PROTEST RHETORIC IN THREE CULTURES: ITALY, SPAIN, AND THE UNITED STATES, 2011-2012

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Alexandria Gina Murray-Risso
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The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Thesis of Alexandria Gina Murray-Risso:

Protest Rhetoric in Three Cultures: Italy, Spain and the United States, 2011-2012

Ellen Quandahl, Chair
Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies

Cezar Ornatowski
Department of Rhetoric and Writing Studies

David Ely
Finance Department

1 November, 2012
Approval Date
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by

Alexandria Gina Murray-Risso

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DEDICATION

To my father, Thomas A. Murray.
[T]he orator … tries by his speech to bring about in the listener a spirit in conformity with the oration by which the listener will feel about the cause as does the orator.

Giambattista Vico, *The Art of Rhetoric*
This thesis examines three texts that emerged from the 2011-2012 protest movements in Italy, Spain, and the United States. These 2011-2012 global movements have garnered much popular attention, as well as consideration from a number of departments within academia, but comparatively less so from scholars of rhetoric. Yet, these movements are both constituted by rhetoric and use rhetoric to negotiate with entrenched institutions. Given the centrality of rhetoric to protest endeavors, the relative paucity of rhetorical scholarship directed toward these movements is surprising, and this thesis attempts to address this gap. Two of the texts analyzed herein were written specifically to convoke adherents and sympathizers, and therefore represent forms of constitutive rhetoric. The third text evinces a constitutive function, but its primary purpose was to articulate specific political, economic and social demands. Although these three texts were crafted to address particular national audiences, the 2011-2012 movement was profoundly global, and these texts reflect this transnational context.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

When the young Tunisian vegetable vendor Mohamed Bouazizi died of wounds from self-immolation on January 5, 2011 Tunisian activist Lina Ben Mhenni tweeted “[t]here is a hidden tension that exploded with Mohamed Bouazizi's death” (DeRosa). She was speaking, of course, of the popular uprising that would topple the Tunisian government. The tension Ben Mhenni first sensed and then witnessed in her country apparently had broad and deep resonance in places near and far. On January 25, protests broke out in cities throughout Egypt, and on February 11 President Mubarak was obliged to resign. In mid-February, demonstrations erupted in Iran, Yemen, Libya, Bahrain, and Palestine, and perhaps fearing contagion, on March 6 the Saudi government banned public demonstrations. In July, protesters in Israel also took to the streets.

This explosion of social tension did not take long to cross the Mediterranean, for on May 17, demonstrators jammed public squares throughout Spain. Like their North African and Middle Eastern counterparts, they were denouncing government corruption, but they were also giving voice to a deep frustration with an economic crisis that was believed to be pauperizing so many. On June 15, Greek protests turned into riots, and in August riots broke out in Great Britain. In fact, in late September the British government, like the Saudi government in March, banned public protests in certain venues. On September 17, popular upheaval crossed the Atlantic, and American protesters began to occupy Wall Street; a long list of venues across the nation would succumb to similar occupation over the coming
months. On October 15 what began as a peaceful protest in the historical center of Rome, Italy turned violent.

By the end of 2011, social protests had spread as far across the globe as Russia, Chile and Mauritania. Indeed, the phenomenon was so widespread and involved so many people that *Time* magazine felt compelled to elect “the Protester” as its 2012 Person of the Year. The protester may earn this distinction yet again in 2013, for popular unrest continues to circumscribe the globe even as this paper is being written in mid- to late 2012.

While these protests certainly can be analyzed in political and economic terms, they are also profoundly rhetorical phenomena, for they evince the belief that people’s lives can be different and they inaugurate spaces of popular contention and negotiation. As such, they conform to Aristotle’s notion of rhetoric as managed conflict. “[W]e debate about things that seem capable of admitting two possibilities; for no one debates things incapable of being different either in past or future or present, at least not if they suppose that to be the case; for there is nothing more [to say]” (*Rhetoric* 1357a12). Rhetoric, Aristotle suggests, arises when alternatives can be imagined and, importantly, spoken. Contrast and communication are the necessary conditions for rhetoric, and the 2011-2012 protests have certainly satisfied this criterion.

A review of prominent rhetoric journals reveals a paucity of rhetorical research on these protests, possibly due to their continuing evolution, possibly to the transnational scope of the phenomenon. Two exceptions are Endres and Senda-Cook’s analysis of the interplay between geography and protest, and Greene and Kuswa’s piece on the reterritorializations effectuated by these popular movements. Although this paper skirts the specific issue of place addressed in these analyses, it does examine protest texts from three cultures: Italy,
Spain, and the United States, and thereby offers tableaus of the current protest movement as a simultaneously culturally specific and a transnational development.

While more rhetorical research is needed (and is probably forthcoming) on the current protests, there is a wealth of rhetorical scholarship both on specific past protest movements and on the protest as a kind of genre of popular expression. Indeed, forty years ago, George Yoos published a bibliography of American rhetorical scholarship on protests that ran five pages; such a bibliography today would surely run into the tens if not hundreds of pages.¹

Originally published in 2001 and re-released in 2006, Morris and Browne’s edited collection, *Readings on the Rhetoric of Social Protest*, has become one of the cornerstone texts on the rhetorical scholarship of protests. For the purposes of this paper, one of the more significant offerings Morris and Browne’s text provides is a series of pieces in which scholars take up the question of how to define a social movement. Michael Calvin McGee, for example, argues that “[m]ovements are not phenomena, nor does the concept ‘movement’ explain a phenomenon empirically; rather ‘movement’ is an analogue comparing the flow of social facts to physical movement. It is an interpretation of phenomenal data controlled less by what happens in the real world than by what a particular user of the analogue wants to see in the real world” (Morris and Browne 118). McGee suggests that the definition of movements *qua* movements is rhetorical work. This position contrasts with previous work by scholars such as Leland Griffin, who held that movements are indeed

¹Although Yoos is cited as the author on the database cover page, the attribution in the actual bibliography reads “Bibliography compiled by Richard L. Johannesen and supplemented with items contributed by E.P.J. Corbett.”
phenomena that result from dissatisfaction and a desire for change, and lead to action, successful or otherwise (Morris and Browne 10).

What these diverging positions underscore is that social movements are not as self-evident as they may appear. Movements are constituted through and maintained by rhetoric. However, this paper does not take the position, suggested by McGee’s argument, that movements are reducible to labels or that they exist subjectively. Rather, the underlying assumption informing this paper is that protest movements are conjunctions of material conditions (economic, political, etc.) and symbolic (rhetorical) interventions. This is not to claim that movements are unique rhetorical phenomena. As David Zarefsky observes, it seems groundless to maintain that “[m]ovements are characterized by recurrent rhetorical patterns not found in other instances of persuasion” (Morris and Browne 126). What rhetorical analyses of movements, such as those presented here, can offer instead are representations of the negotiations that constitute political, economic, and social power gradients.

The aim of this study is to investigate how the current protest movement recruits adherents, and to that end it examines, as noted above, three protest texts from three different countries: *La Ballata degli Incazzati* from Italy; *Indignados*, a Spanish text translated into Italian; and two iterations of the “99% Declaration,” which were disseminated by a group identified as New York Occupy Wall Street. In their efforts to recruit supporters and negotiate with institutions, movements make use of what Charles Tilly calls “repertoires of contention,” which include routines such as the street demonstration and the fund drive, and resources such as the political pamphlet and the poster (*Regimes* 34-35). The street demonstrations that have occurred over the past year have received a great deal of attention
in both the media and in scholarly journals, whereas much of the political writing emerging from the movement, including pamphlets, manifestos, and slogans have tended to receive less. While certainly not comprehensive, this paper seeks to address this gap. Broad rhetorical analyses are provided for each of the three above-cited texts, with particular attention paid to how these texts work to recruit supporters.

This study is composed of seven chapters. The two chapters that follow this introduction construct broad transnational and national contexts within which to locate these three texts. This contextualization work is grounded in readings of mainstream narratives of financial crisis and in counter-narratives offered by the protest movement. The following three chapters focus on rhetorical analyses of *La Ballata degli Incazzati* (chapter 4), *Indignados* (chapter 5) and the “99% Declaration” (chapter 6). And the final chapter offers some parting thoughts on this project. As will be discussed, each text offers particular frames that guide audience judgment and action; that is, each represents the movement in specific ways, thus altering the movement’s vectors of possibility. And each text constructs a dialectic of cohesion and division that reproduces and complicates gender, class, and other social locations.

The current protests offer a rich source of material for rhetoric scholars. As the title of this project and this introductory section suggest, much of my work has focused on Europe, particularly Italy and Spain, and unless otherwise indicated, all translations herein are my responsibility. This work was initiated with a sympathetic eye for the movements’ goals, and that sympathy remains strong even as this project ends.
CHAPTER 2
ENACTING PROTEST

On an evening talk show in March 2008, a young woman rises from her anonymous seat in the studio audience and asks the guest of the evening, then-Premier Silvio Berlusconi, how a young person might be expected to take on the responsibilities of a family, to assume the burden of a mortgage in an ailing job market where the rare job on offer is precarious. Berlusconi replies, “My advice, as a father, is to fish for Berlusconi’s son or other persons who don’t have these problems. With your lovely smile you should have no difficulty” (“Berlusconi e la battuta”). Setting aside the many political and ethical problems associated with such a response and briefly examining Italy’s employment situation at the time, it becomes clear that Berlusconi’s stab at charm was certainly ill-timed and ill-conceived. For, although Italy in March 2008 was still largely unaffected by the financial crisis that was overtaking the United States, total unemployment was 6.3% and youth unemployment was a vertiginous 20.4%. Both figures were on the rise; in 2012, total unemployment stands at 10.5%, while youth unemployment has topped 34%.\(^2\) Additionally, in 2008, more than 50% of the jobs held by young people were precarious: that is, governed by “atypical contracts” of limited duration, limited benefits, and low remuneration (“Permanenze e transizioni”). Only about 25% of contracts in this period were “tipici,” or “standard,” that is, of indeterminate

\(^2\) Information is from the Istituto nazionale di statistica. See both references of “Occupati e disoccupati.”
duration, enjoying all benefits accorded by Italian labor laws, and remunerated relatively well. By 2010, over 60% of labor contracts for youth would be atypical and only 15.7% would be standard. The number of young Italian men possessing a net worth comparable to Silvio Berlusconi’s son, Piersilvio, was less than 1% in 2008, and that figure has not improved. It thus seems that the pond of available billionaires is severely under-stocked for the vast numbers of Italian fisherwomen with lovely smiles but precarious positions.

The employment situation in Spain is rather more dramatic than in Italy, though according to Guy Standing, Professor of Economic Security at the University of Bath in the UK, over 20% of both Spain’s and Italy’s respective GDPs is realized in the shadow economy.3 It is within this “shadow economy…where much of the precariat survives, facing exploitation and oppression” (36). In the official economy, total unemployment in Spain rose from a low of 8.3% in 2007 to 11.3% in 2008, and soared to over 21% in 2011 (“Unemployment Rate, 2000-2011(%”)). Youth unemployment in 2009 topped 37%, and by the fourth quarter of 2011 stood just under 49%. Employment figures for the United States are comparatively better for the same period, but still difficult. As the Department of Labor notes in its June 2008 newsletter, “… the labor market weakened from May 2007 to May 2008. The number of unemployed persons rose from 6.9 million to 8.5 million, and the jobless rate increased from 4.5 to 5.5 percent” (“Why Has Unemployment Risen”). As of

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3 Standing does not provide a definition of the term “shadow economy,” presumably because his readers are familiar with the term. For those unfamiliar, the term is generally interchangeable with “black economy,” “gray economy,” “underground economy,” “unofficial economy,” and “informal economy.” In a 2010 article, the Economist describes the shadow economy as those “transactions taking place outside the taxable and observable realm of the official economy captured by GDP numbers.” The same article goes on to note how shadow economies in a number of nations have been reinforced since the onset of the 2007 financial crisis. See “A Lengthening Shadow.”
August 2012, the U.S. unemployment rate has risen to 8.3%, only about 2 percentage points less than total unemployment in the European Union (“Unemployment Statistics”).

These dismal employment figures from Italy, Spain, and the United States reveal pervasive social malaise, and offer both an explanation for and justification of the wave of popular protest that has overtaken these three countries since 2011. For, as is well known, beginning in January 2011 and continuing as the writing of this paper progresses in mid-2012, a wave of popular protest has, indeed, festered within these countries and spread around the globe. Connecting the movements comprising this wave are a number of conditions and grievances, some of which are economic, such as high unemployment discussed above and the reduction of state sponsored social programs that have exposed a large number of people to poverty, while others are political, such as a pervasive misgiving

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4 In his book *Power in Movement, Social Movements and Contentious Politics*, Sidney Tarrow asks “Why does contention politics seem to develop only in particular periods of history? Why does it sometimes produce robust social movements and sometimes flicker out into sectarianism or repression?” (Chapter 1, Kindle Edition; no page numbers). His answer to these questions is worth considering. “[P]eople engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change, and then by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, creating new opportunities.” In rhetorical terms, contentious politics develops kairotically. Crises, such as the recent financial crisis, represent an example of such kairotic moments, and the 2011-2012 protests can be read as a series of kairotic responses to and engagements with this financial crisis. Although beyond the scope of this work, an argument can also be made that these protests should be tied to other protests: for instance, those that took form in Greece in 2008. For the Greek protests, which are ongoing, seem to constitute a popular response to the financial crisis and to corrupt government, like the protests in Italy, Spain, and the United States. Arguments can also be made for connecting the 2011-2012 protests to the 2010 student protests in the UK, which were a response to, among other things, government cuts in education subsidies; to the 2009 student protests in the United States, which were mobilized for similar reasons; and even the WTO protests starting in the late 1990s. Not only did 2011-2012 protests share repertoires of contention with these previous protests, they also shared a common critical perspective and vocabulary.

5 Persistent protests have been coalescing predominantly in North Africa and the Middle East, Europe, and the U.S. However, on October 15, 2011, demonstrators took to the streets in major cities around the globe in a coordinated effort. See for example, the coverage in the Guardian UK at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/global/2011/oct/15/occupy-movement-occupy-wall-street#block-2>. Calling the movement “global” is understandable, since to some degree it is. However, the label is, of course, also highly rhetorical insofar as it suggests very broad support.
that democracy is either failing or has become a complete farce. Media, both traditional and new, have functioned as powerful apparatuses for the diffusion of these local movements into a global wave; not only do they propagate stories about these movements to broad publics, but movement organizers and participants themselves have actively used media to argue their cases, recruit new adherents, and organize events.\textsuperscript{6}

The 2011 global protests occupied so much media time and space and were perceived to be so influential that \textit{Time} magazine selected “the protester” as “Person of the Year.”\textsuperscript{7} In his cover story for the 2011 “Person of the Year” issue, Kurt Andersen frames the 2011 global protest cycle in terms of Eisenhower’s domino theory.

During the battle of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 … President Dwight Eisenhower held a news conference. ‘You have a row of dominoes set up,’ he said, positing Vietnam as the domino between fallen China and North Korea and the rest of Asia. ‘You knock over the first one, and what will happen to the last one is the certainty that it will go over very quickly.’ But in 1975, after the communists won in Vietnam and Cambodia, no other countries followed, and the domino theory of contagious national-liberation movements was discredited forever. Forever, until now. (Anderson)

The protests that began in Tunisia in January 2011 did indeed touch off a string of protests in the Middle East, in Western and Eastern Europe, and in the United States. However, Andersen’s choice to frame the 2011 global protests in terms of Eisenhower’s

\textsuperscript{6}See Brecher et al. for a more detailed analysis of how contemporary social movements use media.

\textsuperscript{7}In a 2001 interview, Jim Kelly, managing editor of \textit{Time} noted that “the classic definition of \textit{Time}'s Person of the Year is the person who most affected the events of the year, for better or for worse.” See "Choosing the Person of the Year.” In presenting the case for electing “the protester” as 2011 Person of the Year, \textit{Time}’s Rick Stengel wrote,“[p]rotests have now occurred in countries whose populations total at least 3 billion people, and the word protest has appeared in newspapers and online exponentially more this past year than at any other time in history.” See Stengel in Works Cited. And in his cover story for the 2011 “Person of the Year” issue, Kurt Andersen argues that ‘“[m]assive and effective street protest’ was a global oxymoron until — suddenly, shockingly — starting exactly a year ago, it became the defining trope of our times. And the protester once again became a maker of history.” See Andersen.
domino-theory is problematic, because it represents a “reduction of the mental to the physical,” to borrow a phrase from Kenneth Burke (Grammar 326). That is, the symbolic processes that catalyze and are partially constitutive of any kind of action are elided in Andersen’s domino metaphor; the action of protest is reduced to mere motion.\(^8\) Falling dominoes obey the laws of physics, but the laws of physics are necessary but not sufficient to account for protests.

Andersen’s account does, nevertheless, offer an alternative frame, one he doesn’t use, but is better suited to understanding symbol-using animals. This frame is the dialogue. Consider, for example, his description of how the Tunisian movement influenced the Egyptian movement. “Among all the Egyptians I met,” he writes, “there is an absolute agreement about one thing: Tunisia was the spark of their revolution.” In fact, Tunisia wasn’t just a spark. “The lessons of Tunisia weren’t just inspirational,” he argues, “they were practical … like a user’s manual in how to topple a regime peacefully.” In other words, the spread of the protest movement from Tunisia to Egypt involved more, it seems, than mere imitation; the action in Egypt was not merely a simulacrum of Tunisian action. Nor was it, to use yet another metaphor, merely a contagion. Rather, it seems that lessons were learned, and therefore arguments must have been framed; positions debated; choices made.

\(^8\) For Burke “action” and “motion” seem to be antithetical terms: the former indicating activity informed by symbol systems, the latter by activity that is not. See Burke’s “(Nonsymbolic) Motion/(Symbolic) Action” for further explanation. Anderson’s reduction of protest through his domino metaphor arguably cannot be considered what Burke would call a “representative anecdote.” As Burke argues, for “an anecdote to be truly representative [it] must be synecdochic rather than metonymic; or in other words, it must be a part for the whole rather than a reduction of the mental to the physical” (Grammar 326). The alternative frame proposed in this study, the dialogue, is something of an improvement on the domino metaphor because it is, as Burke recommends, synecdochic rather than metonymic: dialogue is a representation rather than a reduction (see Burke’s discussion of synecdoche in Grammar 507).
The dialogic nature of these global protests comes into clearer focus in Andersen’s discussion of the emergence of the American Occupy Wall Street movement. When the movement was still in its planning stage, OWS organizers and Indignados met online, and the latter “started explaining to the Americans how it’s done … At the end of July, in an office in New York’s financial district, the proto-Occupiers met with some veterans of the protests in Spain, Greece, and North Africa” (Andersen). Thus, OWS was not merely passively influenced by movements in the Middle East and Europe; rather, Americans sought the expertise and collaboration of their foreign counterparts.

The 2011 protest cycle, then, is probably best framed not as a set of dominos toppling onto one other nor as a contagious disease vectored between vulnerable hosts by social networks and other media, but as a dialogue between symbol-using animals. This frame is not, of course, entirely unproblematic. For instance, revolutionary factions involved in these protests might not recognize their objectives as conceivable within this frame, for dialogue presumes eventual rapprochement not rupture; the agonisms of revolution are arguably different from the agonisms of reformation. Tunisian and Egyptian protesters, for example, had no interest in reconciling with their oppressive governments. However, they also were not seeking to substitute one oppressive regime for another, but to institute a new form of government, one that would be dialogic not autocratic. Their non-violent protests did disrupt existing political structures, but in a manner that reflected their goal of democratic government. So, while many revolutions would be inadequately framed as dialogue, these particular revolutions seem far more amenable to such a frame.

Moreover, protest movements in Europe and the United States have explicitly distanced themselves from revolutionary histories and from traditional partisanship.
instance, Spanish Indignados “invite people to meet in the street and participate unencumbered by the representative symbols of political parties or unions, in order to highlight the plural and open nature of people’s indignation against the current political, economic, and social panorama” (Botey et al. 11). This rallying cry is not an invitation to revolution; rather, Indignados seek to eschew political polarization as a means of consolidating dissent in order effectuate political change. They seek dialogue with a broad public to address what they perceive to be a corrupt elite. American Occupiers share a similar objective. In the first iteration of the “99% Declaration,” one of OWS’s grievances is the government’s “abandon[ment of] the precious covenant between those who govern with the consent of the People based upon an oath to protect and defend our Constitution” (Working Group, “99% Declaration,” preamble). Occupiers, thus, are not seeking to change the structure of American government but to hold office holders accountable to that very structure. In short, neither European nor American protesters seek rupture; what they do seek is redress, and redress requires dialogue.

This dialogue frame is, therefore, useful to capture the projects of 2011 protesters. However, before expanding further on the usefulness of this frame, a brief detour is required to clarify what is meant by dialogue, for the notion developed here should not be confounded with the niceties of cocktail conversation. Rather, with the term dialogue I wish to evoke something akin to sociologist Charles Tilly’s notion of contentious conversation. In his 1998 article for the journal Social Research, Tilly writes, “[c]onversation is contentious to the

\[9\] There are two iterations of the “99% Declaration,” both of which are discussed in depth in Chapter 6.
extent that it embodies mutual and contradictory claims, claims that, if realized, would significantly alter the longer-term behavior of at least one participant” (“Contentious,” 495). Conversation for Tilly is a frame for thinking about political negotiation, and as his definition suggests, this negotiation involves high stakes: it makes non-trivial demands upon its participants.10

In a later text, Tilly and co-authors McAdams and Tarrow argue that “participants in contentious politics constantly manipulate, strategize, modify, and reinterpret the identities of parties to their contention, including themselves” (56). In a similar vein, if in a different context and for different purposes, Burke in Rhetoric of Motives develops a theory of identification in which he argues that “[a] doctrine of consubstantiality, either explicit or implicit, may be necessary to any way of life. For substance, in the old philosophies, was an act; and a way of life is an acting-together; and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial” (21).

