



I'm so Angry I Made a Sign

Author(s): Michael Taussig

Source: *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Autumn 2012), pp. 56-88

Published by: [The University of Chicago Press](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/668050>

Accessed: 24/10/2013 22:00

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



The University of Chicago Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Critical Inquiry*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

I'm so Angry I Made a Sign

Michael Taussig

A Note on Form:

I have inserted the signs in Zuccotti Park as if they are set-apart quotations in the center of the page.

And sometimes I have also inserted quotations from texts by philosophers, poets, and other people worth listening to.

I don't think you will confuse them, but it's better that you do.

A Note on Strategy:

Friedrich Nietzsche says somewhere that a historian has to create a text equal to what he or she is writing about. In *The Gay Science* he has a line, "only as creators can we destroy," which I take to mean not a demand for "positive critique" but an awareness of how description and analysis of an event is a culture-creating activity.¹

*Wall St. is everywhere
therefore we have to occupy everywhere.*

11:00 PM 13 October 2011: On my way downtown to OWS, Zuccotti Park, NYC. Flustered and excited. Emails coming in from Yesenia, and from Michelle and Alex in my sorcery and magic class at Columbia. They should be writing their weekly assignments for school. They are so far behind. But this is

Thanks to Danny Alonso, Alex Afffi, Salomeya Sobko, and Michelle Rosales.

Thanks to Nancy Goldring for many of the photographs.

Thanks to David Goldstein and PLW.

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science: With a Prelude in German Rhymes and an Appendix of Songs*, trans. Josefine Nauckoff, ed. Bernard Williams (Cambridge, 2003), p. 70; hereafter abbreviated G.

Critical Inquiry 39 (Autumn 2012)

© 2012 by The University of Chicago. 0093-1896/12/3901-0009\$10.00. All rights reserved.

the night the mayor will attack. I stop by the bagel store to tell this to my Mexican friend who serves behind the counter. He is counting money and preoccupied. He has never heard of OWS and tries to look interested. My canvas bag is stuffed with sleeping bags for SAA and myself. Long wait for the number 1 train. Unbearable. Alex says rumors of police closing in at midnight. Danny Alonso, also in my sorcery class, once compared visiting Zuccotti Park—which he did all the time from Day One—to the excitement of going to the movies and getting into the trance of that other reality. You get hooked: “I would be hypnotized and turned into someone else.” In fact many selves: a drumming self, a facilitator self, a hunting-and-gathering self roaming Manhattan for tarpaulins and food from dumpsters to bring to the tribe, listening to stories “and hearing from people who had come from all over to share in this moment.” Many of these people had lost their jobs.

Lost my job but found an occupation

You break through the screen like *Alice in Wonderland*. And now you can't leave or do without it. Everything else seems fake and boring. So how do you write about it? In such circumstance of dissolving norms, effervescent atmosphere, invention and reinvention, what happens to the ethnographer's magic—as Bronislaw Malinowski called it—and that old standby of “participant observation”?

Is that magic strong enough?

Am I clear here? I don't think so, and I think this is the problem of writing surprise and writing strangeness, surely the dilemma and *sine qua non* of ethnography. As soon as you write surprise—or, rather, attempt to write it—it is as if the surprise has been made digestible, so it is no longer surprising, no longer strange. To “occupy ethnography” is to get around that somehow, to seize on the means and manner of representation as estranged. An exuberant style is not enough. That is why I so much like the zombie-style bodies and faces of the sign holders that populate Zuccotti Park, graven images outside of time (figs. 1–4).

MICHAEL TAUSSIG teaches anthropology at Columbia University. He is the author of *The Devil and Commodity Fetishism* (1980); *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man* (1987); *The Nervous System* (1992); *Mimesis and Alterity* (1993); *Law in a Lawless Land* (1993); and *My Cocaine Museum* (2004).



FIGURE 1.



FIGURE 2.



FIGURE 3.



FIGURE 4.

Welcome to Hakim Bey's *Temporary Autonomous Zone*. Out of nowhere a community, a sacred community, forms, fueled by the unforeseen chance to fight back. Decades drift away. Decades of gutting what was left of the social contract. Decades in which kids came to think being a banker was sexy. When that happens you *know* it's all over—or about to explode as once again history throws a curve ball. Once in a lifetime the unpredictable occurs and reality gets redefined. The most striking sign I have seen at Zuccotti Park over three months was a life-size painting of a man's striped tie knotted to form a noose (fig. 5).



