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The Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real in Narratives of the Working-Class Representatives on Their Trade Union Activity. Interpreting Interviews with Jacques Lacan and Pierre Bourdieu

Abstract

The paper aims to explore the narrations about trade unions found in the research material, which consists of three in-depth interviews with working-class women representatives. Interviewees' statements are interpreted from a research perspective that distinguishes three dimensions in which the subject functions, introduced to psychoanalysis by Jacques Lacan: the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real. Psychoanalysis as a theory of speaking allows these dimensions to be recognized in the interviews. Pierre Bourdieu's theory serves to trace the course of life trajectories and characterize the transformations to discern the presence of class conditions and ethos in specific moments in the biographies. In the light of Lacan's reasoning, the narrative of one's own life can occur as the basis of recognitions relevant to Bourdieu's theory, leading beyond the opposition of the objective and the subjective. The subject matter of the paper thus can be described as the self-narration of the working-class representatives, framed by the Lacanian concept of discourse.

Keywords: Bourdieu, Lacan, psychoanalysis, social class, trade unions, RSI

Introduction

The paper aims to explore how working-class women talk about their experience of trade union activity. Their statements are interpreted from a research perspective that distinguishes three orders that organise the subjects' experience and that can be found in the narratives of the interviewees – orders introduced to psychoanalysis by Jacques Lacan: the Symbolic, the Imaginary and the Real (Świrek 2021). Psychoanalysis as a theory of speaking (Lacan [1966] 1996: 23) makes it possible to identify these orders in the course

of interpreting the interviewees' statements. In characterising transformations and tracing the course of life trajectories, Bourdieu's theory serves to discern the influence of class conditions and ethos on specific moments in the biographies. The paper thus integrates a Lacanian vision of the subject with a Bordieuan perspective of social class, which is further justified in the theoretical section of the paper. The theoretical background is crucial in this project merging two thinkers from distant academic fields which is why the theoretical section is the most developed one.

The focus on representatives of the working class inscribes the article in the approach advocated by Stephane Beaud and Michel Pialoux ([1999] 2022), former coworkers of Bourdieu. They argue that the working class is becoming more topical than ever with the disappearance of workers from discourse and visual space (Beaud and Pialoux [1999] 2022: 11). Sociological research, on the other hand, is all the more necessary when the interest of the social sciences seems to naturally shift to issues of new classes, creative classes, mobility, consumption or "middle-class societies" (Jacyno 2022: 11). It is not only the study of and talk about the working class itself that has political stakes, but also the way of talking: treating workers with benevolent indulgence or seeking their agency and subjectivity. Being marginalised or "relegated to social oblivion" (Jacyno 1997b) is not the only threat to the working class from the legitimate discourse: even if "unskilled" workers are discussed, their demands for raises can be seen as a manifestation of the "culture of dependency" (Rakowski 2009: 13) of "welfare clients" (Louis [2018] 2021: 52).

The choice to study female workers involved in a trade union which has had some success in the workplace is dictated precisely by the search for the subjectivity and politicisation of subordinated classes. The problem is all the more complex because trade unions, although closely linked in their history to the grassroots workers' emancipation movement, are today sometimes dominated by full-time activists from headquarters (Gardawski, Mrozowicki, Czarzasty 2012: 8). This article pays particular attention to moments in interviews that refer to interclass encounters. The problem of the agency of the working class and the grassroots nature of workers' actions within contemporary trade unions are examined in detail. Psychoanalysis becomes a useful theoretical background alongside Bourdieu's class conception because of its emancipatory potential lying in the recognition of one's own subjective position. The subject of psychoanalysis gains autonomy by coming to terms with determination, giving up the illusion of omnipotence and accepting limitations (Świrek 2018: 149; Leder 2018: 107). From this perspective, workers' self-organisation can be seen as an achievement all the more subjective because the pressures of reality in the case of the subordinated classes are most acute.

Methodology and Theoretical Background

The research material consists of three in-depth interviews focused on biography. The material is used in a non-systematic way, as this work does not aim at a thorough analysis consistent with the biographical method. Rather, it is about extracting threads from the interviews that are worth interpreting in the context of the research problem posed: How do working-class representatives become trade unionists from the perspective of the Lacanian concept of three orders? How does Bourdieu's theory complement this perspective? The author of the article collected the interviews as part of a larger project focused on trade union activity in public nursing homes in a big Polish city (population of over 600000). The three female respondents whose stories are used in this article work at one nursing home as medical caregivers.