Identification and consubstantiality are achieved through the reservoir of what Burke calls the “tribal idiom,” that is, the symbolic resources available to a social group or culture at any given moment. If this idiom is a fundamental source for the constitution and expression of commonality, it is also, as Burke argues, a source for the constitution and expression of

10 In a later text co-authored with Douglas McAdam and Sidney Tarrow, Tilly’s focus will shift somewhat from contentious conversation to contentious politics and his definition of the latter will also shift. The authors write, “By contentious politics we mean: episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants” (5). I want to highlight the second or (b) point of this definition because it takes up Tilly’s prior definition of contentious conversation but changes the focus from behavior to interests. Of interest for my paper is the assertion that claims made in contentious conversation and contentious politics affect participants in non-trivial ways.
discord and opposition. “Identification is affirmed with earnestness,” Burke argues, “precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division” (22). Identities coalesce around axes of opposition, and contentious conversation or dialogue is defined by and takes place within the zones defined by these axes.

The dialogue frame chosen for this paper, then, should not be understood as constructing social agents in polite or even impolite chitchat, but as casting them within a dual form of conflict-cohesion conducted through symbol systems. The domino-theory frame chosen by Andersen in his article on the 2011 “Person of the Year” completely bypassed such important considerations and thus provided a rather superficial analysis of the protests.11

One important point to be borne in mind is that protesters involved in the 2011-2012 protest cycle were not merely dialoguing intraculturally, but also interculturally; that is, they were dialoguing across, not merely within, national borders. As noted above, in his Time article, Andersen describes meetings between American, Spanish and Egyptian protesters during which they shared, tested, and developed novel protest methods. But the question arises: how can such extra-institutional intercultural dialogues take place? How do people from different cultures commence and manage such dialogues? What conditions might be required in order to make these dialogues possible? One possible way of answering these questions is through the concept of what Mary Kaldor, et al., call “global civil society.” Kaldor and fellow authors define global civil society both as “a sphere of ideas, values,

11 Of course, Andersen was writing under constrained circumstances for a mass periodical, so his objectives were certainly different from mine. Nevertheless, his framing remains problematic even in that context, for it arguably failed to develop much of an explanation concerning the influence of movements across borders.
institutions, organisations, networks, and individuals located between the family, the state, and the market, and operating beyond the confines of national societies, polities, and economies” (2) and as “a mechanism for crossing the divide” between elites and non-elites (1). That is, global civil society is a kind of networked structure which both presumes and facilitates dialogue between global actors on issues of global importance.

For Kaldor et al., this transnational sphere is a relatively recent phenomenon, arising out of and in tandem with the processes of globalization as a means of “… influenc[ing] the framework of global governance” (2). Many political debates and decisions, they argue, can no longer be thought about in purely national terms since decisions made within national borders often bear global consequences, and many decisions of national and international importance are made by international organizations, such as the United Nations. Furthermore, expanding flows of immigration have created personal identities grounded in multiple affiliations that not infrequently supersede national and local bonds (9-10). For these authors, the development of a point of view within global civil society that assumes inclusive, deliberative forms such as global meetings (like the annual World Social Forum) and global protests (for example, against the war in Iraq) represents a salutary corrective to the opacity of much global governance as well as a much needed response to these mounting pressures.

It is within this networked structure of global civil society that dialogue among global actors, including global protesters, takes place, and the elements constitutive of social protest, what Tilly calls “repertoires of contention,” are shared. Points of view are exchanged, debated, and elaborated within the nodes of this network and then formalized and deployed
onto world stages. Media, of course, are crucial in enabling these conversations and in amplifying the local into the global.

Like the annual World Social Forum, the 2011-2012 protest cycle is a product of global civil society. As Anderson’s “Person of the Year” article on the protester indicates, these demonstrations were connected events, organized to deliver and reinforce a message that is essentially the same the world over: non-elites are fed up. “Is there a global tipping point for frustration?” asks Time magazine’s Rick Stengel in his “Introduction” to the “Person of the Year” issue. “Everywhere, it seems, people said they’d had enough,” he notes. “They dissented; they demanded; they did not despair, even when the answers came back in a cloud of tear gas or a hail of bullets. They literally embodied the idea that individual action can bring collective, colossal change.” What Stengel and Time magazine get somewhat wrong is the idea of “individual action.” Time may require that its “Person of the Year” be a single individual, but, as Stengel clarifies towards the end of his piece, the protester of 2011-2012 is actually a proxy for a collective, and I would add, global phenomenon; s/he is best understood as a small node within the vast network of global civil society.

Protesters and reformers participating in global civil society share repertoires of contention that help to advance dialogues both amongst themselves and between themselves and elites. These repertoires embody “the ways that people act together in pursuit of shared interests” (Tarrow Power, chp. 2), and presently consist of performances such as street demonstrations, public meetings, pamphleteering, and petition drives (Tilly Contentious,
Texts, such as *La Ballata degli Incazzati*, the Spanish *Indignados*’s manifesto, and the American “99% Declaration” are clearly components of these repertoires of contention. What these texts and other components in recently deployed repertoires suggest is that protesters participating in the 2011-2012 protest cycle shared two important discursive strands that helped them to formulate their claims: (1) a common critical point of view and critical vocabulary, including orienting key terms, such as “neoliberalism,” and (2) intersecting narratives on the ongoing global financial crisis provided by national and supranational organizations, such as the American Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission and the European Commission, and the mainstream media. The remainder of this chapter will be an examination of these strands.

In their depiction of global civil society, Kaldor, et al., schematize four primary political postures: on the right side are what they call the “neo-liberal right” and the “anti-immigrationist or religious right,” and on the left are the “traditional trade unions” and the “cosmopolitan universalists.” A thorough discussion of their schema is beyond the scope of this paper; what is of interest is that they define global civil society as inclusive of all four postures rather than constituted by merely one or two. In other words, although the most vocal, visible groups are often reformist or critical (what the authors call “cosmopolitan

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12 Tilly argues that repertoires of contention change from place to place and historical period to historical period. The forms of contention – demonstrations, pamphleteering, etc. – that have been adapted in recent protests are not universal. See his discussion in chapter 3, “Repertoires of Contention” in *Regimes and Repertoires*.

13 See their discussion, pgs. 2-4.
universalists” and “traditional trade union”), these groups do not constitute global civil society.

However, these reformist or critical groups do constitute global protest groups participating in the 2011-2012 protest cycle. If, as media commentators and scholars have noted, these protests, particularly in the U.S. and Europe, are, as Sidney Tarrow puts it, “‘we are here’ movements” not movements to influence “policy platforms,” it nevertheless also seems to be the case that protesters share a politically critical perspective (Tarrow, “Why Occupy,” final par.). For example, as will be discussed in a later chapter, the “99% Declaration” assumes a clearly critical posture vis-à-vis current political and economic circumstances and advances a number of clear demands aiming to rectify what Occupy Wall Street protesters see as corrupt governing.

This claim that 2011-2012 protesters share a politically critical perspective should not suggest that they are Marxists, socialists or even necessarily leftist; most disavow any such affiliation. Yet, it is important to distinguish, as Sidney Tarrow does in his article for *Foreign Affairs*, these protesters from groups such as the American Tea Party, for both the Tea Party and the 2011-2012 protesters seek reform and both seek to assume a sort of post-ideological posture. Tarrow argues that the distinction lies in the constituencies of the two movements; the Tea Party predominantly serves “white, middle class Americans” while movements like OWS possess “a shifting configuration of supporters.”

What seems to hold this shifting configuration of supporters together is a common antagonist constructed through a common critical perspective nurtured by a common, critical vocabulary. This perspective is informed by a feeling of outrage against what Stephane Hessel in an interview with the Italian paper *Corriere della Sera* calls “the complicity
between economic-financial power and political power” (Intervista ad Astra). The OWS slogan “We are the 99%” keenly reflects this pervasive sense of outrage against financial and political elites.

In his influential pamphlet Indignez-vous! Hessel, a French Resistance fighter and former diplomat, claims that France languishes under the tyranny of an “international dictatorship of the financial markets (16).[14] “[T]he power of money,” he writes, “which the [French] Resistance fought against so hard, has never been as great and selfish and shameless as it is now, with its servants in the very highest circles of government.” His pamphlet is a call to arms against this financial and political power. “We, the veterans of the Resistance movements and fighting forces of Free France, call on the younger generations to revive and carry forward the tradition of the Resistance and its ideas. We say to you: take over, keep going, get angry.”

Hessel’s is ultimately no appeal to anarchy or even radicalism; indeed, the anger he seeks to evoke is constrained within the “tradition of the Resistance.” Hessel’s Resistance not only fought against an ignominious Vichy government, it also instituted “[a] comprehensive social security plan, to guarantee all citizens a means of livelihood in every case where they are unable to get it by working’; and ‘retirement that allows older workers to end their lives with dignity’” (15). This thus seems to be more of a reformist rather than a revolutionary anger; it is directed at achieving immediate, pragmatic objectives, such as instituting social security, rather than imposing lofty ideals. And although the antagonists he constructs are

[14] The English version of Indignez-vous! is entitled Time for Outrage! The original version was written, of course, in French, and the eighth edition was published in 2010 by Indigene Editions.
clearly financial and political elites, he avoids setting up scapegoats. “Who runs things?” he asks. “Who decides? It is not always easy to distinguish the answers from among all the forces that rule us. It is no longer a question of a small elite whose schemes we can clearly comprehend. This is a vast world, and we see its interdependence” (17). In short, he seems to caution his readers from a facile and stark us-them taxonomy.

Hessel’s pamphlet, originally addressed to French youth, became a cornerstone text for many of the movements comprising the 2011-2012 global protests, inspiring Spanish protesters so powerfully that they crafted their collective name – Indignados – from the title of his text. Italians precariats also borrowed the term in their demonstrations and pamphlets, though less conspicuously and consistently than their Spanish counterparts.

But these groups have not only crafted a name from Hessel’s texts, they have also crafted their identities from their readings of *Indignez-vous*. In the introduction to the Indignados’s manifesto, the authors note that “[t]he Indignados…represent an explosion of creative energy, dictated by the colors of the forms of demonstrations and protest anthems: a new type of mobilization, of many complementary but also contradictory facets” (9). They thus construct themselves as an inclusive group not seeking to destroy, as perhaps their predecessors from the 1960s and 1970s sought to, but to create, as Hessel’s final words

15 Interestingly, although he avoids setting up scapegoats, Hessel doesn’t hesitate to point to George W. Bush as a malefactor. “The first ten years of the twenty-first century…were a period of retreat [from a prior period of social progress], explicable in part by the American presidency of George W. Bush, September 11 and the disastrous conclusions the United States drew from it, such as the invasion of Iraq” (19). He also argues controversially over Israel’s relationship to the Palestinians, and controversially legitimizes Palestinian reprisals against Israel as manifestations of “exasperation” (18).
recommend. “TO CREATE IS TO RESIST,” he closes Indignez-vous. “TO RESIST IS TO CREATE” (19).

Of course, this sense of inclusiveness is developed against a background of antagonism, and, as noted above, the movement’s antagonists are, more or less, the same as Hessel’s. The authors of Indignados, for instance, specifically indict “economic-financial power” (29) as a culprit, echoing Hessel’s alarm at a “dictatorship of the financial markets.” And the narrator of La Ballata degli Incazzati, Italia Peggiore, points a finger at those who would “make precarity a rule of life” (27), implicating governments, supranational financial institutions, and business owners. And the first iteration of OWS’s “99% Declaration” accuses “the institutional and governmental policies pursued by the moneyed interests of the elite 1% [for] hav[ing] destroyed the ability of our government to guarantee the rights and meet the needs of the People.”16 This sounds very much like Hessel’s denunciation of the willful enfeeblement by financial and government elites of those prized “social rights” secured by the Resistance.

One of the key terms used in critical discourse and by the protest movement to identify the policy of elites is “neoliberalism.” Perhaps not entirely surprisingly, the term is often used vituperatively or dyslogistically. In their 2007 study of the history of neoliberalism, Dag Einar Thorsen and Amund Lie find that the concept is mostly deployed in critical discourse as an exhortation “describing…the lamentable spread of global capitalism and consumerism, as well as the equally deplorable demolition of the proactive welfare state”

16 Chapter 6 discusses the two iterations of this text.
It is typically associated by its users with political and economic conservatism, but as Oliver M. Hartwich points out in his 2009 piece “Neoliberalism, the Genesis of a Political Swearword,”

the most curious characteristic of neoliberalism is the fact that … hardly anyone self-identifies as a neoliberal. In former times ideological debates were fought between, say, conservatives and socialists, collectivists and individualists. While there may not have been any other agreement between these opposing groups, at least they would have agreed about their respective identities … In present-day debates … most accused of holding ‘neoliberal’ views would not accept being called ‘neoliberal.’ Either they would insist upon being something else (whether it is ‘liberal,’ ‘classic liberal,’ or ‘libertarian’), or they would simply claim to be misunderstood by their opponents. (4)

Thus, those to whom the term is imputed contest the term as either a misnomer or a misrepresentation. Yet, perhaps precisely because the term is so flatly rejected by those to whom it is imputed, its persuasiveness to users of critical discourse is all the more assured. That is, the term performs rhetorically as a marker for a meaningful “other.” In Burke’s terminology, it represents for critical discourse a convenient “devil term” around which certain devils (political and economic conservatives, international elites, for example) might be amalgamated, and against which a number of god terms (for instance, and depending on who is constructing the axis of opposition, democracy, anarchism, regulated markets, etc.) and gods (precarious workers, protesters in other countries, Keynesian economists, etc.) might be usefully opposed.17 Indeed, its use in critical discourse has become so reified that any move to define the term must seem superfluous. Consider, for example, R.W. Greene and K.D. Kuswa’s paper published in a recent Rhetoric Society Quarterly. The authors rely

17 This discussion should not suggest that I disagree with the typical critical use of the term. Rather, what I wish to highlight is the polarization that the term permits: a polarization that facilitates the formation of an attractive, operationalizable opposition (anti-neoliberalism).
heavily on the term neoliberalism for their argument, but never provide a definition, evidently assuming that their audience will understand and accept the usage. It is unclear if this assumption is entirely warranted, however.

This need for definition becomes apparent when it is recognized that the term possesses a number of meanings. As discussed above, Thorsen and Lie note that it typically references a purported spread of capitalist consumerism around the globe and a reduction in national dispensations associated with the welfare state. In their 2010 book *The Crisis of Neoliberalism* French Marxian economists Gerard Dumenil and Dominique Levy offer a sophisticated version of this definition. For them, neoliberalism as “… a new stage of capitalism that emerged in the wake of the structural crisis of the 1970s … expresses the strategy of the capitalist classes in alliance with upper management, specifically financial managers, intending to strengthen their hegemony and to expand it globally” (1). It is thus a relatively recent project with fairly long historical roots undertaken by political and economic elites mostly in industrial (“advanced”) nations to control the global economy by political and other means (7-10). Because the project expressed through neoliberal policy is apparently exclusively oriented to wealth accumulation, it follows that injurious humanitarian and ethical consequences would be of merely ancillary importance to policymakers.

Yet, not all scholars agree with this evaluation of neoliberalism. Drawing from a Foucauldian rather than a Marxian notion of power, Ahiwa Ong argues that neoliberalism should be read “not as a fixed set of attributes with predetermined outcomes, but as a logic of governing that migrates and is selectively taken up in diverse political contexts” (3). So, while Dumenil and Levy conceive of neoliberalism as a moment within an evolutionary arc
of hegemonic global capitalism, Ong understands it as a cluster of related practices that can be disincorporated and reconfigured depending on culture and circumstance.

Importantly, most protest discourse seems to favor Dumenil and Levy’s position over that of Ong’s; that is, they understand neoliberalism as a particularly vile innovation of capitalism. Consider, for example, how Jaume Botey, one of the authors of the pamphlet *Indignados*, frames his understanding of neoliberal policy. “The *troika* of neoliberalism in Europe: the European Commission, the Central Bank, and the International Monetary Fund-World Bank. Nations are obliged to respond to orders from these diffuse, anonymous, not elected, antidemocratic powers. It’s an uncommon political crisis; politicians had never used their power against their own people in this way” (54). Botey constructs neoliberals as blackmailers and usurpers of democracy, and neoliberalism as a power occult, pervasive, and without historical precedent, and, therefore, very difficult to confront directly. He also constructs it as a controller of wealth; it is embodied in three powerful *supra*/inter/transnational institutions tasked with surveilling and disciplining the world’s wealth.

Interestingly, neither *La Ballata degli Incazzati* nor the “99% Declaration” mentions neoliberalism by name. There may be tactical reasons for this omission; specifically, the authors may wish to avoid appearing unnecessarily ideological. Indeed, protestors have emphatically distanced themselves from partisan positions, claiming inclusion as a foundational value of their movements.¹⁸ If it is uncertain why the term neoliberalism isn’t

¹⁸ *Indignados*, for example, invite participants to dissociate from political and union identifications as a
used in these texts, what is certain is that both La Ballata and the “99% Declaration” attack the global economic and political regime by which their authors and their target audiences feel victimized. Consider, for instance, the way La Ballata’s Italia Peggiore constructs the 2007 financial crisis.

I read about the terrible financial crisis, and learned that, although it had been caused by financial speculation, these very speculators and their banker associates received billions of euros of public money to save them from the crisis that they had provoked. To save them, nations around the world have gone into debt, and to pay off this debt politicians from both sides of the political spectrum are now proposing to slash pensions and health care benefits. (18)

Her narrative is highly polarized; speculators, bankers and politicians are placed in opposition to the people who funded them and whose pensions and health care benefits are being cut to bail them out. Critics of neoliberalism, such as Dumenil and Levy, though offering a far more nuanced reading than Italia’s, nevertheless construct similarly unbreachable polarizations between elites and non-elites. Italia’s narrative about the financial crisis thus resembles not so much those featured in mainstream newspapers and news magazines, but the counter-narratives offered by scholars and other critics.

Like La Ballata, the “99% Declaration” also addresses political and economic controversies, this time from an American point of view. In the section entitled “Suggested Content for the Petition for a Redress of Grievances,” the founding parents of 2.0 demand “[a]n immediate freeze on all primary residential home foreclosures…and new direct means of “underlining the plural and open character of indignation against the political, economic and social panorama” (12). Italia Peggiore describes herself as “an average woman” speaking to and for all precariats (7-8), and therefore presumably outside party and other political-ideological divides. And the “99% Declaration” reaches out to voters “regardless of party affiliation and voter registration status,” inviting participation in the election of delegates who are not “permitted to run on a party line or use any party label” (Working Group, “99% Declaration,” par. I).
mortgages or refinancing to all homeowners by the federal government at the discount window rate (about 0 - .25%) less processing fees incurred by the federal government; all lending institutions shall be barred from the mortgage writing business in favor of these direct federal loans” (Working Group, “99% Declaration”). What is notable about this demand is that it effectively calls for the dismantling of much of the American financial system, and the shifting of financial responsibilities to the United States government. Clearly, Occupiers believe that the current financial system fails to serve their needs. In fact, this position is shared by critical scholars as well.19

Briefly, the United States is regarded by critics of neoliberalism to be the fons et origo of what they call the “financialization” of the economy. Gerald A. Epstein defines financialization as “the increasing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors and financial institutions in the operation of the domestic and international economies” (3). What this definition suggests and what critics of financialization claim is that this increasing role of finance forcefully displaces what Greta Krippner calls the productive economy (4): that is, the traditional industrial and service economies. This displacement is understood to benefit (financial) elites and debilitate non-elites.20 Financialization is also

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19 While critical scholars such as Dumenil and Levy advocate a complete overhaul, so to speak, of the neoliberal system, other scholars, such as Krippner advocate more cautious interventions. The Occupiers’ demand to entirely reconstruct the US financial system thus would not earn support from all scholars.

20 For a more thorough discussion of this, see Napoleoni. In an email discussion, Professor David Ely points out that “[o]ne can argue that the expansion of the financial sector benefitted non-elites since mortgages were offered to marginally-qualified home buyers in the years before the financial crisis. The financial crisis was in part due to efforts to make home ownership possible for less wealthy households.” However, he also agrees that while the extension of credit to a broader group of people may initially have helped those formerly unable to qualify for mortgages, this extension of credit also had the perhaps unintended effect of driving prices up, thus not only creating a greater dependency on credit but also paradoxically impeding many from qualifying
seen as the process responsible for the overextension of credit and the invention of virtually unpriceable financial instruments, both of which, critics argue, contributed to the 2007 U.S. mortgage debacle and its subsequent global manifestations.\textsuperscript{21} In demanding the dismantling of the U.S. financial system, drafters of the “99% Declaration” are striking the proverbial heart of the neoliberal system in the apparent hope of regaining economic well-being and stability.\textsuperscript{22} Their uncompromising demand underscores their belief that bankers and corrupt politicians are to blame for the 2007 financial crisis and that the only way to equitably control the American Dream of widespread homeownership is by abolishing the system currently in place. Like Italia, the drafters of the “99% Declaration” sound more like neoliberal critics than most conventional media commentators; they are working from a counter-narrative rather than a mainstream narrative.

In fact, what the 2011 protests and the three texts under investigation in this paper share is a counter-narrative that is often at odds with the narratives generally offered in the media and government sources. What follows are selections of mainstream narratives from the United States, Italy, and Spain with which (and against which) the protests and protest texts are in dialogue. As will be discussed, each of these narratives and counter-narratives is as normative as it is ostensibly descriptive.

\hspace{1cm} for mortgages. So, while intentions certainly seem to have been charitable, recent results have been disappointing.

\textsuperscript{21} For a fuller discussion see Dumenil and Levy.

\textsuperscript{22} That they may be misguided in some or all of their efforts is a question that must be taken up elsewhere.
CHAPTER 3

NARRATING FINANCIAL AND ECONOMIC CRISIS

The demands of those Occupiers who drafted the "99% Declaration" to dismantle the financial system can be understood as the kind of action that might follow an experience of outraged virtue. Their adoption of language from the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution in the “99% Declaration” analogically connects their situation to that of the Founding Fathers, who after “a long train of abuses and usurpations...throw off such [despotic] Government, and...provide new Guards for their future security” (Declaration of Independence). Occupiers’ outrage, however, is directed at what they see as the complicity between a corrupt government (“entrenched public officials who engage in all manner of corrupt practices for money”) and rapacious business. For instance, the section of the “99% Declaration” entitled “Suggested Content for a Redress of Grievances” offers a long list of demands, such as that corporations no longer be legally considered persons (first demand) and “the rights to clean air, water, safe food, and conservation of the planet for future generations shall no longer be infringed by greed-driven corporations and selfish individuals who care for nothing except money and instant gratification” (99% Working Group, beginning statement of sixth demand).

