

## Acknowledgments

It is always tempting (if not fun) to play the “but for” game: this book would not have existed but for X, or Y, or Z. In this book’s case, that game is fairly short and easy. When I approached Ken Wissoker with this project, its arguments were significantly abbreviated, focused on merely two of its chapters with a few ancillary reflections. As a supportive editor, Ken informed me that he’d be happy to publish it in its then-current form, if that’s what I wanted. However, Ken also prodded me, urging me that he thought I was onto “something much bigger,” that I was still figuring things out. Thankfully, I took that advice, allowing this book to grow in directions I never could have imagined. Since those early conversations, Ken has pushed, inspired, focused, and nurtured this project in countless ways that leave me humbled and thankful.

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projects with Justin Desautels-Stein and Grant Farred honed and clarified a number of core positions.

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I had the chance to explore early articulations of some components of its ideas in the following publications: “The Architecture of Critique,” symposium issue of *Yale Journal of Law and Humanities* 31, no. 2 (2021), edited by Justin Desautels-Stein and Samuel Moyn; “Uncensorable Speech and the Snares of Illiberalism,” forthcoming in *Law and Illiberalism*, edited by Austin Sarat, Lawrence Douglas, and Martha Umphrey (University of Massachusetts Press); “Beyond Ambiguity and Ambivalence: Rethinking the Tools of Critique,” special issue, “The Fatigue of Critique?” *On Education* 9 (December 2020); “Human Rights,” *The Oxford Handbook of Law and the Humanities*, edited by Maks Del Mar, Bernadette Meyler, and Simon Stern (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); “Postcritical Reading, the Lyric, and Ali Smith’s *How To Be Both*,” *Diacritics* 45, no. 4 (2017); “Postcritique and Social Justice,” *American Book Review* 38, no. 5 (July/August 2017); “Why We Love Coetzee; or *The Childhood of Jesus* and the Funhouse of Critique,” in *Critique and Post-critique*, edited by Elizabeth Anker and Rita Felski (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017); and “‘The Scent of Ink’: Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and the Semiotics of Rights,” *Critical Quarterly* 56, no. 4 (December 2014).

Two other “but for”s necessarily conclude these acknowledgments. First, my infinite gratitude to Mitchel Lasser for his patience and support over the many years I’ve been consumed by this project. Mitchel, Sacha, and Zoe Lasser have been all too forgiving of so many hours at my computer. But this book is also the byproduct of endless joyful hours of repartee with Mitchel sitting *en terrasse* in Paris, Lisbon, L.A., Berlin, Palo Alto, and so many other favorite haunts. I hope that this is the first of many projects that will be blessed by such enthusiasm, commitment, and generosity. This book’s arguments never would have come together without Mitchel’s constant encouragement as well as dialogue.

Finally, this book is dedicated to my parents, Roy and Ellen Anker. Insofar as it recounts something of an intellectual biography, that story begins with my parents. From a very young age, my parents imparted to me the relish for intellectual discovery, play, and ideas to which this book is, more than anything, a testament. From the beginning, moreover, that pursuit was always closely tied to matters of social justice, value, and the dilemma of figuring out what truths are worth believing in. Of course, those links were never uncomplicated, but they represented an unfailing point of departure and return for any intellectual conversation. It is above all under my parents’ influence that I have therefore worked on this book. They continue to model not only intellectual curiosity and dedication but the right reasons one might endeavor to embark on a life of ideas. Thank you to my parents.