This occupation is related to care work (Malak Akgün 2018: 144) that does not require higher education and involves mainly physical activities and some psychological support. This type of occupation, in the spirit of Bourdieu, can be classified as characteristic of the popular class (Gdula and Sadura 2012: 8); without entering long digressions, it can be simplistically said that the “popular class” is a way of naming the working class. However, only two of the respondents have popular class origins and have been working their whole adult lives as caregivers. The third respondent whose narrative is used in this article had only been in the profession of medical caregiver for a few years, having previously held middle-level corporate positions. The class origin in her case differs significantly from that of most nursing home workers; she can be classified as a representative of the middle class according to Bourdieu’s thought. Her case is used to a lesser extent, only as a reference point for an in-depth analysis of the narrative of the other two working class respondents.

Subordinated classes in Bourdieu’s sociological theory are subject to symbolic violence. The particular nature of symbolic violence lies in the coercion exercised through consent, which the dominated cannot fail to give to the dominant (Bourdieu [1997] 2006: 242). Double denial here points to the absence of an alternative language that the dominated could use to define his or her relationship with the dominant in a way that is different from the latter’s way of describing and using language. The relation of domination appears natural because the only tools available to the dominated person to name reality are not his or her own, which he or she would select on his or her own terms. These tools are the product of the embodiment (Bourdieu [1997] 2006: 242) of the hierarchical structure to which the dominated person is subject. Symbolic violence thus takes place beyond the alternatives of coercion and consent, and beyond conscious decisions or self-control – it takes place in the darkness of the dispositions of the *habitus*¹ (Bourdieu [1997] 2006: 242). In this sense, the subordination of the dominated is both spontaneous and enforced (Bourdieu [1997] 2006: 243), and the subordinated must contribute in some way to the construction of symbolic power. In a social world characterised in this way, the possibility of acting to change and improve conditions of life seems slim. Hence the oft-repeated accusation of determinism directed against Bourdieu. Even cases of upward social mobility (and degradation), which are not so rare, only seemingly break the vicious circle of reproduction. Upward mobility includes the “uprooted” who cannot simply enjoy success – promotion is a “fall, only that it is upwards” (Jacyno 1997a: 117, trans. A.P.).

What about the experience of collectively winning an improvement in the living conditions outside of individual upward mobility – the kind of experience that happens to female respondents in the course of winning an industrial dispute? Bourdieu does not devote as much theoretical attention to this kind of question as he does to precise descriptions of the mechanism of reproduction. Fragments relating to this issue appear in his later work from the 1990s. The theme of symbolic work, which is a kind of political labour necessary to indict the implicit arbitrariness of the class system and to break

1 Bourdieu creates the notion of *habitus* because he sees a common source of classificatory judgements and the practices subject to these judgements. *Habitus* thus constitutes at the same time a generating principle of practices and a system for classifying these practices (Bourdieu [1979] 2010: 193), which means that the social judgement of practices is on the one hand dictated by its place in the social order, and on the other hand is itself a social practice and reproduces this order. This is because the *habitus* is a complex of dispositions, unconscious perceptions, tendencies, thought patterns, which are a form of internalisation of the current rules of the social order. The social order internalised in individuals, already treated as personal views and preferences, determines the formation and ways of defining tastes, which become the basis for making judgements that re-validate the order itself.

out of the tacit obviousness (Bourdieu [1997] 2006: 267), implies a reliance on expressive and critical capacities which, as forms of capital, are not equally available to all. Hence the conclusion of the necessity of the participation of those who would become spokespersons (Bourdieu [1997] 2006: 267) for the dominated thanks to partial solidarity, the basis of which, at certain historical moments, may be the analogy between the dominated position of some in the entire social space and the dominated position of others in a given field of cultural production. In such moments, there is a transfer of cultural capital which, if there is no capture, allows the dominated to participate in a collective mobilization against the symbolic order. Permanent changes to the symbolic order would require a symbolic revolution, which Bourdieu mentions in an even shorter passage, indicating only the need for such an event and not the conditions of its possibility. A symbolic revolution would have to challenge the very foundations of the production and reproduction of symbolic capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant [1992] 2001: 170).