The virtues against which government and business have offended can be reverse-engineered, so to speak, from these demands/accusations. For example, by constructing government officials in a lowlight as “corrupt” and greedy, the Occupiers’ polar identity is highlighted as honest and charitable. Similarly, by constructing business (and “selfish
individuals”) as “infringing rights,” “greedy,” “selfish,” “caring for nothing except money and instant gratification,” Occupiers’ identity becomes “respectful of rights,” “generous,” “altruistic,” “morally upright.”

Aristotle warns that “outraged virtue [is such a sign [of things to be feared]] when it has power; for it is clear that when a person is outraged, he always chooses to act, and now he can” (Rhetoric 1382b5, emphasis added). While much may have changed from Aristotle’s teaching of rhetoric in 4th century BCE Athens to the Occupy Wall Street movement in 2011-2012, apparently the tendency of outraged virtue to act has not. OWS has occupied virtually every city in the nation and continues apparently unabated in a quest to reform the system. Although the early movement was criticized for having no clear demands, demands clearly are now being made.23 Perhaps a fear of popular reprisal stirred the thinking of journalists and legislators when the 2007-2008 crisis exploded; this certainly is not an unwarranted conclusion when we look at how the media and the government tended to characterize the crisis. For although a number of these characterizations construct polarizations of blame around either bankers or borrowers, the more prominent characterizations represent depolarizations, which distribute culpability to a broad assembly of agents. This distributed culpability, as I will argue below, represents a textual neutralization of outraged virtue; because everybody participated in the downfall of the system, nobody can claim access to a

23 At the outset, OWS seemed to have no specific demands; indeed, the issue of making demands was contested. For example, in a November 17, 2011 article on msnbc.com, Miranda Leitsinger observes that “[a]s the ‘Occupy Wall Street’ protest enters its third month, members are wrestling with an issue as old as the Athenians who first hatched the idea of democracy around 500 B.C.: Should we issue a set of demands and, if so, what should they be?”
higher moral ground. While this trope of distributed culpability may have interpellated some audiences, it seems to have left others, such as OWS activists, unconvinced. As will be discussed, the “99% Declaration” represents a contentious positioning in this dialogue.

On May 9, 2008, WBEZ’s *This American Life* ran a special report, narrated by Adam Davidson and Alex Blumberg, entitled “The Giant Pool of Money,” which constructed a narrative of the 2007 financial crisis based on a “long chain of people … [including] bankers, and brokers, and investors, and homeowners. And everybody along the chain kind of deluded themselves, thinking they could throw out the old rules of banking.” An abbreviated version of this report ran on National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered* on the same day, and two years later, in 2010, the report earned a coveted fourth-place spot on New York University’s Arthur L. Carter Journalism Institute’s “Top Ten Works of Journalism of the Decade 2000-2009.”

In “Act One” of “The Giant Pool of Money,” reporter Alex Blumberg interviews a man, Clarence Nathan, who “worked three part-time, not very steady jobs, and made a total of $45,000 a year, roughly. He got into trouble and needed money. So he took out a loan against his house ....” The type of loan Nathan applied for and received was a “no income verification loan,” and the amount was $540,000.24 What kind of trouble Nathan “got into” is not divulged. However, when Blumberg asks him, “Would you have loaned you the money?”

24 A New York mortgage website explains that “no income verification loans” are “loan program[s] in which the loan applicant discloses the amount of his [sic] income, but is not required to prove it to the lender bank. In other words, the applicant does not submit paycheck stubs, W2s, tax returns and the like throughout the loan process. The loan application is underwritten based on the borrower disclosed income and other qualifying criteria.” <http://www.nymort.com/post/no_income_verification_mortgage.htm>.
Nathan replies, “I wouldn’t have loaned me the money. And nobody that I know would have loaned me the money. I mean, I know guys who are criminals that wouldn't lend me that money, and they'd break your kneecaps.” What this suggests is that Nathan is either a hoodlum or is somehow involved with hoodlums.

Yet, interestingly, Nathan’s story is presented as a representative case: one which suggests that both consumers and bankers share responsibility for the events that led up to the 2007 financial crisis. “[Media reports] often feature an innocent homeowner who was duped by lying, greedy mortgage bankers,” Blumberg argues. “Or if you’re more of a Wall Street Journal editorial page type, an innocent banker who was duped by a lying, greedy homeowner … both categories exist. But Clarence’s case is more nuanced, and much more common.” In other words, deadbeat debtors and greedy bankers not only are relatively uncommon, the relationship between debtors and bankers is obscured by polarized and polarizing stereotypes. Ultimately, the report seems to suggest, neither party should be demonized.

If there is a bad-guy character in “The Giant Pool of Money,” it seems to be a “giant pool of money”: specifically, a global pool some $70 trillion deep and wide.²⁵ Adam Davidson, the second reporter who worked on this story, notes that “the world was not ready for all this new money.” He explains that for “most of modern history, what they [investment managers] did was they bought really safe and, frankly, really boring investments like

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²⁵ The “global pool of money” arguably is a convenient metonymy for investors’ desire for high returns – a metonymy that seems to function to conceal greed through depersonalization.
But, Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan’s decision to keep the federal rate at the absurdly low level of 1% ... sends a message to every investor in the world: you are not going to make any money at all on US Treasury bonds for a very long time. Go somewhere else [with your investment] ... So the global pool of money … looked around for some low-risk high-return investment … They want to beat that miserable 1% interest … And here are these [American] homeowners paying 5%, 9% to borrow money from some bank. So what if the global pool could get in on that action? (Act One)

Why 1% should be considered a “miserable” return on an investment, particularly a safe investment, is not clear from this report. Indeed, given modern portfolio theory, this claim seems simplistic. Of course, when juxtaposed with the “5%, 9%” figures, it certainly does seem paltry. However, the leap from what the Fed offer to mortgage-backed “action” is made without benefit of clarification, and in this leap much is elided. In any case, the “action,” of course, is the mortgage-backed securities market, which according to Davidson “the $70 trillion global pool of money loved ….”

An executive director at Morgan Stanley interviewed by Davidson personified this pool of money as insatiable, suggesting that this insatiability was the true origin of the 2007

26 Why these investments are “boring” is not made clear. Nor does Davidson clarify why this money needs to be invested in financial instruments, instead of, say, infrastructure or capital expenditures. The underlying normative notion that money should make money by buying financial instruments is not investigated; it is assumed.

27 Modern portfolio theory is complex and my understanding is minimal. However, for the purposes of this paper, it is merely important to highlight that this theory suggests that financial portfolios be developed by weighing risk against expected return. Not all investors can tolerate high-risk, high-return investments. Moreover, even those that can may nevertheless require low-risk, low-return investments for diversification. See Marshall and Bansal, 123-143.

28 This paper is not the best place to investigate the contents of this elision. For popular accounts that flesh this out see for example Tett, or Reinhart and Rogoff. Dumenil and Levy’s previously cited text offers a Marxian approach to the issue.
crisis. In order to feed the insatiability of this pool, huge quantities of mortgages needed to be generated and sold to investment firms such as Morgan Stanley, which then structured them into securities. This process led to degradation in lending practices, a dramatic decline in lending standards, and to securitization procedures that resulted in opaque and virtually unpriceable financial instruments. A misguided belief on the part of all parties in the limitless potential of housing prices contributed to the metastasizing financial disaster.

This genesis narrative of distributed culpability, which features a cast of generally well-meaning but ultimately tragically misguided home buyers, homeowners, investors, bankers, lenders, and government officials, is repeated in the *Financial Crisis Inquiry Report* published in 2011 by the Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission. The Commission was appointed in 2009 by President Barack Obama to look into the causes of the financial crisis that started in 2007. It was composed of ten members, six of which were appointed by Democrats and four by Republicans. Like the reporters who worked on “The Giant Pool of Money,” the assenting authors of the Commission locate the blame for events leading to the 2007 financial crisis squarely on the shoulders of virtually the entire nation and on foreign capital. American homeowners, bankers, the Federal Reserve, Presidents

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29 This is how Morgan Stanley’s Mike Francis explains the pool of money in this report. “[W]e almost couldn’t produce enough to keep the appetite of our investors happy. More people wanted bonds [mortgage-backed securities] than we could actually produce. That was our difficult task, was trying to produce enough...From our standpoint, it’s like, there’s a guy out there with a lot of money. And we have got to find a way to become his sole provider of bonds, of mortgage bonds, to fill his appetite. And his appetite is massive” (Act One).

30 This is a nutshell of part of the narrative offered in “The Global Pool of Money.”

31 For further information see <http://fcic.law.stanford.edu/about/history>.

32 Of the ten members comprising the commission, four dissented from the views expressed in the main
Republican), federal and state regulators, rating agencies, CEOs of insurance companies, and foreign investors are all implicated in the crisis, which the report described as “a human disaster, not just an economic debacle” (4).

For example, the first chapter of the report discusses how the Federal Reserve’s policy to hold interest rates very low at the turn of the millennium contributed to a fall in mortgage interest rates; these lower rates drew buyers into the housing market, and this glut of buyers drove up the prices of homes.

Money washed through the economy like water rushing through a broken dam. Low interest rates and then foreign capital helped fuel the boom. Construction workers, landscape architects, real estate agents, loan brokers, and appraisers profited on Main Street, while investment bankers and traders on Wall Street moved even higher on the American earnings pyramid … Renters used new forms of loans to buy homes …. On the surface, it looked like prosperity … [but] familiar market mechanisms were being transformed. The time-tested 30-year fixed-rate mortgage, with a 20% down payment, went out of style. There was a burgeoning global demand for residential mortgage-backed securities that offered seemingly solid and secure returns. Investors around the world clamored to purchase securities built on American real estate, seemingly one of the safest bets in the world. Wall Street labored mightily to meet that demand. (5-6)

This fast-paced section, like most of the report, reads like a novel; the reader’s mental eyes, like the money discussed, rush over the surface accumulating information, but the expectation of accountability is ultimately dashed. “Investors around the world,” demand body of the report. The dissenting views are expressed and explained in two sections at the end of the main text; the first section written by three authors and the second by a single author. The authors of the first section note that “We find areas of agreement with the majority’s conclusions, but unfortunately the areas of disagreement are significant enough that we dissent and present our views in this report” (413). They also go on to say that “The majority’s approach to explaining the crisis…is too broad. Not everything that went wrong during the financial crisis caused the crisis, and while some causes were essential, others had only a minor impact. Not every regulatory change related to housing or the financial system prior to the crisis was a cause. The majority’s almost 550-page report is more an account of bad events than a focused explanation of what happened and why. When everything is important, nothing is” (414, emphasis added). As I argue, perhaps a fear of popular reprisal leads to this kind of neutralizing thinking.
Wall Street’s supply of securities. The “time-tested” mortgage “went out of style” in the same way that apparently fickle consumers in the search for the “new new thing,” to borrow from the title of Michael Lewis’s popular text, caused bell-bottoms to go out of style.

Yet, as the Commission report makes clear, the mortgage-backed securities constructed by Wall Street not only contained a shocking quantity of subprime mortgage loans, but were structured in such a manner that “it wasn’t even clear anymore who the lender[s] w[ere]” (7). A number of lending institutions engaged in fraudulent lending practices, but regulators were slow to respond (12-13). And many home buyers and homeowners were living well beyond their means on cheap credit (5). In short, in their pursuit of the American Dream of wealth accumulation, a lot of people occupying very different social positions blundered. Although the Commission report discusses the failures of responsibility of both the banking system and the regulatory system, full accountability is arguably undercut by the lurking presence of subprime borrowers and the global demand for risky investments.

The Commission report and the report from “This American Life” aren’t the only sources of distributed culpability narratives; indeed, these kinds of narratives are surprisingly widespread. Media outlets as different as the New York Times and Fox News have produced a number of such narratives over the past few years. What is interesting about these narratives

33 Interestingly, while these two narratives note that real wages had been static since the late 1990s and that home buyers/home owners lived beyond their means, they don’t connect these two circumstances to consider that people lived beyond their means because their means were insufficient. This connection certainly would have required evidence. And once the argument was made it would have undermined the distributed culpability strategy adopted.
is that they arguably complicate the formation of subjectivities based on what Aristotle in his analysis of fear calls “outraged virtue” (*Rhetoric* 1382b5). That is, these narratives seem to strip the prerogative of virtue from all subjects. For example, by depicting some homeowners as defrauded by unscrupulous lenders and others as living unrepentantly beyond their means, they construct an ethically ambiguous homeowner subjectivity. This ethically ambiguous subjectivity is reinforced by claims, such as those made in “The Global Pool of Money” report, that most mortgage default cases, like Clarence Nathan’s, involve borrowers who are imprudent (and perhaps, also like Nathan, a bit shady). Moreover, because all subjectivities, including those of bankers, lenders, officials, and investors, are constructed around this same project of ethical ambiguity, a logic of moral hierarchy is effectively neutralized in these discourses. That is, moral outrage is managed in and through these texts by a calculus of counter-position from which a sort of sedate equilibrium emerges.

The neutralization of moral hierarchy within these narratives attempts to foreclose the possibility of action based on moral outrage. That is, no subjectivity either directly constructed within the text or indirectly constructed around the text (such as those of readers) can lay legitimate claim to moral outrage and to the action that such outrage authorizes. These narratives, thus, simultaneously construct and enforce a kind of quietism; there are no good guys or bad guys, they assure: just blundering guys and experts trying to clean up the mess.

The implied fairness of what seems to be a balanced examination of events and persons in texts such as “The Global Pool of Money” and the commission report must seem
particularly persuasive in the chaos of crisis.\textsuperscript{34} And the social and political quietism that these texts exemplify surely represents a powerful model for action and reflection. However, OWS’s recent list of demands makes clear that at least some Americans remain unconvinced by these skillfully crafted stories. Their demand, for example, to effectively dismantle the U.S. financial system is an act of distrust, which invites only one reading: the blame for the 2007 financial crisis and the subsequent upturn in unemployment and imposition of austerity measures rests entirely on Wall Street and the government. OWS’s call to nationalize the financial system is an attempt to not only hold these groups accountable but also to undermine their power.

Effects of the 2007 financial crisis have not been confined to the United States. As Mark Lander observed in September 2008 in his article for the Business section of the \textit{New York Times}, “[b]arely a week after Europeans rebuffed American pleas to join their bailout of the banking system, Europe now faces a financial crisis almost as grave as that in the United States – demonstrating how swiftly the contagion is spreading around the world” (first paragraph).\textsuperscript{35} In 2009 the European Commission issued a 108-page report titled \textit{Economic Crisis in Europe: Causes, Consequences, and Responses}, in which it sought to explain the spread of this financial crisis and to construct a positive ethos of European Union (and

\textsuperscript{34} The texts construct a sense of crisis in a number of ways, but those I’ve particularly examined offer a rapidly paced plot line involving a range of likeable and unlikeable characters in a series of interconnected situations. These textual environments thus seem at times to resemble novels more than news reports or reports by government agencies. Indeed, although the ostensible purpose of these texts is to inform, they do so through what the ancients called “delectare,” delighting.

\textsuperscript{35} The metaphor of “contagion” is widely used in media reports in the United States and Europe to describe the spread of the financial crisis around the globe. However, as will be discussed below, the metaphor is particularly interesting in European media discourses where it is used often to assign culpability to the United States.
American) government bureaucracies involved in managing the crisis. The report locates
the source of the crisis in the United States subprime market and essentially paints a picture
of European banks as victims of American financial innovation gone awry.

The heavy exposure of a number of EU countries to the US subprime problem
was clearly revealed in the summer of 2007 when BNP Paribas [a French bank]
froze redemptions for three investment funds, citing its inability to value
structured products [specifically, financial products which incorporated tranches
of American subprime mortgages] … counterparty risk between banks increased
dramatically, as reflected in soaring rates charged by banks to each other for
short-term loans … At that point most observers were not yet alerted that
systemic crisis would be a threat, but this began to change in the spring of 2008
with the failures of Bear Stearns in the United States and the European banks
Northern Rock and Landesbank Sachsen. About half a year later, the list of
(almost) failed banks had grown long enough to ring the alarm bells that systemic
meltdown was around the corner: Lehman Brothers, Fannie Mae and Freddie
Mac, AIG, Washington Mutual, Wachovia, Fortis, the banks of Iceland, Bradford
and Bigley, Dexia, ABN-AMRO and Hypo Real Estate. The damage would have
been devastating had it not been for the numerous rescue operations of
governments. (Van Den Noord 9)

The financial instruments that had crippled the American financial system and
economy were owned not only by U.S. banks, but by institutions around the world, and this
ownership seems to have been particularly concentrated in Europe. In fact, the report notes

36 According to its website, the European Commission is responsible for proposing “new legislation to the
European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, and it ensures that EU law is correctly applied by
member countries.” It is one of the most prominent branches of the supranational European Union. See

37 Kevin Doogan, Jean Monnet Professor of European Policy Studies at the University of Bristol, writes
“[t]he global economy is represented and perceived as ‘extranational’ or ‘supranational’ acting above and
beyond the national economy and outside the regulative capacity of the nation state, but for the large advanced
economies this is a false dichotomy. The pattern of domestic and overseas investment reveals that the global
economy is not some separate sphere of market forces with its own cycles and business imperatives, but one
that echoes the rhythms of the large advanced economies” (68). This argument complicates and is complicated
by the notion of a “global pool of money” and by the complexities of international finance, as will be discussed
further on. In particular, the global pervasiveness of American high-risk mortgage-backed securities and their
global impact, suggest that while national economies remain absolutely central in any kind of economic or
financial analysis and calculation, a supranational or transnational financial/economic sphere may be a useful
concept not only to explain financial flows, but also to think about how these flows impact national economies,
that devaluations in Europe have been higher than in the United States (24). When BNP Paribas froze the three funds mentioned above, the perception that none of these financial instruments could be valued definitively spread among banks, and this spreading perception is said to have sown a fear of interbank lending. In other words, the trust that connects the different parts of the global financial system and undoubtedly is absolutely necessary for this system to function seems to have been brusquely withdrawn, replaced by obvious mistrust. Apparently, the banks themselves began to mistrust each other.38 If so many financial, insurance, and real estate institutions had done so well, at least for a time, with recent financial innovations, these very innovations were now beginning to be suspect.39

What originated as a banking problem in 2007-2008 expanded quickly to other sectors of the economy. As Emiliano Brancaccio and Giuseppe Fontana argue, the result of the financial crisis was a “generalized decrease of aggregate [global] demand with deleterious effects for the level of output and employment … [between 2007 and 2009 unemployment rates rose in] the UK … from 5.1 percent to 7.76 percent, France from 7.54 percent to 9.11 percent, Spain from 8.61 percent to 17.9 percent” (Brancaccio and Fontana 1).

including consumption behaviors and labor markets.

38 As a result of this mistrust and consequent failure of interbank lending, the Federal Reserve took a number of aggressive initiatives to ensure the continuation of lending. For a review of these initiatives, see the Federal Reserve’s 2009 report to congress <http://www.federalreserve.gov/monetarypolicy/files/20090224_mprfullreport.pdf>. I am indebted to Professor David Ely for this information.

39 The report considers a number of causes for the crisis. Discussion of most of these is well beyond the scope of this study.
As these figures demonstrate, and as I discussed above, Spain’s economy, which was already teetering from internal problems, was hit particularly hard by the spread of the U.S. financial crisis. In a prescient article for the Financial Times, reporter Leslie Crawford describes Spain in 2006 as a “rare bright spot within an otherwise sluggish Eurozone” (sixth paragraph). However, as her article also suggests, that brightness seems to have been emanating from a chunk of fool’s gold. At the time the article was published, on June 8, 2006, “[t]he Spanish economy [wa]s in its 11th year of uninterrupted growth,” (sixth paragraph) sustained by “cheap credit” (eighth paragraph).40 Superficially, things looked promising: construction and consumption were booming; a healthy tide of immigration had lowered labor costs; tourism was flourishing. However, economists and other experts were concerned: a housing bubble was near bursting point; inflation was rampant; and the country’s current account deficit rivaled that of the United States. One economist Crawford interviewed called the situation a “time bomb” (eleventh paragraph). Another declared that the economy was “living on borrowed time” (fifteenth paragraph), while a third argued that “[t]he government could engineer a soft landing by adopting an austere budget, but this is unlikely as 2007 and 2008 are election years” (thirteenth paragraph).

The election, of course, resulted in the replacement of Zapatero’s socialist government with a conservative government. Unfortunately, this doesn’t seem to have

40 The use of cheap credit, of course, means that businesses and families are indebted. The term credit derives from the Latin term “credere,” or “to believe.” An extension of credit implies a belief in repayment. Such belief, though embodied in various legal texts such as promissory notes, credit card contracts, and mortgages, nevertheless recalls what originally must have been the personal relationship between creditor and debtor. It is a relationship completely transformed, as my earlier examination of mortgage-backed securities suggests.
helped; the country’s sovereign debt was subsequently downgraded on several occasions by international rating agencies and remains low. This essentially means that Spain is paying a high rate of interest to borrow money – and borrow money it must to finance its huge debt. As Salvador Marti Puig, a lecturer in political science at the Universidad de Salamanca, asserts that the situation is bleak. He offers an interesting analysis of the economic and political context that was the ground for the emergence of the Indignados movement. Like FT’s Crawford, Puig finds that “huge private debt” was an important contributor to Spain’s collapse (209). However, he also argues that unemployment rates were high prior to the 2011 collapse; in fact, as noted above, they were close to 9 percent (209). In the period prior to the 2011 collapse, young Spaniards’ “interest in conventional politics was weak … and the numbers of those registered for political parties and trade unions were relatively low” (210). Nevertheless, some groups, such as Democracia real ya, one of the key groups responsible for initiating the May 15 demonstrations, were already gaining a large following according to Puig, as were groups like Juventud sin futuro, that “protested against the precariousness and commercialization of education” (211). In other words, the economic collapse was, at least for young Spaniards, the proverbial straw that broke the camel’s back.

