inevitable praise for an action that will be judged positively. In this way, the actor attempts to *avoid* moral judgments. And we might conclude that this avoidance strategy is mirrored in the book's own attempt to do so in its focus on anonymity's performance" (emphasis added). This is a very insightful point. In the case of anonymous charity, the act of revealing the personal identity of an anonymous donor, or even disclosing that a named donor originally requested to remain anonymous, adds an additional layer of positive evaluation. That donor is both generous and humble![15] In this sense, the exposure of personal identity, or the anticipation of exposure, does not necessarily make actors "less free", as in the arguments raised by Lorenzo Sabetta, but can actually be a part of the performance and its layers of meaning. And this, I think, highlights the brilliance of Wagner-Pacifici's insight into the position I take with regard to moral evaluation in the book. As with the case of anonymous charity, my intention to avoid the moral evaluation of my cases and focus on analysis actually frames the moral arguments that come through to the reader of the book. They are more strongly made — or made in a particular way — because I try to avoid them, so that they carry the weight of purity we bestow upon positions that emerge via distanced analysis. In other words, one's intention to avoid the soapbox can bestow a moral richness as the argument emerges from a neutral interaction with the data. Performative? Not in a contrived or strategic sense, but I must admit that my position with regard to my evaluation of the cases ascribes a certain meaning to the evaluations themselves. Like the anonymous donor who uses their anonymity to frame the character of the gift, I have indeed ended up creating moral meaning with my theoretical and methodological claim to avoid imposing moral judgment.

6 Anonymity and Typification

Anonymity exists in perpetual tension with personal identity. The generic categories that others may use to define us – those categories that we in turn use when interacting with or observing other people – coexist with the particularities that we know in the intimacies of love, friendship, and family. Moreover, we should be aware that the categories we use when we perceive people *as types* rather than unique beings are structured in a world marked by distinct

15. DeGloma (2023, pp. 44–46).

dynamics of power. Thus, when we typify people,[16] our understanding of others is shaped according to the implications of that power.

Lorenzo Sabetta gets at the tensions between anonymity and personal identifiability in another way. Pondering questions of almighty or omniscient power, he strikes a contrast between the themes of "impossible anonymity" and "impossible identification". He treats these themes as ideal types which are "useful to discuss more mundane and less thorough actual instances" of anonymity, including cases "either religious or unreligious". I must say that my first inclination here is to caution the reader against thinking in terms of the purity or impossibility of anonymity precisely because such a framework treats anonymity as something of a static state in the world that one either has or doesn't have in a given situation. Rather, as I argue in the book, anonymity and pseudonymity are accomplishments that exist only in relation to audiences, and these audiences include some people and not others. In other words, anonymity is "social and contingent", and "always contextually, situationally, relationally, and temporally bound, and those boundaries manifest differently on a case-by-case basis, depending on the circumstances at hand".[17] To treat anonymity as either purely achievable, a characteristic Sabetta attributes to God (who can never be known), or totally impossible (Sabetta says we can never be anonymous in front of God, who knows all), is to miss the point. But Sabetta knows this and wants to push these questions further to think about what the inability to identify an agent means for the attribution of motive and responsibility for certain actions, on the one hand, and what the knowledge of our eventual exposure means for the character of our anonymous actions, on the other hand. Regarding the former, we can think again about the anonymity of social systems. For example, we may never know a specific *who* that we can hold accountable for an economic crisis (instead, we blame amorphous institutions like "the big banks" or groups like "the billionaires"). Regarding the latter, it is helpful again to consider the multiplicity of audiences and how anonymity can be maintained in front of some while others are simultaneously aware of the performer's personal identity. One may be visible to "God" (or some people) but hidden behind a cover representation to others. In both cases, anonymity manifests as performance, and such performances, as Sabetta points out, certainly shape (and even come alive in) the reactions of audience members.

Finally, in classic sociological form, Abrutyn gives us a four-quadrant diagram intended to "add some explanatory power" to my concepts of *someone*, *anyone*, *everyone*, and *no one* that I discuss in Chapter 1 of the book. I appreciate that Abrutyn attempts to carry these concepts forward and carve out further questions. However, I also want to note that there are many counterexamples to the ways he sees the alignment of these concepts with his dimensions of "collective representationality" and the "identificational" or identificationality. For example, the members of the feminist performance group The Guerrilla Girls are identificational as Abrutyn uses this term, but also could be *anyone* and thus are not identificational in Abrutyn's schema. Corporations are classic cover representations to which we attribute actions in such a way that we can say "no one" is personally responsible (as I discuss thoroughly in my Chapter 4 on the anonymity of social systems). However, they also carry a "collective representationality". These are cases that violate Abrutyn's schema. This is why I did *not* intend these concepts (someone, anyone, everyone, and no one) to be either/or variables that align to cases that would fit into boxes, but rather as interpretive paradigms that show how audiences can

16. Typification, in general, is a basic function of human thought. See Schutz (1962 & 1970); Berger & Luckmann (1966); Zerubavel (1991).

17. DeGloma (2023, p. 6).

attribute agency to impersonal entities under various circumstances and conditions. Multiple paradigms might be relevant to any one particular case, depending on the scene and level of analysis. For example, a hooded Klan member might be *anyone* (any member of the community of white southerners), but hooded Ku Klux Klan members acting collectively while wearing uniforms represent themselves as a racist *everyone*, that is, collective whiteness in reaction to Black empowerment in the decades following emancipation. For these reasons, I am often averse to boxes, even though I've used them myself when heuristically appropriate.[18]

In this brief essay, I hope to have provided my thoughtful critics with the responses they deserve, although I undoubtedly failed to address some of their points and may have left many questions open. However, that is a good reason to continue the conversation, which will hopefully develop in new and exciting directions. Let me reiterate that I am grateful for their careful readings of *Anonymous* and honored by their contributions here. Any author would be lucky to have such a sophisticated group of excellent scholars pay attention to their work.

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