As for the French sociologist's reference to psychoanalytic theory, Bourdieu himself referred to his concept as social psychoanalysis (Bourdieu [1979] 2010), describing the social world with categories such as the social unconscious (Jacyno 2017: 7) or repressed desire in a given field (Jacyno 2002: 91). In analysing the interviews, there is no question of subjecting them to any psychoanalysis in the clinical sense since the respondent will not be confronted with an interpretation of their statements. Rather, the idea is to use a psychoanalytic perspective on how the subject functions in a world – a world, according to Lacan, that is a thoroughly socialised world in which everything that happens to a subject has its origin in others. That happens through the symbolic relation, which “is decisive for the emergence of the subject” (Świrek 2022b: 44, trans. A.P.), meaning that the subject can only exist in the space of language. Language is not understood here as a tool for effective communication because communication cannot be reduced to an equivalent exchange (Świrek 2022b: 42). Language does not simply convey a message; it rather reveals the truth unconsciously in a way not planned by the speaker. Any description of reality is mediated through linguistic representation understood in this way (Świrek 2021: 9).

The distinction between Symbolic, Imaginary and Real orders helps structure these complex mechanisms of representation in psychoanalysis. It allows one to penetrate aspects of social reality that are not observable within the framework of classical sociological methods (Świrek 2021: 5). In Lacan's case, the telling of one's biography can be placed in the Imaginary order, related to the construction of identities and scenarios in which the subject plays a certain role in the world. This order consists of ideas about oneself and others that give the speaker a sense of coherence and agency (Świrek 2021: 22). These ideas have the character of an image with which the subject identifies (Świrek 2018: 185–186). Such images can be described extensively by respondents using the language of affects and association. Descriptions of one's imaginings of the world, people or oneself occur repeatedly in the course of an interview, and the interviewer should – according to the methodology of qualitative research (Kvale [2007] 2010: 117) – provoke and encourage such imaginative confessions from the respondent, stimulating in him or her an “image orientation” (Lacan [2005] 2013: 22) useful from a sociologist's perspective as research material providing insight into the world of feelings and experiences analysed in a qualitative interview (Kvale [2007] 2010: 43). The imaginary order is also the most deceptive register, associated with misrecognition, from which the process of clinical psychoanalysis is supposed to distance the analysand (Fink [1997] 2002: 61), which does not mean, however, that it can be described as illusory or insignificant to the Real (Evans 2003: 82). Although it is subject to illusions of wholeness, similarity or autonomy, and is constituted by alienation, imaginary identifications are inevitable and have far-reaching effects on the real (Evans 2003: 82).

For Lacanian psychoanalysis, biography understood in this way – not dissimilar to Bourdieu's view on it as an illusion artificially producing narrative meanings (Bourdieu 1986) – is only a starting point. A specific kind of listening to biography also opens it up to Symbolic and Real registers. Although telling the story of one's own life is dominated by images of oneself and others and dictated by the image of oneself as an object of research, the sociological interview is fundamentally about the message. The Imaginary itself is structured by the Symbolic, as the space in which the images are located is symbolically constructed (Evans 2003: 83).

The Symbolic order can be recognised by reference to the universal norms and rules that structure the whole of social life, and to which one is subjected. These norms accompany every situation, usually not consciously. That is because they can be compared to an impenetrable sea in which we are immersed, but which it is impossible to grasp with our eyes or to stand next to (Žižek [2006] 2010: 21). The Symbolic encompasses how people treat the ideals instilled by significant others (Fink [1997] 2002: 60). This is, however, not about idealizations about others, but about the ways acquired through them of relating to Symbolic rules. The structures and norms that constitute the Symbolic order cannot exist outside of language (Evans 2003: 201), which in its symbolic function serves “not so much to convey messages as to be recognised by another” (Świrek 2021: 11, trans. A.P.). Recognition leads to the inclusion of individuals in or exclusion from a group, hence the relevance of the Symbolic to social bonds. The irrelevance of positive messages is due to the fact that the signifying structures that make up language have no positive content, but only relate to each other in a negative way, on the basis of differences (Evans 2003: 201). In other words, the space of the Symbolic boils down to the establishment of relations at a fundamental level, where one signifier refers to another and content plays no role (Świrek 2021: 11). At the level of the Symbolic, speech is particularly devoid of meaning (Lacan [2005] 2013: 28). Between people, the symbol has the function of simple recognition made possible by the utterance of words whose content is arbitrary, but which, when pronounced, make both partners different from what they were before (Lacan [2005] 2013: 29).