41 Guy Standing, Professor of Economic Security at the University of Bath in the UK, makes the interesting case that a huge shadow economy exists in countries like Spain, accounting for “over 20 percent of the GDP” in that country (56). Therefore, “[p]oor employment growth records may be misleading” (57). Indeed, “[i]n Spain, by 2010 recorded unemployment had risen to over 4.5 million, well past the level that trade unionists and others had predicted would lead to riots. There were no riots. Some observers attributed that to traditional tolerance of unemployment and family networks that could provide community benefits. Others thought it had more to do with the thriving underground economy.” Standing’s book was published before the May 15 demonstrations. However, when they finally did occur, the demonstrations were not violent, which seems to confirm Standing’s two theses concerning family ties and black market labor. Indeed, Puig also claims that before the May 15 movement, young people “chose not to work for low wages, staying in their hometowns, living with their parents, and enjoying the country’s boom” (210).
As mentioned in chapter 1, the situation in Italy is nearly as bleak as Spain’s. As of August 31, 2012, the total unemployment rate exceeds 10%, while the unemployment rate for young people teeters dangerously at 33.9%. Furthermore, of those fortunate Italians who are employed, a large number are precariats who work under disadvantageous contractual conditions.\footnote{Chapter 4 investigates at length the language and material conditions of precarity.} In her 2011 book Il Contagio, economist Loretta Napoleoni writes:

> in a working population of 20 million, 3 to 5 [million] are precarious, having only limited-term contracts. These precariats have no rights and no connections to labor unions … The lack of job security conditions the lives of this younger generation to such a degree that they have forgotten their rights. They live in the shadow of unemployment and they are skittish about discussing how they’ve been exploited for fear of losing even their status as slaves. (96)

Several websites have been set up by Italian precariats as fora for information and support. One of these, precaria.org, published a brief article in July 2012 that confirms Napoleoni’s dire picture. The organization estimates that there are now 3.5 million precariats in Italy earning a monthly salary of €836 (“L’esercito dei precari,” lede). However, the cost of living in Italy runs at €39 per day, or approximately €1,186 per month, leaving precariats with a monthly debt of about €350 (“Redditi”). Italian precariats, therefore, not only lack job security, their jobs do not provide them with sufficient incomes to live. Chapter 4 offers a detailed analysis of the dramatic situation of these young Italians.

I have found that a language of blame or culpability has been adopted by many in Europe to describe the crisis.\footnote{A July 2012 Pew Center Research report entitled Pervasive Gloom about the World Economy revealed that by and large Europeans did not blame the United States for the financial crisis. The report found that 12% of polled respondents in Germany and 10% in Britain and France blamed the U.S (11). All other European countries polled came in under 10%; 8% of Spaniards and only 2% of Italians polled blamed the U.S (11).} The European Commission’s report cited above used the
metaphor of states of ice – “frozen” and “meltdown” – to trace the movement of the crisis through the banking sector: metaphors that are quite common in financial discourse and that do not carry connotations of blame. However, many of the most common metaphors are drawn from pathology – infusion, virus, infestation, contagion – while others are drawn from warfare – detonate, explosion, “Trojan horse.” These metaphors function as important tools for thinking about the stages and impact of the crisis, and each metaphor represents the crisis in unique and sometimes troubling ways. That is, each of these metaphors establishes what Kenneth Burke calls a terministic screen. That is, these “terms [not only] affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the attention to one field rather than another … many of the ‘observations’ are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made. In brief, much that we take as observations about ‘reality’ may be but the spinning out of possibilities implicit in our particular choice of terms” (Language as Symbolic Action 46). Because the metaphors used in Europe to characterize the crisis construct, as Burke suggests, the public’s sense of reality, an interrogation of a sampling of these metaphors seems in order. What follows is an analysis of a December 2008 article from Il Sole 24 Ore, an Italian business newspaper similar to the American Wall Street Journal and the British Financial Times. My choice of this article is matter of convenience: my knowledge of Italian far exceeds my knowledge of other

However, a large number of European respondents polled blamed the European Union, and an overwhelmingly large number blamed banks. My research confirms this drive to locate culpability. However, my informal research of French, Italian, Spanish and English newspapers leads me to the tentative conclusion that newspaper reporters craft language that points blame to mostly to the United States and secondarily to Britain. Both countries possess globally important banks, so this may be one reason. But much more rhetorical research needs to be done to confirm my impressions.
continental European languages. This particular article uses metaphors that I have found to be common and rhetorically rich.

This article in *Il Sole 24 Ore* begins by characterizing the subprime crisis as a “contagio planetario,” a global contagion, vectored by managed collateralized debt obligations (Longo). The specific focus of the article is on the infection of a small Italian bank, *Banca popolare di Intra*, which invested in what it assumed to be a high-earning tripartite CDO from Barclays in 2000. Intra acquired the CDO because it had lost a great deal of money in previous transactions and required a high-return investment “to recuperate these lost funds.” Barclays retained management of the CDO and over the next several years, according to the lawsuit Intra filed against Barclays, substituted parts of one of the three tranches with toxic assets. The *Sole* report notes:

[i]f this had been an isolated incident, the story of Intra would merely be a case of unlucky investing. But there have been too many instances all over the world for this to be the case. Hsh Nordbank, a German credit union, sued UBS for similar problems … [having] lost 275 million [euros] … [other victims of CDO investing include] Australian municipalities, the schools of Wisconsin, the Cassa di Risparmio di San Marino [the Savings Association of San Marino] … and even charitable institutions … The list is long: nobody knows exactly how long. The OSCE [Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe] estimated in mid-2007 that the global market for CDOs was worth some 1.3 trillion dollars … One thing is certain – CDOs have in many cases been the ‘Trojan horses’ that transported subprime mortgages around the world. Including to Italy. (Longo)

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44 Professor Alan Rechtschaffen describes these instruments in his 2009 text *Capital Markets, Derivatives and the Law*. “Mortgage-backed securities (MBSs) comprise debt securities issued in the market by entities called CDOs (collateralized debt obligations), created for the purpose of buying mortgage loans from originating banks or mortgage companies, repackaging the accompanying credit risk and selling that risk to investors. The allotted securities generally consist of a number of different debt tranches, the credit rating of which decreases as the yield increases, and an equity tranche” (281). The *Sole* report claims that Barclays substituted assets in the equity tranche.

45 “Se fosse isolata, la storia di Intra sarebbe un caso di investimento sfortunato. Ma gli esempi sono tanti, in tutto il mondo. Hsh Nordbank, un istituto di credito tedesco, ha … fatto causa a Ubs per un motivo simile …
This *Sole* report uses double metaphors – contagion and Trojan horse – that function to amplify pathos. These metaphors evidence, on the one hand, astute strategies of style, and, on the other hand, what Jeanne Fahnestock, in her analysis of figurative language in science, describes as “strategies of reasoning” (viii). 46 Stylistically, metaphors like “contagion” and “Trojan horse” function, to borrow an Aristotelian expression, to “bring-before-the-eyes.” That is, they “prompt audiences to visualize images” (Newman 8-9) and, through such visualization, orient them to appropriate emotion and reaction.

“Contagion,” for example, brings before the eyes a number of macabre images, from woodcuts reproduced in grade-school history textbooks depicting the victims of the 14th century Black Death to gruesome scenes from the eponymous 2011 film directed by Steven Soderbergh. “Trojan horse” brings before the eyes that which misleadingly appears beneficent but is actually lethal, such as Virgil’s “horse of mountainous size” (Kline) concealing a ruthless invading army, and malware – “malicious, security-breaking program[s] that … [are] disguised as something benign” (“Trojan Horse”). 47 Thus, the imagery associated with both “contagion” and “Trojan horse” envisions fear and loss, and

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46 Importantly, Fahnestock’s work in *Rhetorical Figures in Science* is not focused on metaphor. Indeed, she argues that “[t]he tight focus on metaphor in science studies, like the fixation on metaphor and allied tropes in textual studies, has taken attention away from other possible conceptual and heuristic resources that are also identifiable formal features in texts and that also come from the same tradition that produced metaphor, the rhetorical tradition of the figures of speech” (6). Nevertheless, her work does not undermine previous scholarly work on metaphor, but enriches an understanding of figural language not as a strategy of style but as “strategies of reasoning.”

47 For more information, see Wikipedia’s entry on Trojan horse (computing) <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trojan_horse_(computing)>.
thereby exemplifies panic and terror as appropriate emotional responses. Moreover, because
the imagery associated with “contagion” and “Trojan horse” evokes associations with
professionalized disciplines such as medicine, biology, military science, and computer
science, the proper course of action for lay audience members is exemplified as a turn to
expertise.

While the stylistic richness of metaphors like “contagion” and “Trojan horse” is
compelling, so is the cognitive work with which these metaphors are tasked. As a number of
scholars, such as Fahnestock, have argued, metaphors and other figurative language are not
merely stylistic choices; rather, they structure cognition and experience. For instance, George
Lakoff and Mark Johnson claim that metaphor represents an “understanding and
experiencing [of] one kind of thing or experience in terms of another” (455). That is,
metaphors like other figurative language do not clothe understanding and experience, they
actually constitute it. So, to frame the financial crisis in terms of contagion is to understand
and experience it as a virulent, rapidly transmitted disease; likewise, to frame the financial
crisis in terms of a Trojan horse is to understand and experience it as an unpredicted and
unpredictable military weapon. Yet, while both metaphors suggest menace and fatality, they
arrive at alarm by different means, and construct different worlds and constitute different
relational subjectivities.

What kind of world, what kinds of subjectivities are constructed by the metaphor
“Trojan horse”? A thorough exploration of this question is well beyond the scope of this
paper; however, a tentative answer which addresses the issue of how the metaphor may
function cognitively is possible. As noted above, the term brings to mind two related sets of
imagery: on the one hand, the covert action of an invading army, and on the other, the stealth
action of hackers. The worlds thus constructed are either of warring factions or of deviant subcultures. The subjectivities made possible within this metaphor suggest a perversion of mainstream morality and an ethos characterized either by a will-to-war or a will-to-subvert. Understanding and experiencing the financial crisis from the perspective of this metaphor as deployed by *Il Sole 24 Ore* involves thinking about securitizers and related financial and governmental institutions as either an army invading the territory of hapless investors or as a stealthy subculture seeking to undermine the broader culture of investors, consumers and citizens. In both cases, relations are characterized domination and subjugation.

Although the *Sole* report begins with the contagion metaphor, it ends with the “Trojan horse” metaphor, a reframing that represents a strong condemnation, for it suggests that Barclays, UBS and other securitizers were the Greeks bearing gifts to (or hackers hacking into) community savings banks, schools, and “even charitable institutions” as a strategy of war, and of domination and subjugation.

If the “Trojan horse” metaphor underscores the social nature of interaction between securitizers and investors, the “contagion” metaphor occludes this sociality behind an impersonal world of physical and biological laws. Contagion, of course, represents the movement of a pathogen through an ecosystem. A world characterized by contagion is one of organisms whose interactions are complex, varying from mutualistic to parasitic, yet deeply impersonal; that is, this is a world characterized by interactions not relationships. The connection between pathogen, vector, and victim can only be mapped on a purely physical
plane in which morality is irrelevant.\textsuperscript{48} Victimization is understood as contingent or a matter of weakness, such as an impaired immune system.\textsuperscript{49} Dissent and protest are utterly meaningless.

Both the contagion metaphor and the Trojan horse metaphors position continental Europe within spaces of victimization. The Trojan horse metaphor constructs a politico-military victimization, which constructs an antagonistic space of response in which “fighting back” is the logical next step. Re-regulation, such as passage and enforcement of laws restricting certain financial products (of the “toxic asset” variety) or the establishment of a Tobin Tax, might be in line with the telos of this metaphor.\textsuperscript{50} The contagion metaphor constructs a biological-ecological victimization, which suggests that continental Europeans might need to inoculate themselves from some financial pathogen. Thus, instead of re-regulation, the telos of this metaphor suggests that encouraging and enhancing financial innovation in Europe might be a more appropriate response to victimization. Clearly, these responses are not mutually exclusive and the untroubled transition from one metaphor to the

\textsuperscript{48} Although pathogens are usually judged as requiring eradication, it must be underscored that the destruction they wreak is impersonal. Their presence in an ecosystem may seem to be evil to moral agents, but the pathogen itself is incapable of moralizing. A contagion metaphor, then, ultimately configures its tenor as unintentionally destructive, thus implicitly absolving it.

\textsuperscript{49} In a better world, the pathogen would evolve sufficiently to avoid killing the host upon which it depends, and/or the host would develop a sufficiently robust immune system to repel the pathogen.

\textsuperscript{50} In discussing the measures available to the Italian government for dealing with the severe economic crisis crippling Italy, the Minister of Economic Development Corrado Passera argued in favor of a Tobin Tax, which is effectively a tax on all financial transactions. It is my understanding that such a tax would curb financial speculation. See for example <http://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/notizie/2012-06-03/passera-tobin-buona-idea-133132.shtml?uuid=AbotRhmF&fromSearch>. 
other in the *Sole* article suggests that they represent two if not complementary at least not antagonistic ways of responding to the spread of the financial crisis.

There are no victims, of course, without perpetrators, and what this *Sole* report and other reports like it reveal is a language of culpability. The perpetrators are always banks, and more often than not these banks are American or British. The culpability furthermore is constructed as willed rather than incidental: the result of a pietistic greed that pervades the industry.
CHAPTER 4

PROTEST RECRUITMENT IN ITALY: LA BALLATA DEGLI INCAZZATI

On June 14, 2011, some six months after the agonized birth of the Arab Spring and one month after Indignados recolonized the plazas of Spain, Renato Brunetta, then-Minister of Public Administration and Innovation in the Berlusconi government, contributed a short speech at the Convegno dell’innovazione or Convention on Innovation in Rome. The “Convention” is an annual event that convenes experts from government, such as Minister Brunetta, industry, and education, along with members of the general public to discuss, debate, and plan for innovation and renovation all sectors of Italian society.

In addition to the usual attendees, the 2011 conference also attracted a small group of demonstrators – about thirty people – who staged a peaceful protest outside the venue. They wielded large signs, one of which declared “Si scrive innovazione, si legge precarieta’,” or “Innovation is what is written, but precarity is what is read.” This slogan referenced the many innovations in finance and economics discussed and debated in the halls and meeting rooms of the conference and which are believed to negatively affect Italian workers.

51 Unless otherwise indicated, the primary source used for the description of the events at the Convegno is an article from the Italian newspaper Il Fatto Quotidiano, cited below as “Nava.” The online version embeds a video of the events, which I also used to develop my description.

52 For additional information see <http://www.convegnonazionaleinnovazione.it/>.
When the news media later reviewed the events of this conference, nothing was said about the content of Brunetta’s speech. What was discussed and debated, however, were the events that constituted the closing moments of his attendance at the conference. For when Brunetta wrapped up, two female audience members rose from their seats and requested permission of event organizers to engage the minister in a short question-and-answer session. They were told that the minister was pressed for time and therefore could not answer long questions, but after a bit of haggling, the two women are allowed to go to the podium at the front of the room where Brunetta awaited them. In the video of the event, these two women – early- to mid-thirties, well-dressed, holding sheaves of paper in their hands – can be seen making their way through the crowded room to the podium (“Il ministro”). One of them approached the microphone. “Io sono dalla rete dei precari…” “I am from the network of precariats…” She was cut off immediately. “Grazie, e arrivederci. Buon giorno,” “Thank you, and good-bye,” the minister cut in, abruptly turning his back on the women and leaving the stage. He grabbed his briefcase and headed towards the exit heedless of their demands for dialogue.

These coordinated moves – his discursive interruption/laceration and simultaneous physical distancing – can be read as a vicious attempt to nullify the woman speaker’s self-author-ization; the interruption cuts off her voice and substitutes it with his, and his physical distancing amplifies this interruption into a disruption. Perhaps he understands that he has discursively liquidated the woman, because as he pushes his way towards the exit, he grumbles loudly. “Questa e’ la peggiore Italia. Grazie.” “This is the worst Italy. Thank you.” With this final move, he reconstitutes her, but to suit his own objectives. For this final reconstitutive move represents the simultaneous construction of two interdependent
subjectivities. For the comparative-superlative adjective “worst” does not report; it fixes a hierarchical connection with its positive antithesis: best. By constructing the woman as “the worst Italy,” Brunetta positions himself as “the best Italy”: the prudential Italy able to judge and pronounce against that which is worst. He thus claims a position at the center of an ethics and a decorum that produce and reproduce deep gender and class divisions.

In the days following the conference, the Italian media, members of various government entities, and the public attempted to account for these events at the Rome conference. Political, economic, and gender divisions run deep in Italy and the accounts followed the trajectories of these divisions. For example, news media from the right and Berlusconi’s favorable publics portrayed the women as aggressors and claimed that they purposely staged the event to implicate Berlusconi via his minister in yet another scandal. In his daily editorial piece for the right-wing *Il Giornale*, Vittorio Feltri dismissed these women as “descamisados di varia estrazione politica,” or “the shirtless of various political persuasions,” thereby highlighting not only their loyalty to/servitude towards some political master (similar to the loyalty/servitude of Argentinian *descamiscados* vis-à-vis Peron) but perhaps also underscoring their economic poverty (Brunetta and Feltri). News media from the center and left, on the other hand, as well as those publics that oppose the Berlusconi government, were outraged with Brunetta and demanded his immediate resignation. Various worker associations released statements that declared, for example, “The worst Italy are those who insult the people of this country.”

53 “L’Italia peggiore è fatta da chi insulta questo paese.” My translation seeks to preserve the meaning, so
The day after the conference Minister Brunetta modified – perhaps the better word here is mollified – his position. He conceded that in the space of 24 hours he received thousands of insults and threats on his Facebook page, and he declared that he was prepared to chat with “online friends” about the matter. “I was not addressing an entire category of worker,” he insisted. “I was merely expressing a judgment against the people at the event” (“Brunetta e i precari”).

This, then, is the situational context from which emerged *La Ballata degli Incazzati* and which as will be discussed below, represents, among other things, a kairotic response to these events. However, before moving onto the analysis of this text, an examination of precarity is in order, for, as noted above, Minister Brunetta silenced the woman when she said the word “precari,” or in English “precariats.” The term evidently jolted Brunetta, but the immediate context fails to clarify why.

Interestingly, neither the term “precariat” nor the term “precarity” are listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Nor are they listed in *Merriam-Webster*. Both terms do, however, possess entries in Wikipedia, signaling that they are in use, if not yet accepted by lexicographers. The closest equivalents that English dictionaries offer for these terms are the

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54 These terms do exist, however, in other languages. For example, they are listed in the Italian *Garzanti* dictionary as “precario” (definition 2) <http://garzantilinguistica.sapere.it/it/dizionario/it/lemma/411e5a921641ee09cf14c23955e9e32b1545f90> and “precarietà” <http://garzantilinguistica.sapere.it/it/dizionario/it/lemma/ff3ee8cad2155d94c0691907b7a8e0bb40a65de8>. They are also listed in the French *Larousse* as “précaire” <http://www.larousse.com/en/dictionaries/french/pr%C3%A9caire/63296#62588> and “précarité” <http://www.larousse.com/en/dictionaries/french/pr%C3%A9carit%C3%A9>. Spanish has the term “precariedad” <http://lema.rae.es/drae/?val=precariedad>, but the Spanish term “precario” is an adjective not a noun.
noun “precariousness” and the adjective “precarious.” Yet, since the late 1980s, early 1990s scholars have been studying what Manuel Castells and Alejandro Portes call the “informal economy” (11), and it is within this informal economy that precariats have emerged. For Castells and Portes, the informal economy represents a transformation of production and the relations of production. Their analysis of this transformation is neither a celebration nor a condemnation, and they do not use the term “precarity” in this initial analysis. However, the term is integrated rather quickly into critical labor studies as an approximate synonym for “informalization” and “casualization,” and it does possess a negative valence. For example, in response to events that unfolded at the Rencontres Europeennes contre la Précarité, European Meeting Against Precarity in Grenoble, France on December 12-13, 1997, Pierre Bourdieu wrote an essay entitled “La précarité est aujourd'hui partout,” which English translators rendered “Job Insecurity is Everywhere Now.” This English rendering suggests that “precarity” was not yet accepted in 1997, even by English language scholars. Yet, the term is, of course, important in Bourdieu’s essay, which offers a synopsis of the discussions that took place during the event in Grenoble and an analysis of the transformation of contemporary labor relations. “Casualization of employment is,” he writes, “part of a mode of domination of a new kind, based on the creation of a generalized and permanent state of insecurity aimed at forcing workers into submission, into the acceptance of exploitation” (85). Precarity for Bourdieu is thus a contemporary form of oppression.

55 Guy Standing claims that “[t]he descriptive term ‘precariat’ was first used by French sociologists in the 1980s to describe temporary or seasonal workers” (9).
The negative valence of the term is not a recent accretion. In fact, the *OED* etymologically traces “precarity” to the Latin term *precarius*, which signifies “given as a favour, depending on the favour of another, (of property) held by tenancy at will, uncertain, doubtful, suppliant.” The etymology offered by the French *Larousse* dictionary is more gnomic and pungent: “qui s’obtient par prière,” or “obtaining through prayer, supplication.” To be *precarius*, then, is to be at the mercy of powerful forces: to be ensnared in relations similar to those obtained between gods and humans, masters and slaves. However, the definition of the term also suggests that this state of oppression can be mitigated and managed through rhetorical intervention: through the deployment of a certain kind of language – supplication and prayer. The function of language as social ligature is thus stressed (both in the sense of emphasized and in the sense of burdened) under *precarius* conditions; it is emphasized as one of the few means, peaceful or otherwise, available for subordinates to influence both their superiors and their peers, and it is burdened because relations with the former are unequal and communication therefore fraught, while relations with the latter may be more competitive than cooperative.

What this etymology evinces is the difficult terrain that precariats must negotiate. Although the language they use to transact with their superiors and their peers is not prayerful in an obvious way, Burke reminds us that “[p]rayer has its own invitation to the universalizing class distinction, the pleader being by nature inferior to the pled-with” (*Rhetoric of Motives* 178). Precariats’ language can be thought of, therefore, as prayerful in the sense that it is language that reproduces social boundaries even as it seeks to undermine these boundaries. In labor discourses, the precariat, like the Marxian proletariat, stand not
merely opposed but subservient to owners/management. However, the precariat is unlike the proletariat in a number of important ways, which need to be examined.