FIGURE 5.

Next to it:

**They piss
on us and
call it
trickle down**

America wakes up from the American Dream. "I've been waiting for this all my life," said Craig, who stayed with me overnight from California with naught but a backpack on his way to Zuccotti Park.

**I awoke in a sweat
from the American Dream**

"At night we lie all together on the concrete," writes Alex, "a few sleeping, the rest talking in low voices, or reading next to the street lights, or cursing the constant sirens that we are certain the NYPD sends around the park at night just to keep us poorly rested and easily dominated, or looking through the thin canopy of leaves between the dark towers and the sky. The first morning we all agreed that we felt as if those buildings would fall in on us."

"Dear WB," she goes on, "maybe OWS is something like that awakening that is between sleep and consciousness. We are emerging from slumber but we are disoriented, stupored, caught between the dream logic of capitalism and the newly forming world."

"Dear WB." How blessed is that? She is writing code, of course, direct from the state of emergency. She is searching the zone of the dialectical image that Walter Benjamin envisaged as emerging from the dream sleep of capitalism that reactivated mythic powers. Just as one swims in the surreal zone of half sleep, half waking, so does the epoch.

**you must be asleep
to experience
the American Dream**

Salomeya put it a little differently. She has a theory, as usual. Working out of the sense of the body and magic she finds in Malinowski's discussions of clan and subclan solidarity and sorcery, she discerns a form of human bonding relevant to OWS she calls "erotic materialism." It is a brilliant and much required feminist rereading of classical anthropology applied as much to Zuccotti Park as to aforesaid dream-sleep mythology.

But the lines get blurred. Solidarity gets tested. As time goes by, it is said undercover police roam the park disguised as protesters. (Question: What does a protester look like?) It is said that homeless people are being directed by police and homeless shelters to go to Zuccotti Park in the hope that they will dilute and factionalize the occupation. The ideals of the radical hipsters from Brooklyn with their web-savvy culture are being tested like never before by these homeless men who seem uninterested in what the hipsters stand for, yet the whole point of OWS is homelessness. As time goes by—horror of horrors!—something like property and real estate interests surface. Someone quips that there is an Upper East Side section of tents in the park, and one hears muttering of gentrification as if this utopic space is reproducing what it is against.

**We just bought real estate
in your mind**

It is said there are rapes and stealing, and there certainly was stealing. Craig got all of his stuff swiped while he left for half an hour to wash up in the bathroom of Trinity Church.

**I can hire one half of the
working class
to kill the other
Jay Gould**

I walk out of the subway at Fulton Street into the canyons of Wall Street, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* (1927) of soaring towers holding up a black sky heavy with rain clouds, workers in cages like moles, no speech, only cryptic subtitles and gesticulating figures with pasty-white expressionist faces caught in a frozen grimace. Police cars and vans are everywhere (fig. 6).



FIGURE 6.

Down on the ground it is a war zone crackling with expectancy, but overhead, glistening with blue light, stands “Freedom Tower” sheathed in mirrors. What did Benjamin say in “This Space for Rent” in *One-Way Street*? That other OWS as the fuse got lit in Europe, 1928, one year after *Metropolis*?²

**What, in the end, makes advertisements
so superior to criticism? Not what the
moving red neon says— but the fiery
pool reflecting it in the asphalt.**

You take a deep breath when you get there and can’t breathe again till you enter the magical zone of OWS itself. Landscape of the crushed soul, Wall Street is the architectural representation of what Karl Marx called “M-M,”³ meaning money making money, meaning finance capital of which credit default swaps are the ultimate expression of the moneylenders that Christ drove from the temple.

But man does not live by bread alone. They so need art, the one percent. *But so does OWS*. This is not only a struggle about income disparity and corporate control of democracy. It is about the corporate control of art, too, including the art of living.

**As Stocks Fall
Art Surges At a \$315 Million Sale**

Despite (or perhaps because of) the stock market’s nearly 400-point plunge, on Wednesday night collectors raced to put their available cash—and lots of it—into art.⁴

But try to be a young artist impassioned by art—something you could die for—if you don’t have a trust fund or your parents aren’t rich

2. Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings*, ed. Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings, 4 vols. (Cambridge, Mass., 1996), 1:476.

3. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, trans. Ben Fowler, 3 vols. (New York, 1990), 1:248.

4. Carol Vogel, “As Stocks Fall, Art Surges at a \$315.8 Million Sale,” *New York Times*, 9 Nov. 2011, www.nytimes.com/2011/11/10/arts/sothebys-contemporary-art-sale-totals-316-million.html

with connections in the art world. I dare you. The humiliation. The slime. The eating away of self-confidence. Do anything—anything at all—to survive. The heart-rending questions: What is art? Why that, and not this (fig. 7)?



FIGURE 7.

“Ultimately what Zuccotti Park is all about,” Reinhold tells me (presenting the urban planner’s view), “is real estate.” What he means is that the occupation is testing the limits of monetized space. So what we have is:

Real Estate
Finance Capital
Art

And now OWS (another form of Art)

History congeals, then dissolves. Night and day, the crescendo of jackhammers obliterates time itself. Cranes lace the sky, adding new constellations.

**Nobody is more
hopelessly
enslaved
than those who
believe they are free**

I look in heaps of garbage for plastic bags to cover us if we try to get some sleep. Huge white plastic bags outside Starbucks look good. Homeless woman asleep sitting in a doorway wrapped in an enormous black plastic bag. Right idea. Slight drizzle. Warm. Get to the park. A crazy-looking guy walks by with a sign:

**We are the future
We are going to win**

He is dragging a white dog. He is ready to fight, but his forked fingers mean peace. Some people are ripping open plastic bags. The “human microphone” that everyone spells as “mic check,” but is pronounced “mike check,” is in full swing, explaining civil disobedience and what to do when arrested. Rain is getting heavier. We are encouraged to clean the park. What irony! Are we not reinforcing the mayor’s excuse for dealing with protesters—the old cliché they never tire of using—vermin that need . . . the unclean, the disorderly, the un-uniformed, the un-uniform, and let’s not forget the worst, the anarchists, are as much vilified by the police as by Marx and Friedrich Engels.

**we all know
where the real dirt is**

Here I am with a broom side-by-side with a merry fellow in a Santa Claus outfit leading the crew. A woman starts up a *mic check*.

Hello

Hello

I am the Sanitation Group

I am the Sanitation Group

(Her voice is shrill, authoritative, nagging)

I am not *the* Leader

I am not *the* Leader

(long pause)

I am *a* leader

I am *a* leader

The park slopes downhill to the west. Rivers of soapsuds float west merrily along with Santa. SAA loves to clean and is doing a great job. It feels good to be doing something physical. There are many brooms. All new. No shortage of stuff in Zuccotti Park. This place is organized! Check out the People's Library, the kitchen, the Poets' Corner, the drummers, and the altar. But no time for that now. We are in lockdown, as if a hurricane is imminent.

"Every morning before GA [general assembly], we would gather on the street and start up the drums," says Danny. "Our efforts channeled the pulse of the occupation." On the first night of occupation he felt drawn to the group of people drumming, singing, and dancing. He never thought of himself as a musician or a performer but felt compelled to pick up a small drum. "As we share this warm harmony," he later wrote, "I decide to burn some incense. It seems others had something similar in mind, and soon we are enveloped in candles, smoke, and warmth. While many of us play, a few souls decide to stand up and channel the rhythms into song and rhyme. Out of nowhere these wonderful lyrics emerge full of love, dreams, and longing for the moment of revolution. The space upon which we play is consecrated and transformed."

The weather was unusually balmy in September and October. To visit the park was like going to a street fair (figs. 8–12).



FIGURE 8.



FIGURE 9.



FIGURE 10.



FIGURE 11.



FIGURE 12.

There were so many smiling people, radiant with happiness, mixed with a few grim faces. Some women were topless. Many people were on their hands and knees making signs on brown cardboard recycled from boxes. T-shirts were being silk-screened. As the days went by, older people got in the mix. On the pavement by the park, tourist photographers stood three deep, many engaged in polite but strenuous political, philosophical, and theological debate.

**Mutual Responsibility
Come Chat With Us**

The park was ablaze with flags—rainbows, the planet earth, and of course Old Glory, but with the logos of corporations instead of stars. Poor stars, trumped like this. Yet the trees still have their leaves, fluttering (fig. 13).



FIGURE 13.