The real, on the other hand, is the order that reveals itself in those moments of biography that cannot be reconciled, recounted or developed. This is due to this order's resistance to representation and to its mode of existence: incompatible with the subject's identifications within the other two registers (Świrek 2021: 31). The real does not have enumerable constituent qualities, it does not divide, and it does not even include negative relations (Evans 2003: 159). It can be described not by enumerable qualities, but as a collision with something (Lacan [2005] 2013: 48), which leaves behind a bizarre sense of lack or contingency (Świrek 2021: 31). The experience of lack that confounds the subject's sense of inability to develop a narrative is rooted in the nature of the real object (*petit a*). This object is neither experienced by the subject nor is it something that the subject desires (Świrek 2021: 31). Instead, it is the cause of desire, a desire that is always and necessarily unsatisfied, because it is related to what was lost originally, before entering the symbolic and language. Although the real does not submit to representation, it is possible to signify it. An example is the “raw” statistics of the different life expectancy of people with different class positions (Świrek 2021: 32). The events that lead to the shorter life expectancy of representatives of the working class – for example, accidents in socially disrespected work (Louis [2018] 2021), or more generally a lifestyle enforced by hard, physical labour – can be rationalised as incidental and thus somehow forgotten through naturalisation. Such “phenomena related to the disruptive impact of violence” (Świrek 2021: 34, trans. A.P.) are situated in the Real, the full recall of which threatens to devastate the subject once more.

In the light of Lacan's reasoning, biography can occur as the basis of recognitions relevant to Bourdieu's theory, leading beyond the opposition of the objective and the subjective. The Lacanian study of biography makes it possible to reconstruct structures external to the subject, but at the same time reveals the hardest root of their reality, in relation to which the subject is unfree as a result of its own active involvement. Such a subject is also drawn by Bourdieu, who describes the habitus as a structure shaped by the pressures of reality, but responsible at the same time for reproduction, and linked to the deepest desires, emotional investments and inner experiences and actions of the subject, who is active in various ways when making choices or making creative use of situations.

The two key authors in this article are also linked by how they capture social structure – in Bourdieu's case given more explicitly, while in Lacan's case, it is present when concluding social theory from his teaching. In Lacan, the symbolic structure is incomplete, language fails, and the real emerges from behind these linguistic holes in the Symbolic (Świrek 2022b: 44). Structure, therefore, is not an assemblage of positive content, but is relational and thus is defined by lack and non-identity, "cannot be observed except through its effects" (Świrek 2022b: 45, trans. A.P.). Translated into social science issues, this could mean, for example, that class structure is also relational – there is no other form of it than conflict, clashes, and struggle between classes. Bourdieu similarly describes his theory, as already mentioned, when he observes that each condition of life is defined "by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions (...) i.e. by everything which distinguishes it from what it is not" (Bourdieu [1979] 2010: 166-167). It is for this reason that the description of the classified habitus often takes the form of an enumeration of negative indications, while there is no explanation of what the practice actually consists of (Jacyno 1997a: 21).

Analysis and Interpretation

The research material analysed and interpreted in this article consists mainly of interviews with two caregivers anonymized under the names Julia and Eve. Their stories are united by a downplaying of their own role in the union action: Eve expressed doubt before the interview whether she was a suitable respondent for the study due to her low involvement in her perception. Julia, on the other hand, both during and after the interview, indicates that she would like to be able to help more in obtaining information about the dispute. Both refer in this context, as a role model and authority, to another caregiver working in the same workplace, who was most active during the collective dispute. In the article, she appears under the anonymized name Anne and her narrative is used as a reference to the perspective of a worker with a middle-class background as opposed to the working-class background of Julia and Eve. An important difference in the class backgrounds between Julia and Eve is the feeling of security achieved by Julia that allows her to eagerly think of further training, while Eve's narrative is shaped by the harsh reality of her barely making ends meet, which influences how the respondent explains her character and situation.