Guy Standing, the British professor whose work was cited in the previous chapter, explores the origins of the “precariat,” and, perhaps surprisingly, locates the group’s rise in a period of relative economic expansion. “In the 1980s and 1990s “[a]s globalization proceeded, and as governments and corporations chased each other in making their labour relations more flexible, the number of people in insecure forms of labour multiplied” (6). For many Americans this notion of “insecure forms of labor” may seem peculiar. After all, most Americans are engaged in what is known as “at-will” employment: that is, relationships in which an “… employer does not need good cause to fire you” (“Employment at Will: What Does It Mean,” second paragraph). No explicit contract governs these at-will employment relationships, and although all American labor relations are regulated by, for example, laws against discrimination, American laborers arguably enjoy fewer employment safety nets compared to their European counterparts.

Consider, for example, the labor situation in Italy. Regular employment (that is, legal employment not black market employment) in Italy is governed by two classes of contract: union contracts and contracts negotiated between individuals and business owners.56 There are nearly 400 types of contract classified into these two main classes, and even the newer forms of precarious employment are governed by contract, though these forms do not offer many of the safety nets or the higher compensation offered in older contractual forms.

56 For detailed information about labor contracts and labor law in Italy see <www.cnel.it>.
Nevertheless, all contracts offer a modicum of security to employees, including detailed stipulations for appropriate termination. Perhaps more importantly, the contract form itself provides substantiality to the employment relationships; for the employment relationship is the object of legal and bureaucratic intervention. It is defined by and administered through documentation within a legal regime that privileges this relationship. In fact, the first article of the Italian Constitution, under the section entitled “Fundamental Principles,” begins with the declaration “Italy is a democratic Republic founded on labor.”\(^{57}\) An individual’s status of employment is thus rhetorically connected to her status of citizenship; to work is to partake in the community, and therefore to enjoy all of the benefits of membership. In such a system, however, unemployment must feel like a form of exile, and precarity like a painfully drawn out prelude to such exile.\(^{58}\)

As noted above, the precariat are not, Standing argues, “part of the ‘working class’ or the ‘proletariat.’ The latter terms suggest … workers in long-term, stable, fixed-hour jobs with established routes for advancement, subject to unionization and collective agreements” (6). That is, these terms refer to individuals organized into groups who, if nothing else, possess the power of association. But, they are also, he underlines “not ‘middle class,’ as they d[o] not have a stable or predictable salary or the status and benefits that middle-class

\(^{57}\) For an English translation of the Italian Constitution see <http://www.senato.it/documenti/repository/istituzione/costituzione_inglese.pdf>.

\(^{58}\) Although labor regimes vary across Europe, it is my understanding that at-will employment is not common in any European Union country. Germany’s labor regime, which tends to be far less Byzantine compared to Italy’s and Spain’s, is nevertheless governed by contract. See for example <http://www.crossborderemployer.com/post/2012/01/13/Germanye28099s-Labor-and-Employment-Laws.aspx>.
people [a]re supposed to possess” (6). For Standing, the precariat is “a class-in-the-making,” (7). This newly evolving class inaugurates an era of “fragmentation of natural class structures,” which calls for “a new vocabulary, one reflecting class relations in the global market system of the twenty-first century” (7). Indeed, Standing develops a taxonomy composed of seven social groups, which complicates and perhaps supersedes the binary bourgeois-proletariat, and, close to the base of Standing’s taxonomy, “flanked by an army of unemployed and a detached group of socially ill misfits living off the dregs of society” (8) is the precariat.

Standing’s work suggests that the emergence of the precariat class is constituted both by novel material conditions and rhetorical invention. That is, naming, classifying, arguing, and narrating are as much a part of the constitution of the precariat as are their material condition. In Italy, La Ballata degli Incazzati offers one of these constituting narratives; there are, of course, many others.

One of the central sources of organization and information for Italian precariats is a website, precaria.org. The banner running along the top of the website features a photograph of a city and on top of this photograph the slogan “inspira conflitto conspira precario” or “breathe conflict conspire precarity” scrawled in black letters that look like graffiti. The website offers a wealth of organizing materials for strikes, May Days and demonstrations; papers analyzing political decisions affecting precariats; relevant newspaper stories; videotaped interviews of politicians and precariats on relevant issues; data from statistical agencies concerning the status of precariats; and information on international efforts to organize precariats from different countries. For example, a recent paper seeking to develop an international political platform for precariats underscores the sense of isolation precariats
feel and the need for them to recognize common ground with other precariats. “A viable platform for precarity must particularly address those who suffer their working situation passively; we believe that awareness of one’s precarity must spring from experiences outside of strict labor conditions, as an act of infidelity.”\textsuperscript{59} Although precaria.org has been successful in its outreach efforts, a large number of passive precariats still must be recruited in order to create a political platform that will gain the respect of politicians and broad publics. Recruitment, however, is challenging.

Many precariats are frightened that if they become involved in protest actions they’ll lose even the tenuous employment they have. Others simply don’t see themselves as precariats. This lack of identification, in turn, has a number of troublesome causes. One cause is education: only 15% of precariats possess university degrees, while 46% have high school diplomas, and 39% have a diploma from middle school. In a culture characterized by a rigid social hierarchy, these educational differences can be difficult to navigate. Education, however, is not the only significant differential; geography also contributes to fragmentation. Over 35% of precariats live and work in the “Mezzogiorno,” the southern part of the country. Communication and cooperation between the wealthy, industrial north and the poor, agricultural south have been fraught since the country was unified in 1861, and antagonisms between the two areas continue to vex the best efforts of politicians, business interests, and

\textsuperscript{59} “Per costruire e discutere di una piattaforma precaria rivolta soprattutto a coloro che subiscono in modo passivo la propria condizione lavorativa, riteniamo che la consapevolezza della propria precarietà, se ha luogo, può avvenire soprattutto al di fuori della condizione strettamente lavorativa e presuppone un atto di ‘infedeltà.’” My translation seeks to convey the meaning and is not therefore completely literal. See “Piattaforma Precaria” under “Nuovi Materiali” on the left-hand side of the website for the Word document.
labor unions. These spectra of differences in education and cultural formation burden the work of unifying the precariat and of creating a common political platform from which to negotiate with management and politicians. Pamphlets like _La Ballata degli Incazzati_ represent an important component of the outreach effort seeking to attract the 47.9% of Italians between 15 and 34 that constitute the national precariat.  

_La Ballata_ was published in October 2011, coinciding with a labor demonstration in Rome and recapitulating the angst that fueled that demonstration. Four months had passed from Minister Brunetta’s verbal assault on the women precariats, and the publication of _La Ballata_ can be understood as a kairotic transfer of this collective memory to paper, as a way of transmuting it for and fixing it in the public record. It can also be understood in other ways, as will be explored below.

The publisher of _La Ballata_ is Editori Internazionali Riuniti, a small, radical organization that’s been active since 1953. The firm’s mission statement ends with the declaration “Noi amiamo i libri, e con i libri vogliamo agire,” or “We love books, and it is through books that we seek to act” (Aringoli). In fact, their stated intention is to change the world through books. However, the list of books they have published over the years, from authors such as Antonio Gramsci, James Joyce, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Walter Benjamin, confirms a commitment to intellectual and artistic innovation and rigor, but it also suggests a readership that while certainly erudite and politically radical is also canonically conservative. In other words, their publications suggest that they may be preaching to the converted.

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60 Data for February 2012. See “Posto fisso” in Works Cited.
La Ballata is part of their Corsari (Corsair) portfolio, a five-volume collection of paperback, pamphlet-length texts whose emblem is the corsair, a ship typically associated with piracy. The text is small (6-3/4 x 4-1/2 x ½ inches), and runs 22 pages: a representative format for political pamphlets. And La Ballata is indeed a political pamphlet, and can be so classified not merely because of its diminutive, inexpensive physical format, but also because it conforms to the purpose of the genre, which is to polemically engage in issues of broad political concern. As Ralph Pomeroy observes his review of scholarship on the rhetoric of the pamphlet, “pamphleteering is … ‘a traditional kind of rhetoric’ producing an ‘openly polemical form.’” (372). That is, partisanship and persuasion represents salient features of the genre. Pamphleteering is also necessarily kairotic, or “deeply occasional” as Edward Said puts it (Pomeroy 404). For it initiates or responds to ostensibly pressing issues that affect a wide swath of a given community at a specific historical moment. As noted above, La Ballata is a kairotic response not only to Minister Brunetta’s assault but to the continued challenges faced by Italian precariats in a time of increasing fiscal austerity and decreasing political transparency.61 Like all political pamphlets, La Ballata is anti-cathartic; rather than arousing emotion for the purpose of psychological purgation, it seeks to arouse emotion for the purpose of evoking will-to-power in the service of some immediate political action.

In addition to its classification within the pamphlet genre, La Ballata can also be classified as a form of deliberative rhetoric. Aristotle theorized three broad classes (eide) of

61 Many Europeans feel that decisions made at the level of European Union institutions, including decisions affecting national fiscal austerity measures, lack transparency. In fact, the only EU body subject to democratic vote is the European Parliament. All other EU institutional positions, from those in the Central European Bank to those in the EU Commission occur through bureaucratic not democratic appointment.
rhetoric based on what he conceived to be the responsibility of the audience (Rhetoric 1358b1). For him, audiences either participate through observation or they participate through acts of judgment. He classified oratory that situates audiences as observers into what he called the epideictic genre; this kind of oratory typically involves either a celebration or condemnation of one or more persons for action taken in the past. The audience of an epideictic oration is asked to appreciate, not act upon, the occasion. On the other hand, oratory that situates audiences as judges does require audience action, and Aristotle theorized two classes of this oratory: forensic or judicial and deliberative. Forensic oratory requires the audience to judge one or more persons for past actions, and as Aristotle’s taxonomic label suggests, this kind of oratory is characteristically associated with legal controversies. Deliberative oratory, on the other hand, requires the audience to make judgments about future actions involving the entire polis, and therefore affecting the judges themselves.

La Ballata is probably best located within the deliberative class of Aristotle’s taxonomy. For it represents an exhortation to a large group of citizens to judge and act immediately for the realization of a future goal: the goal of forming a cohesive class capable of exercising political power. So, although La Ballata does not directly deal with the five subjects designated by Aristotle for deliberation, the formation of the group of precariats into a viable political agent will indeed influence future decisions regarding Italy’s finances; its involvement in war and peace efforts; its national defense concerns; its connection to local and global partners for import/export agreements; and the framing of its laws (Rhetoric 1359b7). How La Ballata exhorts its audience to group formation is the subject of the next section.
Most Americans are familiar with the kinds of political pamphlets structured as essays, such as Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense* and Charles Sumner’s *Barbarism of Slavery*. The form *La Ballata* assumes, however, is that of a fictionalized, autobiographical narrative. Pamphlets written in this form are not unheard of; as Pomeroy’s work suggests, they can take a number of forms, including, of course, the essay but also verse, epistolary, and narrative (390). Yet, the choice of form is significant. For it permits the narrator to aesthetically exemplify the process of political consciousness-raising and through this exemplification provide a suitable temporary proxy for the reader’s own consciousness-raising. That is, the vehicle of fictionalized, autobiographical narration allows for the creation of a narrator that is, to borrow a Burkean term, consubstantial with an audience of socially atomized, precariously employed Italians, particularly women, in their mid-20s to late-30s with degrees in the humanities. In other words, the form suits both the audience and the purpose of the text.

*La Ballata* is divided into sixteen short sections, seven of which begin with brief citations drawn from either protest music (Woodie Guthrie, Phil Ochs, Bruce Springsteen) or activist literature (*Autobiography of Malcolm X*). The narrative arc, however, can be reduced to three important moments covering the narrator’s lifespan: the initial moment characterized mostly by frustration and a sense of powerlessness, which covers the narrator’s life from birth to leaving university (the first six sections); a moment of complication and redirection, which covers the period after the emotionally difficult termination of the narrator’s relationship with her fiancé and her meeting with an important antagonist – this moment represents the initiation of her radicalization (middle five sections); and a final moment which encompasses a period of intensified radicalization (last five sections).
As noted above, the narrative of *La Ballata* is a fictionalized autobiography framed by the polemical form of the pamphlet for the purpose of creating an experience of consciousness-raising in and for the intended reader. The narrator is, therefore, not surprisingly autodiegetic; that is, the narrator speaks in the first person and is dramatized within the narrative (so a true agent without prognostic abilities or privileged access to others’ minds). The narrator is, in general, reliable; her autobiography is internally coherent, verisimilar with respect to the intended reader’s experience, and conforms to the polemical frame of the pamphlet genre. The narrative is also subject to narratorial commentary; a section functioning as preface and another functioning as epilogue bracket the main story, and light commentary is interspersed within the story itself. What little dialogue the story possesses is direct.

The story takes place almost entirely within Italy; the narrator is Italian, as is the intended audience and probably the author(s), so justification for the setting seems unnecessary. The narrator does describe, very briefly, a trip to some unspecified location overseas, but this trip serves to accentuate conditions in, and her concern with and attachment to Italy. The historical period covered by the narrative extends from the 1970s to the present, and takes place in both provincial and urban areas. Indeed, the narrator is at pains to de-emphasize the importance for precariats of the boundary between these often contrasting zones, which seems fitting given the author’s objective to reach audiences in all areas of the nation.
The narrator offers very little in the way of physical self-description. “I am,” she writes in the first prefatory section of the text, “an ordinary [common] girl who grew up with lots of dreams, and earned a degree summa-cum-laude” (7). This physical indistinctness combined with what appear to be particular details from the narrator’s life functions as a seduction to readers to fit themselves into a story space that actually will seem familiar. For growing up with “lots of dreams” for the future and earning a degree with full honors are common tropes in the life-stories of middle class Italians, particularly of the women in this group. In other words, this combination of indistinctness and specificity initiates the process of what Kenneth Burke calls consubstantiality. “[A] way of life [for example, a common culture] is an acting-together,” he writes, “and in acting together, men have common sensations, concepts, images, ideas, attitudes that make them consubstantial” (Rhetoric of Motives 21). The narrator’s physical indistinctness and her mentioning of experiences with which her readers will be familiar function as ligature and create a psychological space in which acting-together becomes a possible. So that, what begins ostensibly as an autobiography of a single individual ends as a kind of (auto)biography of an entire group. For the narrator begins with the declaration “I am Italia Peggiore and this is my story” (7, emphasis added) and ends with the exhortation, “You’ve read this story. Now, what are you still waiting for” (29, emphasis added). This pronoun change represents the consummation of a textual consubstantiality between narrator and reader that should lead to extra-textual consubstantial action.

62 “Sono una ragazza qualunque, cresciuta con tanti sogni e laureate col massimo dei voti.” Unless otherwise indicated, all translations are mine.
The first moment in the narrative arc begins with the narrator telling about her birth in an unnamed province at the end of the 1970s, in a period marked by political violence. Her upbringing, however, is not unusual; she grows up watching cartoons featuring strong female protagonists, and believes that as an adult she will be like them (9). She is alternately optimistic about and diffident of her future; she feels that she will help to “change things,” that she will not live like her parents (9). After college she takes a brief trip overseas and although, as noted above, she appreciates the openness and possibility she discovers, she ultimately returns to Italy to construct her future (10). She enters the “‘job market,’ a technical term” she finds peculiar (11). “One buys objects at the market,” she notes, “so [this job market] brings to my mind ancient slave markets. Men and women exposed, evaluated and valued, controlled, and, in the end, chosen mostly on the basis of price. Or else it [the job market] brings to mind the little outdoor markets that sell clothes. I imagine myself next to a pair of shoes or a cheap shirt” (11).63

She finds it difficult to integrate into this job market. Her jobs are temporary, poorly paid, dull: very far from her childhood dreams. Her parents complain about what they perceive to be her failure. “You can’t find a job or a husband,” her mother tells her, “instead you continue to be a parasite to us” (14).64 Nevertheless, the narrator keeps trying. She watches television and reads newspapers to try to make sense of her situation, and the talking

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63 “Feci ingresso in quello che gli esperti chiamano ‘mercato del lavoro’. Una locuzione che mi ha sempre fatto un certo effetto. Al mercato comprano oggetti e io mi figuravo la scena come nei mercati di schiavi di antichità’. Uomini e donne esposti, valutati, controllati e, infine, scelti soprattutto in base al prezzo. Oppure immaginavo un mercatino di vestiti di oggi. Mi figuravo accanto a un paio di scarpe o a una maglietta da pochi euro.”

64 “[n]on sai trovar ti ne’ un lavoro, ne’ un marito e resti qui a fare la parassita.”
heads and the journalists tell her that she is actually experiencing the very freedom she has always dreamt about. She finds a boyfriend; they talk about starting a family, but since each still lives with parents and since neither can count on a long-term job, the relationship eventually fizzles. “What kind of future could we give a child,” the narrator asks. “How could we put children in a world that even we don’t know how to live in” (16).65

The second moment of the narrative begins in this place of social isolation and quiet desperation. This section begins not as a number of the previous sections with lyrics from popular protest music, but with a quote attributed to Malcolm X. “Usually when people are sad, they don’t do anything. They just cry over their condition. But when they get angry, they bring about a change” (16).66 The narrator begins to pay more attention to the people around her, to spend time surfing the internet in hopes of finding more people like her. She reads about the terrible economic crisis and realizes that the middle class has become enslaved. One day she meets a young, successful entrepreneur who represents a condensation of her antagonists. He does not come from wealth and is self-made, so to speak, and when she asks what the secret of his success is, he doesn’t quite know how to respond; he pretty much possesses the same qualities that most other people possess. What he does know is that he has succeeded and that it is completely fair for some people to succeed and command and for

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65 “Come avremmo potuto mettere al mondo qualcun altro, se non sapevamo neppure noi come restarci, in quel mondo.”

66 What is interesting about this particular citation is that it’s the only one in the entire text that is translated from English into Italian. And it occurs at the pivotal moment in the text. What this suggests is that the author wants to ensure that readers will follow the emotional crescendo being constructed through the narrator’s story. In short, the quote represents an important marker of the rising pathos of the story.
others to fail and be commanded (20-21). This encounter depresses the narrator, whose self-image as a complete failure seems in danger of fossilizing.

The last moment of the narrative begins with the lyrics attributed to the protest singer, songwriter Phil Ochs. “Now the strikes were bloody, and the strikes were black as hard as they were long, In the dark of night Joe would stay awake and write, In the morning he would raise them with a song, In the morning he would raise them with a song” (22). As noted above, the young entrepreneur she had previously met represents a proxy for a host of antagonists that have made her life miserable. But she is not without help. At a job interview she meets a young woman carrying a large bag full of bright brochures proclaiming “No to precarity,” and declaring “Take back the future.”67 They exchange a few words about their respective backgrounds in the waiting room. She discovers that the young woman is highly qualified and has been offered a number of opportunities overseas. She asks her why she doesn’t take them. “I want,” the young woman tells the narrator, “to change things. If I were to leave Italy, it would amount to surrendering, and to letting them win” (24).68 Although the two women do not meet again, the young woman’s stories and the slogans she carries about encourage the narrator to reconsider her self-image, her experiences, and her place in Italian society.

67 “No alla precarietà” And “riprendiamoci il nostro futuro” (24). I’ve chosen to translate this last slogan in a not entirely literal manner in order to convey its snappiness. A literal translation would be “Let’s take back our future.” Of interest in this scene of the text is the centrality of print. The affect the brochures have on the protagonist echoes the consciousness-raising objective of La Ballata and of all political pamphlets. What this suggests is that print retains value as a means of political communication even in a wired world.

68 “Io voglio provare a cambiare le cose. Se lasciassi l’Italia, sarebbe una resa e loro avrebbero vinto.”
She begins to read more, to seek and meet up with other people in her situation, and as she finds more people like her she feels heartened. She realizes that the situation of which she is a victim is not her fault. “I am a serious, competent, passionate person, and in many ways also extraordinary and unique” she declares. “But my tendency to introspection is much less strong today and if at times I happen to close myself in my own thoughts, I only feel an incessant anger and desire. In fact, now I know that I am not a defendant in some trial, that I never committed a crime, that I am not an insect, but that I am a beautiful, intelligent, young woman. Above all, I now realize that they are the guilty ones” (27).\(^{69}\) Unlike the Kafka characters to whom she had earlier felt such an unbearable affinity, she actually discovers the identities of her antagonists. “They” are politicians and entrepreneurs, who take advantage of the hard-earned skills of precariats to earn more profits and who “are making precarity the rule of life…for both the young and the not-young” (27).\(^{70}\)

It is, of course, virtually impossible to calculate the effectiveness of *La Ballata* on its intended audience. Statistics about sales are unavailable, as is feedback from readers. Furthermore, the text was neither reviewed in major print and online Italian publications nor in social media, such as Twitter and Facebook. In lieu of this data, a brief analysis of how the text might be read could provide some clues regarding its reception.

\(^{69}\) “Io sono una persona competente, seria, appassionata e, per molti versi, straordinaria e unica…la voglia d’introspezione e’ molto meno forte di un tempo e se mi capita di racchiudermi in me stessa a pensare, sento solo l’incessante ribollire di rabbia e desiderio. Infatti, adesso non solo so che non sono imputata in nessun processo, che non ho commesso nessuna colpa e che non sono un insetto, ma so di essere una bellissima, intelligente, giovane donna. Soprattutto, ora vedo che la colpa e’ loro.”

\(^{70}\) “…stanno facendo della precarieta’ la regola di vita…Dei giovani e dei non giovani.”
A surface reading of *La Ballata* clearly indicates that the text is an exercise in consciousness-raising and a call to arms. At the end when the narrator transforms, as if by a kind of enchantment, what up until then has been the narrator’s story into the reader’s personal story and demands the reader take action, there can be little doubt about the polemical nature of this textual project. Antagonists have been sketched and even named: for example, Silvio Berlusconi. And while allies have not been specifically named, they have nevertheless been given sufficient definition to identify with ease: consider, for example, the young woman whose bag was full of bright protest brochures, or the group of precariats that are evoked at the end of the text. Readers are thus provided specific markers with which to orient themselves in the political field. At the surface, the text does not invite a deeper reading; the movement from beginning to end is rapid and decisive, and the single character, the narrator, is accessible: even her love of literature seems to be more of a matter of consumption than production. She is not, in short, a complex artist requiring scrutiny.