Most of all I was struck by the statuesque quality of many of the people holding up their handmade signs, like centaurs, half person, half sign. Looking now at the photographs, which give me some distance from the hurly-burly of the face-to-face realities, I see the sign as an extension of the human figure, that history is being made by this stiller-than-still conjunction, heavy with the weight of ages and the exhilaration of bucking the system. And then I realize that this centaurlike quality and stiller-than-still stillness—this terrible gravitas—occurs because the sign holder is posing for photographers, or, rather, the sign is being made to pose for the camera, its very stillness calling to mind, for the aficionados, at least, that wonderful line of Theodor Adorno's where he tells us that the trick to Benjamin's style is the need to become a thing in order to break the magic spell of things. Compare the statuesque quality of the centaurs with the radiance of the sign come alive (fig. 14).



FIGURE 14.

It is the handmadeness of the signs, their artisanal crudity, art before the age of mechanical and digital reproduction, that facilitates this hop, skip, and jump. To Nancy Goldring, who took many of these photographs, it seems as if this graven quality comes from the sign being exactly what the sign bearer wants to say. Put another way, there is a fusion between the person and the sign that demands it being held aloft as testimony to history finding its articulation in words—words that play with words as much as with history. The sign has a talismanic function, an incantatory drive, and is of divine inspiration, the gods in this case being of mirthful disposition, feeling quite at home in the park.

And now here we are on the night of 13 October when the city is going to bring in its sanitation workers, backed by police. The tents have come down (fig. 15).



FIGURE 15.

The park has become a sea of blue tarpaulins glistening with rain, a sea of hope. Is this the sea that Mao talked about in his writings on guerrilla warfare? Are we the waves to which Nietzsche passionately refers in his “Will and Wave,” that mighty turbulence breaking on the rocks of time, dashing pearls, holding court with history through secret affinities (*G*, p. 176)?

**That is how the waves live—
that is how we live,
we who will—I will say no
more.**

Zuccotti Park is all that, bathed in an unearthly yellow-green light coming from the streets around. Underneath, hard granite. And underneath that? The Situationist beach onto which the waves break (see *G*, p. 310).

**Truly, at this moment nothing
remains of the world but green
dusk and green thunderbolts**

Like dancers we swirl, floating on high spirits and the sense, no matter how silly, that at least we are accomplishing something by cleaning. Some socks float by. There is a smell of sage burning. Shamans circle the perimeter of the park, providing the real cleansing. Scrub away. How absurd!

We use our magic to thwart their magic. They have pepper spray. We have burning sage. They prohibit microphones. We have the people's microphone. They prohibit tents. We improvise tents that are not tents but what nomads used before North Face. They build buildings higher than Egyptian pyramids, but that allows our drumming to reverberate all the louder and our projections of images and emails at night to be all the more visible and magical, taking advantage of the mega-screens that the facades of these giant buildings provide (fig. 16).

Each day, each week sees another deterritorialization of their re territorializations. They prohibit the gasoline-powered electric generators we use for our computers and cell phones. We set up bicycles that can generate power. People who would otherwise gawk and take photographs get into the movement,