As mentioned in the theoretical section, in the sociological analysis of interviews, the Imaginary order is interesting insofar as it shows what a given respondent is most affectively engaged with and how the relevant imaginaries differ between respondents. The imaginary involvement captures the class difference as Julia and Eve appear to be keen to talk about their view on the community of caregivers at their workplace, but less about themselves, especially about political opinions. Anne on the other

hand is keen to paint a picture of herself, talking extensively about the search for her personality and a job that would suit her character and needs. When talking about other caregivers, she seems to view them as a group of individuals with different features. Opposed to that, when Eve or Julia is supposed to talk about herself, she keeps coming back to a perspective of 'us', describing the image she has of the caregivers as a supportive, reliable and fun community. Both Eve and Julia admire those most committed to the labour union from and outside of their workplace, especially their colleague Anne. However, when comparing her calm nature to the behaviour of longer-serving trade unionists, only Julia speaks about a lesson on strategies for dealing with a political opponent. The image in her head of the involvement of unionists – with higher cultural capital and a higher sense of legitimacy – changes her own image in her relationship with the political opponent from a submissive attitude towards one of brave stubbornness. It seems that the privileged position of her new allies, enables, in Julia's eyes, a stronger legitimization of union demands. In Eve's narrative, on the other hand, initially positive statements about Anne lead her to confess the weakness of her own commitment. Later, she is also invaded by a reflection based on a comparison between her own material situation and that of her colleague, which seems more stable. The two perceptions – one full of admiration and the other linked to rivalry – are not easily reconciled, and this inconsistency at the level of representation seems to reveal the reality of class antagonism. As the respondent places herself in the social structure, the Symbolic order comes to the fore.

The Symbolic order is revealed in those statements in which discourse takes on the characteristics of a universal one, so when a specific dispute turns into questions of justice, norms and key principles. Questions of justice in Julia's and Eve's narratives arise among workers when their hard work is not properly appreciated. Hard, honest work and due respect for it seem to be one of the key symbolic principles for Julia and Eve. Indeed, the theme of work as a value also emerges when asked about their parents' attitudes to work, both warmly mention their parents' work ethos. Accuracy and diligence at work represent a value for the popular class respondents, the upholding of which is a matter of respect for their parents. Julia and Eve put this value into practice every day at work, so undermining it by refusing to give them raises provokes passionate opposition in them. Suddenly, legislators and management are aiming at symbolic principles, and through the hole in the Symbolic, one can see the Real of the class structure, part of which is the lack of recognition of the values of the subordinated classes. The caregivers do not want to accept such a vision, so they have to fight for their principles, presenting them to society as universal. The main weapon in the fight becomes the media and the obstinacy of caregivers. While Eve remains uninvolved in the wider topic of trade unions, for Julia, the process of fighting seems to be, at the same time, a process of learning to express one's interest in a new language, a language pretending to be universal enough to get the public on the side of the trade unionists. Anne, in contrast, assumes a pose of externality to the fight, speaking from a distanced position of support. The struggle has no real stakes for her.

Reaching the Real in an utterance is not possible without some mediation of this order. However, "secondary markings of the real dimension" (Świrek 2021: 32, trans. A.P.) are possible. In the interviews with Julia and Eve, it was allowed through posing a question about what is particularly difficult in their work. One can venture the thesis that in the narratives of the subordinate classes, it is somewhat easier to trace the Real: workers' lives are characterised by a compulsion to constantly face barriers. The utterance about difficulties at work is, in Julia's case, one of the very few moments in the interview when she does not stick to the question asked: firstly, avoiding the answer, then quickly cutting it off and moving on to

another topic. The short statement indicates that her workplace was affected by cuts in public facilities in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and at that time she saw the spectre of unemployment.

In the case of Eve, the hard part of work refers to how it violates her bodily and psychological boundaries. The lack of respect for her work – present overtly in the behaviour of the patients and covertly in the decisions of the authorities – has consequences that will forever remain etched in Catherine’s body. The respondent admits to a tendency to burden herself with tasks that are too heavy and to perform them alone. Her experience thus is positioned beyond the alternative of coercion and consent, beyond self-control, where the darkness of symbolic violence obscures the class origin of suffering. Systems of patterns of perception, judgement and action are inscribed in her body by past experiences: a particular upbringing, preparing her for hard work, having to constantly grapple with the prospect of poverty, accompanied by the contempt and mockery of the ruling class transmitted by the media. The reproduction of this violence takes place through the undertaking of excessive effort, leading to spinal disease.