A more detailed reading is, of course, possible and presents some interesting complications. What such a reading reveals is a very rich intertextuality. Although as numerous scholars have argued, all texts are dialogic and marked by intertextual references, this particular text possesses so many of these references that it suggests a commitment to polyvocality. For not only are numerous citations intertwined with the narrative, both the title and the author’s name are borrowings, and the very fabric of the text is threaded with implicit and explicit references to a wealth of literature sources, some of which were mentioned in the analysis offered above. Naturally, this rich intertextuality can be understood as a move to enhance the narrator’s ethos. She not only appears learned, but her knowledge of literature represents a marker of her membership in the group of people that are both the text’s
intended audience: those with degrees in the humanities. She, therefore, is trustworthy to this particular audience. However, the rich intertextuality suggests more than mere ethos enhancement. It suggests, as will be discussed below, a polyvocality that complicates the polemics of the text.

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, when Minister Brunetta addresses the women precariats at the conference he calls them “italia peggiore,” the worst (of) Italy. The author(s) – we don’t know who or how many they are – of La Ballata antiphonally transforms this epithet into a name: Italia (first name) Peggiore (surname), and adopts it as the authorial pseudonym. (In English this pseudonym would be “Italy Worst”). The author ironically recovers Brunetta’s offensive epithet not only as an encomiastic proper name, but as the authorized voice that appropriates his voice/insults. Italia’s subjectivity is thus defined, literally and figuratively, by Brunetta.

Italia is, of course, the name of the nation, but it is also a female name, and, in fact, the narrator of the text is female. Through this juxtaposition or collapsing of nation and individual both the narrative voice and the authorial space are opened to plurality. A female voice is synechdochically made to speak for, or to use Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s terms, “re-present and represent” (275) the entire nation (of precariats). In his work on master tropes, Burke observes that all synechdochic “conversions imply an integral relationship, a relationship of convertibility” (Grammar 508). This notion of convertibility is particularly interesting when applied to La Ballata for it suggests that both individual and nation may represent/represent each other, that, to paraphrase Burke, microcosm is identified with macrocosm (Grammar 508). The intertextual, polyvocal commitments evidenced in this text certainly support this extension of Burke’s claim; from the cited music to the borrowed and
ironically reconfigured pseudonym, the discursive references and appropriated voices constitute Italia Peggiore. But through her synecdochic act of re-presenting/representing in *La Ballata*, Italia constitutes the nation.

The title *La Ballata degli Incazzati* confirms this apparent commitment to polyvocality and intertextuality. For, as with the pseudonym, the title of *La Ballata* references an Italian film released in 2009 entitled *La Ballata dei precari*. The film follows a group of young precariats as they deal with the daily challenges that are the consequences of their precarity. Both the title of the book *La Ballata degli Incazzati* and the title of the film *La Ballata dei precari* represent ironic appropriations of a fifteenth-century ballad entitled “La Ballade des Pendus,” or “The Ballad of the Hanged Men,” by François Villon. It seems that Villon wrote this ballad while waiting to be sentenced for murder and contemplating his fate on the gallows. An examination of a couple of the connections that obtain between “La Ballade des Pendus” and *La Ballata degli Incazzati* provides an interesting gloss on the latter.

The most obvious connection between the two pieces is the word “ballad” (“ballade” and “ballata”), which occurs in both titles. The term “ballad” has been used loosely historically, but today it generally refers to “narrative songs that have been circulated widely, chiefly by word of mouth” (Millard 124). While many of these songs are associated with authors, many others are not. The author of the “Ballade des Pendus” is, of course, known (even well-known in Europe), whereas, for example, the author of “The Wife of Usher’s Well” that appears in an anthology edited by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow is not.\(^71\) The

issue of authorial designation is important because the author often serves as the ultimate source, the final arbiter of and authority on the meaning of a text. Authorial vacancies undermine the notion of a single, correct reading thereby legitimating a variety of readings.

In his critique of the author function, Roland Barthes observes that “[o]nce the Author is removed, the claim to decipher the text becomes quite futile.” Indeed, anonymous and pseudonymous texts possess no such author-ity and therefore, as Barthes notes, the “writing [therein] ceaselessly posits meaning ceaselessly to evaporate it, carrying out a systematic exemption of meaning.” Villon’s “Ballade” can be read authoritatively by framing the reading with reference to what is known about Villon’s life. The same cannot be said for La Ballata; although the narrative is autobiographical, no reading can appeal to an author and assume the mantle of author-ity. Yet, by what authority does Italia Peggiore speak the words “You’ve read this story. Now, what are you still waiting for?” As noted above, the narrative surreptitiously slides from being Italia’s autobiography to being the autobiography of the reader. The authority to insist on action, then, should seem to originate with the reader herself. But this seems rather risky: the presumption that a common, difficult autobiography is sufficient to induce action seems unwarranted.

Perhaps what warrants the presumption is the powerful echo from all of the intertextual references which La Ballata possesses; for each of these references derives from some well-known author: Dante, Kafka, Salgari, Montale, Charles Dodgson, Malcolm X, Woody Guthrie, Bruce Springsteen, Phil Ochs. Thus, although Italia Peggiore is completely inscrutable as a source of author-ity for the reading of La Ballata, the readings of these other texts tend to be standardized by the communities of discourse to which readers of La Ballata presumably belong. Thus, these standardized readings carry the narrative along a given,
predictable trajectory. Although these intertextual references (and their standardized readings) can seem to represent a rather paradoxical appeal to authority given the anti-authority posturing of La Ballata, they can be read in light of their possible ability to officiate as proxies for the author function and therefore can be read as a subversion of that function. What remains when the author function is thus subverted is a chorus of textual and hermeneutical voices rather than the autarky of the single author’s voice. (Political) action is configured as authorized not by some Big Brother authorial figure, but by this chorus (the reading social body) in which the reader may also be participant.

The second comparative aspect between Villon’s “La Ballade” and Italia’s La Ballata is an inverted resonance between the voices speaking these two texts. The narrator of Villon’s poem speaks with profound remorse and a yearning for redemption. As he imagines and depicts for his audience men, including himself, hanging from the gallows, he says “You see us tied here, five, six:/As for the flesh that we nourished too much/It has long since been eaten and rotten,/And we, the bones, become ashes and powder./Of our pain let no one make fun,/But pray God that he wills to absolve us all!” The images are harrowing and underscore a sense of deep despair and hopelessness. In contrast, at the end of the text the narrator of La Ballata not only seems to exhibit no remorse, she seems to yearn for revenge. “We want our future and if they won’t give it to us, we’ll come and take it. We are not only indignant,” she insists. “We are pissed off, and the blood in our veins boils like lava” (29).72

72 “Vogliamo il nostro future e, se non ce lo daranno, ce lo verremo a prendere. Noi non siamo solo indignati. Siamo incazzati e tutto il sangue che abbiamo nelle vene ribolle di lava.”
The images are menacing (“we’ll come and take our future”) and astounding (boiling blood), suggestive of implacable mobs.

Yet, it isn’t entirely clear how much of this fiery language is actually bravado. Indeed, a similar orientation obtains between both the narrator of Villon’s poem and the narrator of *La Ballata*. Both contemplate difficult futures: the former remorsefully, as noted above, and the latter ironically, but also ambiguously. For although Italia ironically reverses “pendus” (“hanged men”) to “incazzati,” (“those who are pissed off”) and although in the epilogue her language and descriptions are menacing, the image of the (wo)man awaiting hanging remains discernible beneath the defiant language interspersed throughout the text. In other words, the text is woven from two threads of emotional language: one is the language of political rage and defiance and the other is the language of the hypersensitive aesthete given to bouts of melancholy and fear.

The resulting tension arguably undermines the polemical objective of the text: to recruit the reader to combat precarity. Indeed, since, as noted earlier in this chapter, so many precariats hesitate to join organizations because they fear losing jobs, Italia’s fear, though well camouflaged, may confirm the careful reader’s worst apprehensions.

What recommends *La Ballata* as a successful example of pamphleteering is its brevity; its conformity to intended reader’s expectations; its compelling narrative arc; and its appealing intertextuality and polyvocality. However, the careful reader may read the emotional tension within the text as unresolved and therefore as unresolvable, and as a result may reject the text’s call to action.
CHAPTER 5

THE EPIDEICTICS OF M15

At the beginning of March 2011 a Spanish grassroots organization called Democracia Real Ya! (Real Democracy Now) sent out a summons to several national websites to mobilize a demonstration for May 15, 2011. “We call on all [Spanish] citizens to gather on May 15 under the banner ‘Real Democracy Now. We are not merchandise in the hands of politicians and bankers.’ We encourage you to join without symbols from any organization so that we may be heard as a single voice” (Ya en marcha). The objective was to protest against a government seen to be corrupted by national and international bankers and by supranational institutions like the European Union as well as international institutions such as the International Monetary Fund. Spain’s economy had produced a massive housing bubble from about 1995 to 2006. According to the Financial Times, the prices of homes rose by 150% in eight years, and the country’s four-percent inflation rate rendered it uncompetitive with its principle trading partners (Crawford, seventh paragraph). Unemployment was relatively high in this eleven year period, but when the financial crisis that began in the United States in 2007 spread to Europe, Spain’s unemployment rate soared, growing to over 21% by March 2011 when Democracia Real Ya began its online mobilization campaign.

73 “Convocamos a todos, en calidad de ciudadanos, a salir a la calle el día 15 de Mayo, bajo el lema ‘Democracia Real Ya. No somos mercancía en manos de políticos y banqueros’. Te animamos a que te unas sin símbolos de ninguna organización para hacer que se escuche una sola voz.”
The turnout on May 15 was impressive, particularly since the summons was published in most mainstream papers only a few days before the demonstration was to take place. The exception to this late media attention was El País, the country’s left-leaning paper, which picked up the story in mid-April. Thousands of Spaniards took to the streets in more than fifty cities on that bright Sunday in mid-May. Inspired by the Arab Spring and Stephane Hessel’s book Indignez-vous!, they began to call themselves Indignados: those who are indignant. Most were young and either unemployed or part of the army of precariats moving from one low paying temporary job to the next. But Spain’s youth was not the only group represented; young families and retirees were also present in not insignificant numbers (Alcaide).

What seemed to have started off as a demonstration destined to last a few days or, at most, a few weeks has morphed into a movement called 15M (15 Mayo) that continues to make itself heard. For instance, in early June 2012, a small subgroup calling itself 15MpaRato in an ironic nod to Rodrigo Rato, a notorious politician and banker, summoned internauts to an online crowdfunding event to raise money for a legal team to prosecute Rato. They managed to collect over €19,000 from approximately 11,000 supporters in 24 hours (Elola). Economist Loretta Napoleoni whose work was cited above described the relationship between Spanish politicians and Indignados as constituted by a “wall of incomprehension” (7). The metaphor is certainly apt, but it is a wall Indignados seem committed to tear down.

In an article published in La Verdad, the major newspaper of Murcia, Spain, twelve days after protesters begin to occupy Madrid’s Puerta del Sol an op-ed writer worries about the effects the 15M movement will have on Spain’s upcoming elections. “The political obscurantism of the demonstrators,” he warns, “will have repercussions at the ballot box”
He compares protesters to Ortega y Gasset’s masses, “who have no life project and drift,” and disparages the movement as an episode of youthful anger reminiscent of the demonstrations in France, 1968.

A few days later, Barcelona’s El Mundo publishes an article entitled “La acampada de Sol pierde el rumbo,” offering a reflection on the ongoing experience of the protest. The report begins “[o]n 15 May 2011 hundreds of youths united with the ambitious goal of changing the world” (Fernandez-Pacheco, first paragraph). The language and tone seem patronizing, and the reporter rather dismissively compares the protesters to hippies of the 1960s. She is not, perhaps, as castigating as the reporter from La Verdad, but her piece nevertheless suggests a kind of frivolity at the heart of the 15M movement.

Democracia Real Ya, the grassroots organization that planned the demonstrations, describes itself and its objectives rather differently from these media reports. The manifesto published on the group’s website and read and distributed during the demonstrations begins:

We are ordinary people. We are like you: people, who get up every morning to study, work or find a job, people who have family and friends. People, who work hard every day to provide a better future for those around us. Some of us consider ourselves progressive, others conservative. Some of us are believers, some not. Some of us have clearly defined ideologies, others are apolitical, but we are all concerned and angry about the political, economic, and social outlook which we see around us: corruption among politicians, businessmen, bankers, leaving us helpless, without a voice. (“Manifesto”)  

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74 “El oscurantismo politico de los manifestantes…tendrá sus repercusiones en las urnas electorales.”
75 “El 15 de mayo de 2011 cientos de jóvenes se unieron con la ambiciosa meta común de cambiar el mundo.”
76 This English translation is offered on the Democracia Real Ya website.
There is no evidence in this text either of countercultural hipsters or Ortega y Gasset’s listless masses. Underscored instead are the protesters’ identity with mainstream Spanish life, their political and religious diversity, and their shared resentment of disadvantaging power structures. Moreover, this self-representation accords with the above-cited report from *El Mundo*, for although the report is patronizing, protesters probably would recognize themselves in some of the descriptions. For instance, “Puerta del Sol,” *El Mundo* tells its readers, “is occupied by hundreds of people who recognize love, brotherhood, and respect for others as basic pillars of society …” (Fernandez-Pacheco, seventh paragraph). The report notes that discussion and debate are encouraged and decision-making communal in the makeshift tent camps or *acampadas* that have been organized in the plazas. Of course, the report also highlights how this commitment to openness undermines efficiency, but the value of efficiency is the reporter’s not the protesters’.

If many of Spain’s media outlets offer reports and op-eds like the two cited above that are critical or somewhat tongue-in-cheek or even nonplused about the 15M movement, *El Pais*, Madrid’s somewhat left-leaning newspaper is arguably more thoughtful. For instance, one of its op-ed pieces attempts to situate the movement historically. “15M was not born on the day of 15 May 2011, although the protest owes its name to this date. Instead, its history can be traced back over at least the past decade of protests in Spain …. The mobilizations of 11M [demonstrations held on 11 March 2004 in the wake of the Madrid train bombings by Al Qaida], as those of 15M, took place in a period of elections and both events were
reactions to crisis situations” (Fajardo, second and fourth paragraphs). By connecting recent demonstrations with previous demonstrations, *El Pais* rationalizes and normalizes rather than stigmatizes or pathologizes the 2011 protests. Indeed, the writer of the op-ed notes “[w]hat the 15M protests signal, in my opinion, is the revolt of a large part of society against a new kind of despotism, which, through the mechanism of elections, has reformulated the old motto of … despotism (“everything for the people, but without the people”) to govern in the name of the people but without the people” (Fajardo, eighth paragraph). In short, the op-ed writer demonstrates sympathy for the goals of the movement.

What I’ve been trying to highlight in this brief analysis of Spanish media reports and commentary on the 15M movement is their variability. Some construct the movement disparagingly, others skeptically, while still others construct it approvingly. Through these constructions the media offer orient audiences to the movement. That is, they offer audiences a perspective, which the audience is invited to occupy and from which they may view, understand, and interact with the movement. Of course, these perspectives are representative; habitual readers will more or less recognize their own ideological, ethical commitments in the analyses.

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77 “El 15-M no nació el día 15 de mayo de 2011, aunque a ese día deba su nombre, sino que su historia se puede rastrear, como mínimo, a lo largo de la última década de protestas sociales en España…Las movilizaciones del 11-M, como las del 15-M, tuvieron lugar en pleno periodo electoral. Ambas fueron reacciones ante situaciones de crisis …”

78 “Lo que las movilizaciones del 15-M vienen a señalar, en mi opinión, es la rebelión de una buena parte de la sociedad contra una nueva forma de despotismo que, utilizando las elecciones, reformula la vieja máxima del despotismo…("todo para el pueblo, pero sin el pueblo") para gobernar en nombre del pueblo, pero sin el pueblo.”
As orientations, these newspaper pieces thus embody and perform an epideictic function, for they are not merely disinterested descriptions, but construct and promote certain ethical positions. That is, they assign praise or blame, constructing the movement around a binary of virtue and vice. For example, the report from La Verdad cited above frames the movement as an episode of youthful dissipation, whereas the El Pais op-ed frames it as quasi heroism. The El Mundo piece, though apparently neutral is merely more subtle. For example, its title, “La acampada de Sol pierde el rumbo,” “The encampment of [Puerta del] Sol loses direction,” positions the reader to accept the reporter’s argument that protesters’ well-meaning commitment to cooperation is fatally undermining their goal of political change. “One of the protesters explains that ‘all voices are heard in our meetings.’ However, other Indignados complain about the impairment of decision-making [under these conditions]” (eighth paragraph). The 15M movement is thus constructed as well-meaning, but ultimately misguided and ineffective in its idealism. The El Mundo reporter’s characterizations and tone construct an orientation that condescends and that therefore seems to reside above the polarities of virtue and vice. Yet, it performs and invites a merely facetious neutrality, for it offers judgment and a space for judgment even as it seeks to occlude this offering. As Kenneth Burke notes, the “use of weighted words … makes all men rhetoricians” (Rhetoric of Motives 94). It also makes them ethical.

Aristotle observed that “the line between virtue and vice is one dividing the whole of mankind” (Aristotle, Basic Works, Poetics 1448a3). Burke updates this observation when he notes that “[i]n the surrounding of himself with properties that name his number or establish his identity, man is ethical” (Rhetoric of Motives 24). Identification is constructed through the ascription of properties, qualities, characteristics – none of which are disinterested, since
identity construction itself is the process whereby interests are aligned (or, as the case may be, misaligned).

This process of identity construction thus relies on an epideictic function; the properties ascribed either construct a subject through the use of terms of praise that reproduces a given culture or society’s values and virtues, or they construct a subject through the use of censorious terms that seems dislocated with respect to these values. So, as noted above, La Verdad constructs protesters through a censorious terministic screen, thus positioning readers to condemn the movement, while El País constructs them through a commendatory terministic screen, thus positioning readers to applaud the movement. In short, as Burke’s work suggests, the epideictic function seems to be intrinsic to language use.

However, as Aristotle conceived of it, epideictic was, along with the deliberative and judicial, a genre or species (eide) of rhetoric; he did not seem to think of it as a function of language. Specifically, it was the species of rhetoric that conducts and performs praise and blame. The performance of praise depicts and displays virtue and the honorable, whereas as the performance of blame depicts and displays vice and the disgraceful or shameful (Rhetoric 1358b5, 1366a1). In Aristotle’s scheme, “the greatest virtues [to be lauded in epideictic speeches] are necessarily those most useful to others,” and justice, courage, and liberality are these greatest of virtues (Rhetoric 1366b6). Justice “is a virtue by which all, individually, have what is due to them and as the law requires … courage … [is a virtue] by which people perform fine actions in times of danger and as the law orders.” And liberality involves “mak[ing] contributions freely and … not quarrel[ing] about the money …” This suggests that for Aristotle ethical discourses (and their embodiment in epideictic) are informed by behaviors: in his examples, ensuring that people have their due (justice); setting aside
personal fear to serve the community (courage); and good-naturedly contributing to communal funds when necessary (liberality).

Ethical discourses are also characterized by eulogistic terms. When praising, Aristotle advises to “always take each of the attendant terms in the best sense; for example, [one should call] an irascible and excitable person ‘straightforward’ and an arrogant person ‘high-minded’ and ‘imposing’” (Rhetoric 1367a29). Ethical discourses, thus, are informed by certain kinds of action thought to ensure the continued viability of the community and terms that have gained a positive valence in community use. Epideictic speech is a form of ethical discourse and reproduces these features, for, as Aristotle makes clear, in such speech a person and/or event is instantiated terministically as acting in praiseworthy or blameworthy ways and therefore as either virtuous or vile.

The 15M movement inspired not only media reports, like those cited above, which performed an epideictic function; it also inspired entire epideictic texts, one of which is a small political pamphlet entitled *Indignados*. This pamphlet resembles *La Ballata degli Incazzati* in a number of important ways. It is published, for example, by Editori Internazionali Riuniti and is part of the Corsari portfolio. It was published in October 2011. Its physical format is exactly the same as *La Ballata*, only *Indignados* is nearly three times as long, running 64 pages.

Like *La Ballata*, *Indignados* can be classified into the genre of political pamphlet, and as such, one of its objectives is to recruit adherents. Yet the objective of recruitment is not a call to action; rather, it is to guide the audience “to a disposition toward action,” as Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca put it in their analysis of epideictic (54, emphasis added). That is, the objective is to form perspectives, attitudes that can be quickly mobilized when action
becomes necessary. Indeed, Aristotle called audiences of epideictic *theoroi*, observers, in contrast to the *kritês* or judges of deliberative and judicial oratory, and he indicated the convertibility of epideictic into deliberative (*Rhetoric* 1368a35-36), suggesting that once a disposition is in place action is readily consequent, perhaps not entirely dissimilar to the transformation of potential energy into kinetic energy.

In his analysis of Aristotelian epideictic, Gerard Hauser notes “that Aristotle thought epideictic was a form given to the excesses of display” (14). If this is the case, and my reading of Aristotle’s work in *Rhetoric* does not support Hauser’s reading, *Indignados* bears no trace of these kinds of excess. The text does contain photographs, though they are black and white, and small, so they testify to rather than dramatize events. The text also features the lyrics of a protest song, but it too represents a rather subdued testimony. Still, the text does work to display the movement, and thereby “mak[es] manifest,” as Lawrence Prelli argues in the introduction to his edited collection *Rhetorics of Display*, “the fleeting ‘appearance’ of excellence in human experience that otherwise would remain ‘unnoticed and invisible’” (3). However, the excellence *Indignados* seeks to portray is a certain kind of ethical excellence, and perhaps because ethical excellence is subtler than, say, the excellence of athletes, the display offered is suitably refined.