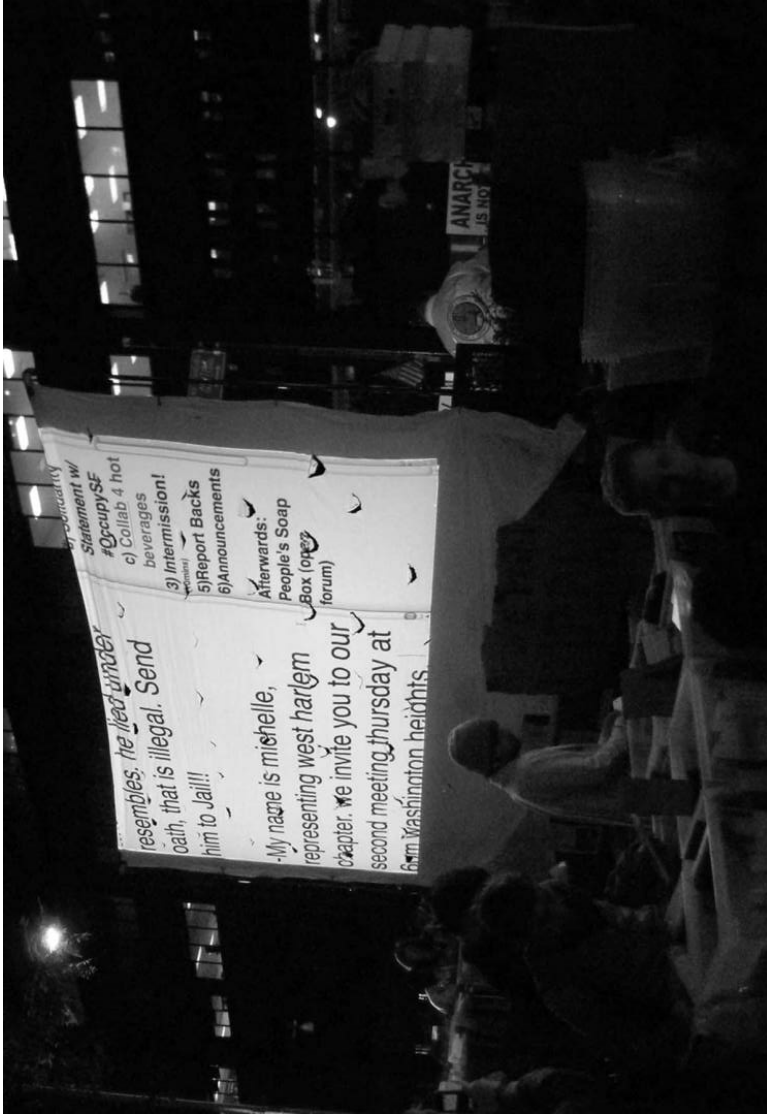


FIGURE 16.

become Dionysian and not just Apollonian, sitting in the saddle pedaling like crazy. This is how they get into the movement. One woman sees it in historical terms, running in matriline. As she pedals, smiling, she says, “I can tell my grandchildren I provided energy for OWS” (fig. 17).



FIGURE 17.

By her side a bunch of older women sit sedate in lounge chairs knitting woolies for OWS. They have all the time in the world, for they inhabit time and time stands still. They don't need to reference history or the matriline. They are all what Benjamin called “the time of the now” that compressed stasis, which is the revolutionary moment.⁵ Clickety-clack go the knitting needles as history is rewoven. They have cardboard signs by their side voicing their outrage. Clickety-clack. This is not the clickety-clack of the locomotive of history that Marx invokes in his preface to *The Introduction to the Critique of Political Economy*. This is not the clickety-clack of Benjamin in his anarchist (*Blanqui*) mode, trying to figure out when you pull the emergency brake that will usher in the revolution. Nor is it the explosion that Benjamin invokes as the blasting apart of the continuum of history that creates the *jetztzeit*, the “time filled by the presence of the now.”⁶ Revolution is different now (fig. 18).

5. Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, trans. Harry Zohm, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York, 1969), p. 261.

6. *Ibid.*

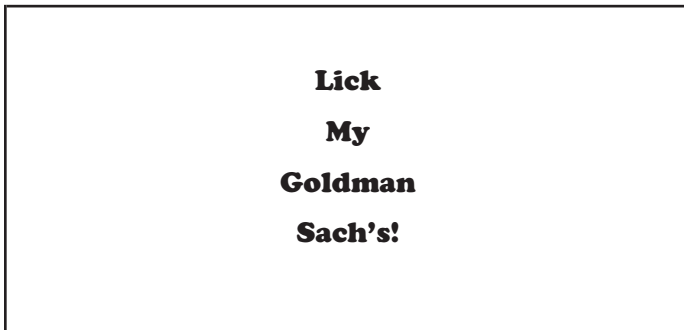


FIGURE 18.

Another vision of revolution surfaces; a cheeky little 4 in. x 3 in. sticker adorning the gigantic orange metal sculpture at the southeast corner of the park (fig. 19):



FIGURE 19.