In comparison, in Anne’s case, the Real does not seem to reveal itself when asked about what is difficult in her work: the respondent does speak of difficulties related to the serious condition of patients or insufficient psychological support for employees but there is no trace of understatement or incoherence here, and the difficulties are rather limited to the Imaginary order, becoming a description and confirmation of the characteristics attributed to herself. The moment of marking the Real in the interview takes place rather when she is asked about her parents: Anne says with a nervous laugh that her father didn’t “even” graduate from school, and a moment later she cuts the thread firmly. The expression of shame about her father’s social status is the only moment in the interview that seems to bear a trace of the Real.

Conclusions

To conclude, the research questions have to be answered: How do working-class representatives become trade unionists from the perspective of the Lacanian concept of three registers? How does Bourdieu’s theory complement this perspective?

It can be said that Julia has undergone something of a transformation to become a committed trade union member. As she claims, the experience of the industrial dispute has left a lasting mark on her. From a Lacanian perspective, the transformation in language use, declared and demonstrated by the respondent, is particularly significant. This transformation, described in the previous section of this article, can also be captured using Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic work (Bourdieu [1997] 2006). In Julia’s case, the indictment of the implicit arbitrariness of the system and the adoption of a stance of resistance to symbolic violence took place with the significant participation of unionists, who indeed shared their capacity for expression and criticism not only through their own statements but also by encouraging the caregivers to speak up. It remains an open question whether the participation of the spokespersons was necessary, for the initial impetus came from the caregivers themselves, and the trade union headquarters only supported this reflex. However, it seems that the change to a permanent approach to resistance to employers? was made possible by the support of the union. The symbolic revolution ([1992] 2001), which requires a questioning of the very foundations of the power of judgement, lies, as it seems to do in

the example of Julia, in contradiction with symbolic work. Symbolic work presupposes that a person from a dominated class learns a more legitimate language thanks to the support of spokespeople, which rather distances the person from questioning the illegitimacy of the language he or she used before.

At this point, it is worth tackling Eve's perspective. For this respondent, the trade union and its activities did not become part of her identity. They have brought some, measly in her view, raises, and have left no lasting trace other than a remorse that she could have been more involved. Despite this, both respondents share a certain approach that seems to enable them to form a common front, which comes to light with Lacanian theory. Indeed, each of the three orders seems to have been useful in participating in the collective argument of the two female respondents. With the help of the imaginary order, the caregivers with a working-class background produce a community with their female co-workers that forms the basis of the struggle for better working conditions. In Eve's case, moreover, solidarity with the rest of the female workers in the face of a common enemy is more strongly present, as revealed by emotional investment when it comes to discussing those with a better class position in management. Eve's example perhaps reveals a different kind of involvement: some expressive and critical capacities possible without going through a process of symbolic work, and therefore contestation capacities of a popular class nature.

Within the Symbolic order lie the key principles of respect for hard work, which Julia and Eve are prepared to uphold against their superiors and the authorities while learning to express their principles in a language the audience can understand. In the symbolic power that their expressions will have, the Real order has its key share. The experiences that fall within the real constitute a kind of weapon for the female respondents. Its use becomes an expression of the nature of being subjected to symbolic violence and occupying the position of the subordinated classes. It can be presumed, based on the opinion of the female respondents, that media publicity was decisive in winning the collective dispute. The effectiveness of the use of this weapon containing real experiences, and therefore the effectiveness of the accusation directed towards the dominant classes, depends on the extent to which the public, driven by a sense of solidarity with the trade unionists or indignation about their working conditions, will support the demands of the caregivers.

From the perspective of Bourdieu's theory, the respondents become trade unionists in two different ways. Julia undergoes a more sustained process of symbolic work, while Eve engages in a fully popular class way. Lacan's theory of three orders, however, allows us to see an important connection that occurred between the caregivers, enabling a common struggle: the workers stood for the same fundamental symbolic principles. Although the trade union had a different meaning for Julia and Eve from the perspective of Bourdieu's class theory (the differences in capitals and narratives were important), from the perspective of psychoanalysis, the meaning of the trade union can be reduced, on a symbolic level, to the same thing: an institution which function is to enable collective solidarity among workers and to give hard work its due respect.

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