All of the chapters are written in a journalistic, third person voice and, indeed, are best described as short reports or essays that run from 2 to 16 pages in length. The journalistic genre suits the authors’ purpose to introduce the 15M movement to those with little knowledge of it, and it is also well suited for their epideictic task, for it encourages a kind of linguistic asceticism or reportorial self-denial, which displays 15M rather than its scribes.
The political pamphlet *Indignados* consists of seven chapters, including a very brief introduction and conclusion, neither of which has been assigned an author. The chapter following the introduction also has no author assigned to it. It seems likely that these three chapters were written collectively. Authorial attribution is offered, however, for four chapters, one of which appeared in modified form in the newspaper *El Pais*. Interestingly, *Indignados* is a collection of texts that have been translated from Spanish into Italian, but it is not clear if the Italian editor commissioned the authors to put together some writings to explain the 15M movement to an Italian audience, or if the text has a Spanish analogue. I could locate neither such an original nor any other translations.79

The authors teach at universities in Spain. Rafael Diaz-Salazar is a professor in the Department of Political Science and Sociology at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid; Oscar Mateos is a professor in the Department of Education and Social Work at the Universitat Ramon Llull; Jesus Sanz is a professor in the Department of Social Anthropology at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid; and Jaume Botey is professor in the Department of History at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona. Interestingly, in his analysis of Aristotelian epideictic, Hauser champions the argument that “the epideictic speaker is an educator” (10), and it would seem that this is literally true in the case of the authors of *Indignados*. But it is also true in Hauser’s sense that the epideictic speaker “serves … as a teacher of civic virtue” (14). For, as will be discussed below, the authors of *Indignados* stress

79 That the text is a translation is clear. The translator’s name – Silvia Guarnieri – is prominently displayed on the title page. Moreover, my research online revealed that one of the chapters is a revised version of an article published in *El Pais*. 
that the work of the 15M movement is to “reaffirm the existence of basic rights: home, work, health, education” (12).

All of the authors are members of a foundation called *Cristianisme e Justicia*, or *Christianity and Justice*, whose website describes it as “an educational organization promoted by the Catalan branch of the Society of Jesus. The organization was created in 1981 in order to advance the goals of Vatican II and the consolidation of these goals in the Jesuit Congregación General 32, which highlighted to its members the important task of ‘the service of faith and the promotion of justice’” (“¿Quienes Somos?”) The organization is headed up by more than 70 professors who are experts in social work. Given this background, one might expect that *Indignados* would be framed in religious terms, or that it might promote a strictly Catholic point of view. Yet, I don’t think this is the case. There is, for example, no mention in the text that the authors are lay members of a branch of the Society of Jesus. And although a strong ethical stance is taken, it seems more catholic than strictly Catholic.

The Introduction to *Indignados* is barely two paragraphs long, and begins with a common opening strategy – telling readers how difficult the authors’ task is. “It’s no easy undertaking to describe the mobilizations that took place in Spain starting on 15 May

80 “Cristianisme i Justícia es un Centro de Estudios promovido por la Compañía de Jesús de Catalunya. Fue creado el 1981, con el interés de ser una respuesta a las líneas del Vaticano II, y a sus concreciones a la Congregación General 32 de los jesuitas, la cual señalaba a sus miembros como tarea prioritaria el servicio de la fe y la promoción de la justicia.”

81 Nevertheless, my own reading of *Indignados* certainly has been influenced by my research on the authors. I think this will be evident in my analysis of the text.
2011…” (9). This strategy serves a number of important purposes; it alerts readers to the complexity of the topic; it allows the establishment of an authorial tone that is modest, thereby shaping a positive ethos for the intended author(s); and it, of course, introduces the project and the subject to be treated: 15M. The remainder of this chapter consists of description of the movement, “which has the pretense of wanting to be remembered by a country slapped by a grave financial crisis,” and a reiteration of purpose, “a group of interpretations offered by those with direct experience” (9). This reiteration underscores the point that the authors do not intend for this text to be read as constituting an exhaustive analysis of the 15M movement. This move forecloses eventual criticism that the text is inadequate or that some points of view are not represented.

**DALL’INDIGNAZIONE ALLA SPERANZA**

The second chapter entitled “From Indignation to Hope,” runs 16 pages, the longest in the text. As noted above, no author is ascribed to it, so like the Introduction and Conclusion, it was probably co-authored. But what is actually seen on the page is, paradoxically, an authorial absence. This absence with its hint of co-authorship is striking, for it seems to reflect the ethics propounded by the 15M movement and those of the authors’ organization *Cristianisme e Justicia*. That is, it seems to exemplify the choice to value

82 “Non e’ compito facile raccontare le mobilitazioni verificatesi in Spagna a partire dal 15 maggio 2011 ....”

83 “… che ha la pretesa di essere ricordato nella memoria di un paese schiaffeggiato da una grave crisi economica” and “… un insieme di interpretazioni legate a esperienze dirette …. “

84 “[V]uole essere un insieme di interpretazioni legate a esperienze dirette ….” In fact, a Google of Jaume Botey turns up YouTube videos of the professor speaking at one of the *acampadas* in Barcelona.
sharing (brotherhood) over egoic interest. It thus demonstrates the authors’ commitment to the movement’s values, thereby authorizing them in their function as storytellers for the movement.

This chapter, in fact, provides a narrative of the movement that reads a bit like an adventure story. The movement itself is configured as the story’s valiant protagonist who must combat self-serving politicians, cruel law enforcement brigades, and a hostile media. The story begins with *Democracia Real Ya*’s summons of citizens to demonstrate and within three paragraphs moves to laying out the political platform that undergirds the movement. This platform section represents an extended suspension of the narrative, running about four pages. However, it is comprised of short, declarative sentences dense with the language of demands. “Politicians and other public officials must be required to divulge their net worth” (12). “Raise taxes on the wealthy and on banks” (14). “No internet control” (15). “Reduction in military spending” (15). So although the narrative has been suspended, the staccato toned sentences force the reading along at a machine gun pace.

The narrative picks up right after the demand to reduce military spending. “The turnout [of the 15M demonstrations] is much greater than even the most optimistic of predictions: the demonstration becomes one of the most massive citizen mobilizations, more massive than the traditional union demonstration on the May Day of two weeks ago” (15). What this shifting moment that juxtaposes demands and celebratory narrative underscores is

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85 “L’adesione va oltre le previsioni piu’ ottimistiche: la manifestazione del 15M diventa una delle maggiori mobilitazioni cittadine, piu’ numerosa della tradizionale manifestazione sindacale del primo Maggio, di due settimane prima.”
the apparent popularity of 15M’s political platform. Although no overt call for cohesion is
made to the reader in this moment, cohesion is exemplified by the text and, as part of the
reading experience, becomes paradigmatic to the reader. In other words, the text practices a
kind of sympathetic magic on the reader, who having responded to the storytelling tone at the
beginning of the text with the usual suspension of disbelief, now finds herself willingly
drawn into the story’s ideology, and into the ideology of 15M.

This key moment of textual enchantment is followed by a question. “But how did this
path begin and how was it organized” (16). This question serves two important purposes.
On the one hand, it anticipates the ideal reader’s response, projecting her into the text in the
form of an active, questioning presence, thereby committing her to the denouement of the
story. And on the other hand, it redirects narrative thrust to a necessary flashback, which will
function, to borrow a metaphor from the authors’ religious ideology, as a sort of via crucis or
textual pilgrimage for the reader, reinforcing her personal connection within and to the

The flashback that follows this question takes up the remainder of the narrative, and
begins with a very broad statement concerning the movement’s moment of genesis. “The
idea [for the movement] is born from the desire to excite [popular] mobilization in the
context of existing social, political and economic difficulties, but not excluding other
problems” (16). There are, of course, no subjects in this passive construction: no

86 “Ma come’ iniziato questo percorso e come si e’ articolato?”
87 “L’idea nasce dal desiderio di suscitare la mobilitazione nel contesto sociale, politico ed economico
esistente, ma includendo riferimenti anche ad altre problematiche.” My translation is not literal, but seeks to
identifiable author to give face to the movement. Rather, 15M is described as having arisen from communal difficulties, from the condensation of a multiplicity of voices and exigencies. The next sentence thrusts the reader from Spain into Iceland, where constitutional reforms were passed that allowed “justice to be done and that opened the way for the imprisonment of those responsible for a financial crisis that nearly ruined the nation” (16). The communal difficulties experienced by Spaniards are not different from those experienced in Iceland; a financial crisis attributed to banking gone bad drags down the entire nation. Iceland resolved its crisis in a way that the authors evidently admire and want emulated in Spain: constitutional reforms and incarceration. Iceland thus functions as a paradigm for the shaping of the platform of 15M and as the only subject in this initial paragraph that inaugurates the chapter’s passional flashback.

From this genetic and rather generic space which is constructed as the birth place of 15M, the text inscribes a path that runs from online social networks (Twitter is the most prominent) to the plazas of Spain’s major cities and small towns. Colorful descriptions of the development of the acampadas, of clashes with police, of the expanding base of support are offered, as are commentaries on the state of the movement at different moments, and on the responses of the media. A small, black and white photograph of an aerial view of Puerta del Sol crammed with people provides visual testimony for these descriptions and commentary. And two footnotes direct readers to websites for further information. The final paragraph reproduce the meaning of this sentence.

88 “…far giustizia e arrivando a incarcerare alcuni responsabili della crisi che aveva trascinato il paese in rovina.”
references an observation made by “the Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stieglitz … [who] declares how impressed he is by the energy of the movement and its courage to ‘replace bad ideas with good ones’” (25). If at the beginning of this chapter Iceland represented an exemplar for Spain, by the end, the perfection of identification, to use Burkean terms, has ensued, and Spain itself has been transformed into an exemplar.

**IL 15M E LA COSTRUZIONE DI UNA NUOVA POLITICA**

The third chapter, entitled “15M and the Construction of a New Politics,” is the first chapter that possesses an authorial designation. It runs seven pages, and given the title’s emphasis on politics, it isn’t surprising that the author is a professor of political science and sociology. A first iteration appeared on May 26, 2011 in somewhat modified form as a commentary (in the section “Tribune,” “Tribuna”) in *El Pais* under the title “Insurreción del precariado y victoria del PP,” “Insurrection of the precariats and the victory of PP.” The question that the revised piece in *Indignados* poses and seeks to answer is: “are we Spanish schizophrenic [for celebrating 15M and then voting for the conservative *Partido Popular* in the 22M (May 22) elections]” (27). The short answer is, no we’re not.

Diaz-Salazar, the author of this chapter, argues that “[i]t was a vote that sought to punish the government [Zapatero’s leftist coalition] and above all to punish the head of that government [Zapatero]” (30). In other words, citizens who participated in or in any case approved of 15M were not inconsistent in either handing their votes to the conservative party

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89 “Siamo schizofrenici noi spagnoli?”
90 “E’ stato un voto di castigo nei confronti del Governo e soprattutto nei confronti del suo capo…”
or in abstaining from voting; their behavior in the elections was a sign of their disgusted with
the previous government.

Between the posing of the question at the beginning of the piece and the answering
towards the end, Diaz-Salazar offers a polemical analysis of the political and economic
situation in Spain, and particularly of what he calls “the antagonisms between citizens”
(27). He bisects Spanish society into two groups: a small group “of those who are satisfied
and integrated” and a larger group of “those marginalized by the well-off” (28).
Government and other institutions are controlled by the former group, and therefore are
largely irresponsible to the needs of the larger group; 15M is a response of this larger group to
these injustices.

In the middle of his essay he cites the lyrics of a Spanish protest song called “The
Master of All This,” or in Italian “Il padrone di tutto questo.” The song is comprised of
dirteen, sardonic anaphora that begin with the words “Many thanks,” or “molte grazie,” and
end with an observation about how government or business or media practices have
destroyed people’s lives (29-30). It terminates with the amplified demand “React! React!”
Some of the words and images are startling. “Many thanks for the freedom of expression on
cultural wagers, betting on Channel 5 [presumably a television station] that shoves it in your
ass and and gives you pleasure” (30). Most are dripping with anger. “Many thanks for this
opportune and necessary [welfare] cut, for this lesson in pragmatism and reality” (30).

91 “…antagonismi esistenti tra i cittadini”
92 “…i soddisfatti e gli integrati…” and “…gli emarginati dall società del benessere.”
Indeed, the terminal demand “react” represents a natural crescendo point, galvanizing the reader into action.

This is the first moment in the *Indignados* pamphlet the slides from epideictic to deliberative speech. It is a moment of anger liberated, but importantly it is guided by the author. He commiserates and does not seek to palliate these difficult feelings associated with oppression. However, the call to action he makes at the end of his piece seeks to harness these feelings into an alternative anaphora “… a neogandhian strategy of resistance, of civil disobedience, of occupation of public spaces … of civic education and organization …” (32). This strategy of action is exactly the kind associated with 15M, which denounces all forms of violence. The piece thus ends in both an epideictic and deliberative mood; it rationalizes and celebrates the movement as an epideictic should, but like good deliberate rhetoric it also calls for participation.

**IL 15M MOVIMENTO STORICO IN COSTRUZIONE**

If Diaz-Salazar’s chapter offers an examination of the movement (and a call to action) developed from a purely political perspective, this third chapter, entitled “15M: a Memorable, Ongoing Movement,” represents a historical and social contextualization of 15M. The author, Oscar Mateos, is a professor in a department of education and social work and his piece runs ten pages. The main claim is that M15 is an pioneering social movement but one that will exercise long-term and wide-ranging effects on the political and social

93 “… una strategia neogandiana di resistenza, di disobbedienza civile, di occupazione dello spazio pubblico … di organizzazione ed educazione civica …”
fabric of the country. Mateos examines the circumstances that led up to the movement, reiterating Diaz-Salazar’s contention that Spanish society has been characterized by socio-economic polarization (35). He traces the movement to earlier global movements in the 1990s and early 2000s, such as the Zapatista movement in Mexico, the anti-globalization movement, and the protests against the war in Iraq (40). He contends that representative democracy is experiencing a moment of crisis due to cronyism, corruption and disconnection (37). And he notes how during the year that preceded the emergence of 15M a torrent of information “denouncing the cause of the [financial] crisis and appealing to mobilization” was loosed on the public, urging people to wake from their lethargy (37). He also observes how important the internet has been in helping people not only to communicate, to break through their isolation, but to organize encounters and events. He also comments on the centrality of Democracia Real Ya in coordinating these encounters and events.

After he develops this background, he begins to build the case for his claim that 15M is innovative and enduring. Three features, he argues, distinguish the movement, “the novel political culture proposed … the political and social agenda [of the movement] and the way this agenda has been constructed; [and] the adoption of the internet as a key point of reference for discussion and mobilization” (40). Taken together these distinguishing features provide the movement an irresistible impetus to move people and create lasting change. He notes that 15M is not a “revolution of young people only, but of people of all...
ages who are indignant about their living conditions and indignant with institutions” (41). He thus differentiates it from the movements in Europe and the United States of the 1960s, which were driven by mostly young people. He ends the chapter with a final encomiastic thrust.

Nobody knows who or when this [financial and political] crisis will end. Nobody knows how existing economic and political systems will change, but one thing is clear: thanks to 15M, at least in Spain, many of these changes will adopt forms that didn’t previously exist. 15M is making history and history is in continuous construction. (43)

This chapter is fairly heavily footnoted for an informal article: a total of eleven in ten pages. All of these footnotes refer the reader to websites, thereby re-enacting the centrality of the internet in the pages of a book. The piece also features an untitled, black and white cartoon composed of two vertically aligned vignettes. The top one presents a man placing a sealed ballot in a box, beneath a caption that reads “Every once in a while … the celebration [fiesta] of democracy. The bottom vignette shows the same man sleeping, and the caption in the second reads “Meanwhile, the siesta of democracy” (36). The play on the words and images is, of course, obvious: the substitution of the f in fiesta for the s in siesta and the change of posture of the man highlight and critique the spotty representation that the author feels characterizes contemporary democracy. These contextual features – the footnotes and cartoon – reinforce the central work of the text: to panegyrize 15M. But, the footnotes

96 “… rivoluzione dei giovani, ma di tutte quelle persone, di ogni età’, che avevano in comune l’indignazione per le istituzioni e per le proprie condizioni di vita … ”

97 “Cada tanto…la fiesta de la democracia.” “Entre tanto…la siesta de la democracia.”
particularly suggest a slide from epideictic into deliberative, for they encourage the reader to look beyond this text at websites constructed to elicit participation.

**NON SIAMO MERCI NELLE MANI DEI POLITICI**

Chapter five, entitled “We Are Not Merchandise in the Hands of Politicians,” runs seven pages, and offers an appreciative evaluation of a number of slogans the 15M movement. The placement of these slogans in the text creates striking white spaces that seem to magnify the slogans, even though the font is the same. Jesus Sanz, the author, is a professor of Social Anthropology, so the analyses he presents are not specifically rhetorical. His discussion focuses on origins: the groups responsible for developing the slogans and/or the historical moments and sentiments that the slogans seek to encapsulate and commemorate. His analysis covers 36 slogans, some singly, others in groups.

The first slogan he examines is “Without home, without work, without retirement, without fear” (45). Sanz explains that the slogan seems to have been used first by the group Youth Without a Future, *Juventud sin Futuro* and that it calls attention to the degraded conditions in which many young people live. He provides disturbing statistics that flesh out these conditions, including employment figures; “43.5% [of youth are unemployed] and precarity [stands at] 56%” (45). Rhetorically speaking, the form of this slogan is figured with anaphora and asyndeton, which imbue it with monotony and thus reproduces tonally the dragging feeling that apparently characterizes the lives of these young people. However, the

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98 “Senza casa, senza lavoro, senza pensione, senza paura.” The word “pensione” should be translated as “retirement pay,” but I chose to omit the word “pay” in an effort to remain faithful to the form.

99 “…la disoccupazione giovanile ha raggiunto nel 2011 il 43,5 per cento e il precariato il 56 per cento.”
final word “fear” breaks this tonal incantation on a cold note, reversing the trend; apathy is transformed into a barely veiled threat. Although Sanz does not offer explicit rhetorical analyses, as previously pointed out, he does suggest that the defiant attitude expressed in this slogan is “very present in 15M” (45).\(^{100}\)

Another slogan Sanz examines reads, “Yes, we camp” (46), a riff on Barack Obama’s 2008 campaign slogan “Yes, we can” (La Ganga).\(^{101}\) “Yes, we camp” refers to the acampadas that were established in plazas throughout Spain after the first 15M demonstration. My reading of the slogan also suggests that it hints at an appreciation of President Obama, for the slogan is not figured with irony. Rather, rearticulates the chord progression of the piece similar to the way progressions are rearticulated in an improvised jazz tune. It is an extension of the sentiment expressed during Obama’s campaign. Sanz observes that the emergence of this slogan marks an important moment in 15M’s evolution: the moment when the demonstration is transformed into an occupation. He characterizes this moment as embodying “an act of courage, ingenuity, and improvisation that will be decisive” (46).\(^{102}\)

Sanz’s analysis of 15M’s slogans serves not only to offer entry to a part of the movement’s verbal repertoire of contention, but to explain and panegyrize the movement via these slogans. He repeats much of the data contained in previous chapters, but in a different

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\(^{100}\) “… molto presente nel 15M.”

\(^{101}\) It may also be a reference to the United Farm Workers’ slogan “Si se puede,” which may have been the original inspiration for President Obama’s 2008 presidential campaign slogan “Yes we can.”

\(^{102}\) “Un atto di coraggio, ingenuita’ e improvvisazione, che risultera’ decisivo.”
form which appeals to readers’ aesthetic sensibilities. However, as Aristotle’s work on gnomic sayings in *Rhetoric* suggests, slogans may also deliver powerful logical appeals. Consider, for example, the M15 slogan “We don’t need violence. We have reason” (49).\(^{103}\) It is, of course, composed of two statements, the second of which provides a reason for the first. Aristotle indicates that “if the cause is added and the reason, the whole is an enthymeme” (*Rhetoric* 1349b2). As Kennedy observes, Aristotle believed that enthymemes were “key to logical persuasion” (22). Enthymematic slogans are powerful because they often encapsulate appeals to all three *pisteis*, logos, pathos, and ethos; for they offer reasoning, they often highlight emotion, and they also may enhance the speaker’s ethos. Aristotle observes how gnomic sayings, such as maxims and slogans, “make the speech ‘ethical.’” Speeches have character insofar as deliberate choice is clear, and all maxims accomplish this because one speaking a maxim makes a general statement about preferences, so that if the maxims are morally good, they make the speaker seem to have a good character” (*Rhetoric* 1395b16). Protesters thus gain much positive ethos through well-formulated slogans. Indeed, Sanz may have mined these slogans precisely because they reflect the positive ethos of 15M participants and thereby provide a kind of ready-made epideictic for the movement.

**IL 15M E LE SUE SFIDE**

The penultimate chapter is entitled “15M and Its Challenges” and runs a short five pages. The author, Jaume Botey, is a professor of history, and in this chapter he traces two historical moments to 15: the French student movement of 1968 and the rise of

\(^{103}\) “Non abbiamo bisogno di violenza. Noi abbiamo la ragione.”
neoliberalism. He finds the 1968 movement quite very different, arguing that the goal of that movement was to revolutionize society, while the goal of 15M is to enforce true democracy (54). He locates the source of the world’s financial problems in an intensification of neoliberalism, which he argues began in the 1980s (53-54). However, he points to the warnings sounded by Stiglitz, Krugman, and Soros about impending financial disaster, thus recuperating mainstream economic positions for the movement. In these analyses he seems to frame 15M in a more conservative light than the authors of previous chapters.

However, towards the end of this chapter, he cites a text that was read at Puerta del Sol on May 21, 2011, which represents a rousing cry to action, ending with the invitation “Occupy the cities’ squares. We await you” (55). He thus seems to complicate his own frame. Perhaps what this apparent inconsistency underscores is the complexity of the movement, for it seeks to transcend affiliations of all kinds, including all of them, but reframing them with a combination of old and new commitments.

The text terminates with six criteria that the author hopes will continue to characterize the movement: non-violence; public debate and discussion; leaderlessness; decentralization; participation of citizens; and action that is legitimate even if not always legal. He thus extols the virtues of the movement in the same moment as he seeks to guide its decisions.