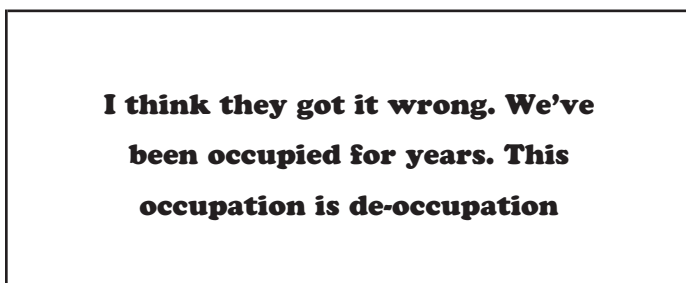
Jack the giant-killer! This little fellow transforms the seventy-foot-high *Joy de Vivre* sculpture, another of New York's notable contributions to public art, but nothing compared with what is going on in the park since OWS, where art acquires new meaning as we read in:



In the corner of the diminutive sticker we read,



On all sides jackhammers, police sirens, traffic roaring down Broadway, echoes bouncing off buildings. Mic check and the poets keep at it along with the drums. Mic check—Michelle tells me that even the police tried to use it once, at the end of the number 3 subway line at New Lots where OWS occupied a foreclosed home. Everyone laughs.



“I made my way towards what looked like a ball of people huddled around a small group standing on a bench,” writes Danny about Night

One of the occupation in Zuccotti Park when all seems pandemonium. “The people on the bench were speaking in unison, seemingly repeating the words of someone coming from nowhere. Eventually the group on the bench started calling on people in the crowd to speak, echoing their words as the person spoke.”

In repetition you come to grips with trauma, as readers of Sigmund Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* will recognize and which in Zuccotti, with mic check, becomes a living text. There can be fear here, too, fear of mindless repetition of the brainwashed. This is the cultic expression of magic. But then the next mic checker gets up and the message is quite different! We repeat yet we transform. And think of Allen Ginsberg, with his harmonium and his *OOM, OOM*, and many more *OOMs*. There is joy in that, spoofing the too-serious ones, left wing or right wing, who assume they are the ones who know and have come here to tell us what’s what.

This is worth thinking about. Occupying Wall Street inevitably means occupying how we talk, how we talk in public, how we learn and teach, and how we write ethnography (about our own tribe). All this is up for grabs. Otherwise there is no occupation.

The occupation is self-reflexive, to a fault.

In the wan green light our sea ripples over the shoals of the nervous system. We are awaiting the police who at the moment form a blue cordon around two sides of the park. On the north side their blue and white cars and vans face us ready to leap. Behind the cars stands a skyscraper crisscrossed by steel beams like a fortress. An art student from Parsons tells me it is the FBI building. In bold black letters on the facade: as I recall.

One Liberty Plaza

By 2:00 a.m. it is pouring. There is lightning and thunder. The heavens erupt. Reality mimicks art, meaning John Cage’s 1976 performance called *Lecture on the Weather*, in which art mimicks reality, the reality of storm.

Cage devised this for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to mark—not celebrate—the US bicentenary. Based on readings of passages selected by chance from Henry David Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience*, each of the twelve speakers recite a different passage until, with the swelling hubbub of voices, lightning flashes and thunderclaps bring history and natural history together.

The crowd has thinned, yet the mobile food stands on the south side are doing great business. Their warmth, light, and sense of bounty are cheering. I meet up with students from Columbia. We mingle talking, smoking, animated, searching for shelter, waiting for the bust at dawn, scenarios of the impending attack running through the mind. Classic concepts leap to mind—especially the *liminal space* Victor Turner illuminated for us from his studies in southern Africa where the initiates are gathered, transformed step-by-step through rituals and symbols resonant with myth. Being betwixt and between, the initiates occupy magical space in which the elementary forms of religious life take fire. The twin poles of birth and death frame the space. Womb and tomb.

“I asked my friend why he always wears that scarf,” says Danny. He’s wearing the scarf that he wore on the first night of the occupation. I ask him why he always carries that scarf around him wherever he goes. He tells me it’s like his baby blanket. “On September seventeenth I died. On September seventeenth I began living. I found this scarf that day. It is a relic from the rebirth, from the moment when I started taking my first steps in this new life, in this new me.”

Tomb and womb. A child is born from the womb just as spirits emerge from the tomb. Emergence is the trope. Emergence from the underworld. Orpheus, don’t look back! Not this time! Sing your songs so beautiful they enchant animals and things, like these buildings that reach for the sky, this Wall Street so mythical and world dominating. “Mr. Gorbachev, tear down this wall,” said the Great Communicator.

But what have we here? Weeks later I see a photograph of a tall young man with camouflage pants, a black cowboy hat, and a big smile. He is standing on the perimeter of the park along Broadway with a five-year-old girl on his shoulders holding up a large sign. Her mouth is wide open. Is it surprise? Is she challenging us? As always the face of the people holding the signs says as much or more than the signs themselves, and the signs say plenty. What is she holding up?

**Mr. Obama
Tear down
This Wall**

Looking for a new language? Well here it is, the language of the sign, the language of wit rearranging history through a barrage of *A-Effekts* that warp what we took for real. It is a scene language like Brecht's placards hung above the stage. "Mr. Obama Tear down This Wall!"

**I'm so angry that
I made a sign**

There is no doubt that a morality play is taking place here, powered by the "moral economy" that E. P. Thompson brought to our attention. This is a lot bigger than phrases like "growing income disparity" or even "we are the 99 percent" convey, phrases encumbered by the same economism they otherwise challenge. "The rupture between bodies and homes, the rupture of foreclosure" writes Michelle, whose own family was foreclosed in Los Angeles, "is revelatory—spirits of home emerge as well as the specters of power. The taking of a home by a bank is experienced as a violation of sacred space." Thompson analyzed eighteenth-century bread riots in London. Today it's homes.

Monstrous masks and transgression are de rigueur in the liminal period. In OWS this is manifest in outrage transformed into humor and play like the cheery Santa Claus with whom I am sweeping the park. Like Darth Vader, the NYPD straps on grotesque masks and weapons, reaching for pepper spray, bouquets of yellow plastic handcuffs, and medieval riot gear. Helicopters scour the sky like irate dragonflies.

But, there on the ground, the atomized mass of yesterday, without hope, has crystallized into a community of rebels defining itself through

new language and sense of being. It is a movement that seems to have come out of nowhere, a messianic movement after the death of god that kindles our polymorphously perverse infancy with relish. More than anything else, it is an attitude, a mood, an atmosphere, like Cage's babbly lecture on weather mixing up Thoreau's *Civil Disobedience* with thunder and lightning, and this is why the politicians and the experts have a problem. They see OWS as primitive and diffuse because it has no precise demands—as if the demand for equality was not a demand, at once moral and economic, redefining personhood and social reality. OWS is akin to the “primitive rebels” that Eric Hobsbawm called the anarchists of Spain, a movement he saw as “*pre-political*.”⁷ What the experts want is for OWS to submit to the language of the prevailing system. Yet is it not the case that merely to articulate such is to sell out the movement? There is as yet no language to express the drift, as Jean-François Lyotard called it, with '68 in mind. Politics as aesthetics is back. Politics as “affective intensity” is back, too. “A successful attack on the belief in necessity would inevitably lead to the destruction of kapital's very main-spring,” he wrote back then.⁸ The laws of equivalence are in suspense, and libidinal impulses are unhooked from prevailing norms. But the experts want to channel the messianic and transgressive impulse into their own need for fame and power (fig. 20).

5:50 AM: *sudden mic check*. “Breaking News” (funny how they reproduce the media, especially at this crucial moment). The park has filled to overflowing the past dark hour along with rising tension, and three “echoes” or rebooting of the mic check are required to get to the people at the back.

Breaking News
 Breaking News
 Breaking News

The human microphone is bursting to capacity. Echoes chase echoes, and only the most alert ears and powerful voices are able to transmit anything. Hope and fear blur the message. The faces in the sea of faces around me in this magic hour of the dawn light are those of angels and trust. We bond. We embrace with our eyes. You strain forward. Then pivot 180 degrees to catch the repetition. We feel the incredible power of repetition, each repetition the same, each one slightly off. (“What did they say?”) It

7. Eric Hobsbawm, *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movements in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (New York, 1959), p. 2.

8. Jean-François Lyotard, “Adrift,” *Driftworks*, trans. and ed. Roger McKeon (New York, 1984), p. 10.



FIGURE 20.

could be natural forces, that sea, those waves, again, that muffled thunder,
on our side, now, natural force, natural history.

The deputy mayor
has cancelled the clean up.

For a second a stunned silence.

Then cheers of unbelievable elation.

A young man asks for a mic check.

Look up

Look up

Look up

See the sky

See the sky

See the sky

A new dawn

A new dawn

A new dawn

Mist clings to the skyscrapers. The mottled sky grows pink with the
promise of light. My sun, 'tis of thee. For a glorious moment history and
natural history fuse. Second nature dissolves. The time of the now.

Clickety-Clack

Clickety-Clack

Clickety-Clack

The end.