**CONCLUSIONI**

The final chapter entitled “Conclusions” is two pages or four paragraphs long, and as noted above is not associated with an author. It recapitulates in broad brush strokes what the

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104 “Occupy le piazze. Vi aspettiamo.”
previous chapters argued, and it offers a final epideictic reflection on the 15M movement. It notes that “the movement enjoys huge favor with the population,” and has provided much needed hope to a people wallowing in resignation (59). But it also sounds a cautionary note. “Shared indignation is both a strength and a weakness: in the first stages of the movement, indignation undoubtedly served to unite heterogeneous social sectors and to construct a shared base upon which to articulate a position of protest. But this won’t be sufficient for the future” (60).105 The movement will need to move beyond indignation if it is to survive and create change. The authors, however, are optimistic. 15M may indeed represent the avant-garde that “reinvent[s] democracy and subtract[s] from the market some sectors of society and life that are not and can never be commercializable” (61).106 These are the final words in this chapter, and they underscore the difficulty the movement faces, for it seeks a kind of change that is not merely political, but cultural: a change that has global repercussions because the global and local no longer form a stark binary but a point of interpenetration. And yet in depicting the uncommon challenges that the movement faces, the authors of Indignados offer the movement the highest form of praise, for as Aristotle notes, “[a]nd [people value] what no common person does; for these deeds are more praiseworthy” (Rhetoric 1363a29).

105 “L’indignazione condivisa e’ allo stesso tempo un punto di forza e una debolezza: in un primo momento, l’indignazione e’ senza dubbio servita per riunire settori sociali molto eterogenei e per costruire una base condivisa sulla quale articolare la protesta. Ma non bastera’ per il futuro.”

106 “… reinventare la democrazia e sottrare al mercato alcuni ambiti della societa’ e della vita, che non sono e non potranno mai essere commercializzabile.”
CHAPTER 6

CONSTITUTING AND RECONSTITUTING
COMMUNITY: OCCUPY WALL STREET

On June 7, 2011, the Canadian magazine *Adbusters* sent out an email to their 90,000 international subscribers describing a “global situation … deteriorating faster and faster – instabilities, disruptions and singularities are emerging not just in our ecological and financial systems, but now, as the depression epidemic spreads worldwide, in our psychological systems as well. We are racing towards nightfall, a second great dark age” (*Adbusters*, “Live Without Dead Time,” second paragraph). The email summons readers to combat this impending darkness through three specific actions: boycott the American coffee chain Starbucks, boycott the online journal Huffington Post, and organize political action to support Palestinian efforts to achieve statehood. The verbal summons to action is amplified by crafty visuals – for instance, the Starbucks boycott is imaged by a red no-sign imposed upon the Starbucks logo, and the Huffington Post boycott is imaged by a cartoon wolf blowing on a house that bears the inscription “AOL The Huffington Post.” Appeals to social networking are also present in two Twitter hashtags: #NOSTARBUCKS and the more

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107 This email, called a “Tactical Briefing,” is sent out regularly – usually whenever the magazine publishes a new issue. When Occupy Wall Street (OWS) entered the planning stage, the frequency of these emails increased. This particular email is addressed to “you 90 thousand jammers, anarchists, politicos, rabble rousers and do gooders on the other side of this screen.”
humorous #HUFFPUFF, which encourage readers to make these trending topics and thereby spread the boycott effort.

This June 7 email ends with what it indicates is “a final thought,” but what reads like a final action item in a four-item agenda that began with the summons to boycott Starbucks. “America needs its own Tahrir acampada now,” begins this “final thought” in the last paragraph, and continues, “Can we get 20,000 people to flood into lower Manhattan, set up tents, kitchens, a democratic assembly and occupy Wall Street for a few months? kono@adbusters.org.” The hyperlinked email address clearly indicates that the magazine expects readers to respond to the question. References to the occupation of Tahrir square in Cairo, Egypt and to the acampadas of the plazas of Spain function both as apparently successful prototypes that proleptically counter any doubts about the feasibility of occupying Wall Street, and as an implicit argumentum ad populum; everyone is occupying/protesting, so we should too. The dark visions that oppressed the beginning of the email were dissolved by the end through a gradatio of calls for action: the first two calls involving the relatively more passive behavior of boycotting and the last two calls involving the more proactive behaviors of protest planning and organization.108

108 Of course, the email is, among other things, an effective sales tool; readers are invited twice to explore the newly released issue of the magazine, and a picture of the new issue’s cover is inserted into the middle of the text. A hyperlink embedded in this picture opens a browser tab on Adbusters’s website that contains additional hyperlinks for purchasing the issue or subscribing to the magazine. So, Adbusters’s goal to “coax people from spectator to participant” can be read as an incitement to change in the sense of arousing participation through the creation of a certain kind of political, social, and media awareness. And, it can also be read as an incitement to an uncommitted audience to becoming active subscribers. This is not to suggest that the magazine’s “bottom line” is money. Rather, this suggests that what Kenneth Burke calls the “money motive” ambiguously constitutes the magazine. As Burke reminds us, “put identification and division ambiguously together, so that you cannot know for certain just where one ends and the other begins, and you have the characteristic invitation to rhetoric” (1969, 25). Capitalism as conceived in critical discourse represents an
A month later, on July 13 *Adbusters* sent another “Tactical Briefing” to its subscribers (*Adbusters* #OCCUPYWALLSTREET). It seems that the magazine either received overwhelmingly positive support for its call to occupy Wall Street or that it was going to push the idea through anyway. “Alright you 90,000 redeemers, rebels and radicals out there, [a] worldwide shift in revolutionary tactics is underway right now that bodes well for the future. The spirit of this fresh tactic [is] a fusion of Tahrir with the acampadas of Spain…” (first and second paragraphs). The glumness of the previous month’s email is replaced here by an optimism bordering on ebullience, textually configured in the trinity of readers united under a roared alliteration of “r’s,” and in the term “fresh tactic,” which sounds like an intriguing combination of rap lyric, cleaning-product ad copy, and military jargon. The protests in Egypt and Spain are referenced once again, probably for the same rhetorical reasons they appeared in the earlier email. Undergirding these references is the apparent assumption that the protests in these overseas locations could be replicated in the US. As discussed in chapter 1, repertoires of contention are shared internationally. Additionally, an interconnected global civil society provides the means for sharing these repertoires, thus ensuring that they are broadly available. So this assumption of replicability is not without merit.

The email established a date for the upcoming demonstration: September 17, 2011; a hashtag to be used to raise awareness of, plan for and organize the demonstration:

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ethical foil without which *Adbusters* is inconceivable. The magazine is similarly inconceivable without a paying audience. This ambiguity should not be read as undermining the important work of dissent that the magazine seeks to accomplish; it merely underscores the need for cautious rhetorical probing in this and any kind of factionalism.
#OCCUPYWALLSTREET; and a location: lower Manhattan, the site of the Financial District. It also offered a demand which would justify the occupation: “Representation Not Corporation,” (seventh paragraph) a slogan urging the U.S. government to distance itself from the corrupting influence of wealthy corporations and individuals. “This demand,” noted the email, “seems to capture the current national mood because cleaning up corruption in Washington is something all Americans, right and left, yearn for and can stand behind” (eighth paragraph).

Although the email was addressed to *Adbusters* subscribers, who are typically left of center, the goal of movement organizers at the magazine seemed to have been to attract Americans from across the entire political spectrum by promoting a slogan with broad appeal. For instance, it renovates the “No taxation without representation” slogan of American colonists, thereby appropriating for left-wing purposes a discourse of patriotism most recently associated with right-wing movements, such as the Tea Party. The slogan also underscores the doxastic notion that the value of government in a democratic society resides in its duty to represent the majority’s interests not the interests of (wealthy and/or powerful) minorities. Finally, the slogan implicitly bisects society along a line of power and wealth, with the government and corporations standing on one side of this line and the vast American public on the other. So, the *Adbusters* slogan and email suggest that the magazine was seeking to construct something more momentous than an ephemeral protest or campaign: that they were seeking to establish a movement community that might possess broad appeal and longevity.

*Adbusters*’s parent organization, the Adbusters Media Foundation, has been organizing campaigns such as “Buy Nothing Day” and “Digital Detox Week” since the late
1980s. The organization describes itself as “a global network of culture jammers and creatives working to change the way information flows, the way corporations wield power, and the way meaning is produced in our society” (“Guys and Dolls”). But the organization also seeks to “topple existing power structures and forge a major shift in the way we live in the 21st century” (“Guys and Dolls”). It thus constitutes itself in opposition to corporations, government, and the mainstream media. Arguably, such opposition was of marginal or passing interest to broad American publics until the 2007 financial crisis.\textsuperscript{109} However, this interest grew as general unemployment started to climb to record-high levels and masses of Americans were facing the threat of pauperization, and as the media continued to report on executive compensation and bonuses that seemed unwarranted and inequitable, and on profligate lifestyles that could only be judged offensive and provocative. \textit{Adbusters} thus kairotically exploited existing social rifts in American society, condensing these into a stark, nearly intuitive binary that divided government officials and the wealthy on one side from a catchall “everybody else” on the other side.

As Kenneth Burke observes, “[i]dentification is affirmed with earnestness precisely because there is division. Identification is compensatory to division” (\textit{Rhetoric of Motives} 22). What Burke’s work demonstrates is that any distinguishing mark or boundary can be recruited into rhetorical service as a simultaneous appeal to identification and to division. \textit{Adbusters}, therefore, cannot be singled out for its strategy of cohesion-division. Indeed, this

\textsuperscript{109} \textit{Adbusters} still only has a little over 90,000 newsletter subscribers, a relatively insignificant number compared to the populations of Canada and the United States where its subscriber base resides. However, Occupy Wall Street has provided a great deal of visibility to the organization, though its ideology remains unconvincing to the majority of Canadians and Americans.
same strategy can be seen in the appeals of European precariats to join together qua precariats against corrupt governments and perfidious businesspersons in texts like *La Ballata degli Incazzati* and *Indignados*. The move to exploit social boundaries (and perhaps even to create boundaries where none seem apparent) thus appears to be fundamental in the repertoires of contention of all social movements. Yet communities founded on the rhetorical reduction and/or amplification of these boundaries may be fragile and subject to fragmentation, as OWS was to discover.

The rhetorical cohesion-division initiated by *Adbusters* was amplified when Occupy Wall Street activists appropriated *Adbusters*’s binary and provided catchy titular terms to the two groups; they metonymically designated the masses as 99% and the elites 1%, reducing politically, culturally, and socially diverse Americans into a binary distinction based entirely on personal net worth. This binary is compelling for a number of reasons. Aesthetically, the stark contrast thought to exist between the masses and the elite is reproduced visually and aurally in the numbers 99% and 1%: the two-digit, high-number, double-syllable is associated with the masses and the single-digit, low-number, monosyllable with the elite.

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110 See Weinstein for how these titular terms spread through the movement and the media. *Adbusters*, of course, was not the only organization to exploit the nation’s class disparities to create communities based on cohesion-division. On September 18, the day after OWS activists began occupying Zuccotti Park near Wall Street in Manhattan, Fox News reported approvingly that Republican representative Paul Ryan had “accused President [Barack] Obama of appealing to Americans’ ‘fear, envy and anxiety’ by pushing a new tax rate on people making more than $1 million annually, saying the ‘class warfare path’ will only hurt the economy.” At the least, the claim that taxing the wealthy amounts to class warfare is hyperbolic. But one suspects that awareness of the figuration of the discourse is lost beneath the anger (and perhaps fear) that the figure invites its audience to feel. See “Republicans Accuse Obama.”

111 Of course, vocalizations of the terms “masses” and “elite” also seem to reproduce the proportions of the apparent referents. The first term’s long, open “a” suggests a large referent and contrasts with the second term’s short “i.”
However, rather than an innovation, this binary represents a renovation of previous social binaries, including the Marxist dichotomy bourgeois|proletariat and Ortega y Gasset’s intellectual man|masses. More significantly, OWS’s binary is like Burke’s notion of literary form which “is arousing and fulfillment of desires” (*Counter-Statement* 124). For instance, OWS’s mass-elite binary is echoed in other binaries which are prominent in American culture: for instance, the dominant political system with its binary Republican|Democrat, whose national distribution has been depicted by the media schematically as a binary of red and blue states. This echoing of political binaries suggests a certain, if only formal, conservatism, which to some degree seems at odds with a community that understands itself as pioneering. Nevertheless, this conservative form may be favorable in recruiting adherents seeking reformation, for it reproduces the reformer’s goal of tempered change within a given social structure. Yet, of course, this form is also likely to exasperate revolutionaries, who will be unsatisfied with anything less than complete structural transformation.

A final point of interest about the OWS binary form is that it represents what might be called an appeal to statistics. That is, the form mimics statistical or probabilistic measurement, and therefore in a culture such as America’s characterized by a technoscientific ethos, it may appropriate the respect accorded to these forms of knowledge, thus enhancing the ethos of the OWS community. Moreover, this simplified binary form stands in contrast to the deluge of confusing, occasionally contradictory statistics offered by the media concerning the ongoing financial crisis, thus further enhancing the community’s positive ethos.

What these rhetorical interventions – emails, taxonomic work, the invention of monikers – evince is the constitution of a loosely knit national community that would
become OWS. For, although *Adbusters* originally called for 20,000 people to gather in protest under a broad banner of anti-corruption, its deeper objective of community formation began to produce results. OWS was becoming the kind of organization and community that, to borrow James Boyd White’s felicitous characterization, “enables people to say ‘we’ about what they do and to claim consistent meanings for it” (693). Indeed, in these early stages the community defined this “we” vis-à-vis others richly: in positive terms (aligning with Egyptian and Spanish protesters), in negative terms (repudiating the 1%), and in conciliatory terms (seeking to attract members from across the political spectrum and to give voice to this multiplicity of perspectives).

However, although organizers sought to be inclusive, some recruited communities ultimately dissociated from the broader OWS community. For example, the People of Color Caucus initially joined the growing OWS community with strong hopes of addressing not only present social disparities and grievances, but also of redressing past injustice. The verdict a year later was that “Occupy [OWS] was a sham. Occupy is on its last leg and it's just trying its best. People who are anti-politics are now pro-Obama. They were anti-everything, and now they're pro-everything. So Occupy is broken—the message is broken. They let America down. But Occupy the Hood will keep going without them” (Paye, sixth paragraph). The People of Color Caucus have thus not ceased to do the work they had hoped OWS would do; they have, however, distanced themselves from the central “we” of the OWS

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112 It is my understanding that the meaning of the term “community” is contested, and undoubtedly, White’s formulation bypasses the intricacies of this debate. However, my point in this paper is simply that a “we” more enduring than a protest demonstration began to be carved rhetorically within the broader legal “we” of American citizenship, and this “we” is still more or less viable a year later.
community, and have thereby traded the benefits of scale presumably offered by the community for independence. OWS evidently failed to address internal differences, and consequently important parts of its community have splintered off, undoubtedly undermining the identity and the work of the community.

Thus, OWS has suffered from factionalism. Of course, actions, not only in the United States, but around the world, continue to be organized under the OWS appellation. And websites such as occupywallst.org, occupytogether.org and, of course, adbusters.org continue to function as community hubs for debate and organization. However, the commitment to polyvocality arguably strains unity so that OWS can seem more like a network of loosely affiliated groups than a cohesive community. Nevertheless, it can be argued that OWS represents a new form of community, one defined by a commitment to radical openness, inclusion and polyvocality: a commitment that disavows traditional identification and thus supersedes cohesion-division. Indeed, in its “Statement of Autonomy,” the original OWS group asserts:

Occupy Wall Street is a people’s movement. It is party-less, leaderless, by the people and for the people. It is not a business, a political party, an advertising campaign or a brand …. We welcome all, who, in good faith, petition for a redress of grievances through non-violence. We provide a forum for peaceful assembly of individuals to engage in participatory democracy. We welcome dissent. (“NYC General Assembly”)

Yet, if internal dissent does not lead finally to some agreement, however loose, it results in division rather than cohesion. The community therefore faces a difficult situation. Its commitment to a diversity of opinions seems based on the hope that diversity will encourage amity. This hope may indeed be vindicated. However, it also may be vitiated, and the hope for amity thereby transformed into the despair of enmity. It’s premature to draw conclusion one way or the other.

What is certain is that the OWS appellation continues to be used both overseas and nationwide, and that a core of underlying concerns, such as the viability of democracy; the need to address government corruption; the need to rethink corporate power, continue to motivate the movement community. What seems to be at stake, then, in this period of incipiency are the boundaries that define the community. Sometimes internal dissention becomes division, as in the case of the People of Color Caucus, and the boundaries of the community are consequently redrawn. At other times, internal dissension pushes and stretches these boundaries but rupture may be avoided; the OWS community is confronting another episode of boundary definition at this very moment.

When a small group identifying itself as OWS New York called for the entire OWS community to convene in Philadelphia in July 2012, the call was read by many sectors of OWS as a sort of secessionary move. The purpose of the conference, which in a nod to American history and to contemporary communication technologies was called Continental Congress 2.0, was to ratify an inventory of demands to the American government. This inventory took the form of a manifesto that went through two iterations. The first iteration was called “A New Declaration for Continental Congress 2.0,” though like its second iteration it became known as the “99% Declaration,” and, as will be discussed below, it
represented a loose draft for public consideration rather than a final version. The second iteration or final version of the text was called the “99% Declaration,” (both titles, of course, are nods to early American history). The first version of the “99% Declaration” was published online several months before the Congress was to convene. The final version was published after the July 2012 Congress. Among the demands made in both iterations of the “Declaration” are bids to institute a progressive tax rate, to fund National Public Media, and passage of the “Dream Act.” In other words, both iterations of the “Declaration” seek reform not revolution. However, as noted above, the Congress and the “Declaration” were largely censured within the OWS community (Peralta). Indeed, OWS’s public relations committee released a statement on the subject insisting that while

> [t]he people of Occupy Wall Street are doubtlessly animated by many of the same concerns addressed by the points in the … 99% Declaration … the group’s plan to select delegates representing each Congressional District to ratify a petition to present to the U.S. government while threatening to run candidates for positions in this corrupted system runs counter to OWS’ commitment to direct democracy, grassroots people power, and building a better society from the bottom up. (“OWS PR Working Group”)

What is clear from this statement is that the core of OWS seeks to foster a radical dissociation from mainstream political structures and processes, and therefore disavows efforts by any OWS group to interface with these structures. Yet, what is equally clear is that while this core group rejects the forms which New York OWS proposed (the “Declaration” and the Congress), it nevertheless sanctions much of the substance of both iterations of the “Declaration.” For example, both iterations reproduce and are structured around a cohesion-division trope that the core OWS community accepts. Furthermore, adoption of the final text, though unlikely, would indeed reconstitute American society in a way that would probably gratify many in the OWS community. This, of course, is not to suggest that the dispute between OWS factions stems from a mere formality. Indeed, it seems to be a dispute between
revolutionaries and reformers, and therefore may result in yet another cleavage of OWS. At the same time that OWS seeks to reconstitute American society, the OWS community itself undergoes phases of constitution and reconstitution, thereby rendering its efforts unstable.

In fact, Continental Congress 2.0 and the two iterations of the “Declaration” seemed to have been less successful than organizers had hoped. The feedback on the first iteration of the “Declaration” was not exactly massive and the Congress was not well attended. However, the “Declaration” represents both an instance of constitutive rhetoric and an instance of claims making, and as such can be understood of as contributing to the repertoires of contention used by protest movements. Like other manifestos, the “Declaration” “takes a violent position and produces a flagrant commanding relationship … between its producer and his or her audience” (Yanoshevsky). That is, as will be discussed below, it constructs discord as a means of commanding audiences.

Before commencing analysis of the two iterations of the “Declaration,” a brief detour into Aristotle’s work on the three species of rhetoric is warranted, for both iterations are mixed and therefore present challenges for classification. As pointed out in previous chapters, Aristotle theorized three species of rhetoric: epideictic, deliberative, and judicial. Two of these were discussed in previous chapters: La Ballata degli Incazzati was analyzed as an example of deliberative rhetoric, and Indignados as an example of epideictic rhetoric. However, the ways these three species of rhetoric function in texts is not always cut and dried. As Kennedy notes in his introduction to chapter 3 of Rhetoric, “Aristotle’s rigorous characterization [of the three species of rhetoric] does not take into consideration the use of epideictic passages in deliberative speeches…or casting an epideictic speech into judicial form…or other combinations and permutations” (46). In other words, the species can and
often do intermingle, making classification a challenge. Even Aristotle recognized the potential for promiscuity when he observed how, for example, epideictic speech would slide into deliberative speech. This sliding was discussed in the previous chapter.

The “Declaration” represents a site of species promiscuity, for as noted above, both iterations possess deliberative and judicial features. One thing these two features have in common is audience; Aristotle theorized the audiences of both deliberative and judicial rhetoric as kritēs or judges. Unlike the audience of epideictic who are positioned in the rhetorical performance as witnesses and therefore as relatively passive, the audiences of deliberative and judicial oratory are positioned as active; they are required by the circumstances of the rhetorical performance to participate through adjudication. However, while these two species share audiences, Aristotle differentiates them in terms of temporal frames and in terms of the audiences’/judges’ relative involvement.

Generally, deliberative oratory concerns judgments that must be made in the present for future actions that are “important to the state,” and that therefore affect the judges personally (Rhetoric 1354b10). Aristotle discusses five subjects of deliberation, one of which is the framing of laws, as might occur, for example, in a legislative session. Both iterations of the “Declaration” present specific demands for the framing and passage of laws. But where the second iteration formulates and addresses these demands directly to the government, the first offers tentative formulations of these demands addressed to OWS and the American public for deliberation. Furthermore, the issues the “Declaration” takes up are not private, but public matters that affect not only those who drafted and ratified the text but, if transformed into law, all American citizens. Finally, like all deliberative rhetoric, the temporal frame in both iterations is future oriented, though the future constructed in the second iteration is more
proximate than the future presumed by the first iteration. That is, the first iteration was a
deliberation of a draft of a list of grievances, whereas the second iteration was the finalized
list of grievances which is to be deliberated upon by the American government.

As previously observed, in addition to its deliberative features, both iterations of the
“Declaration” also possess judicial features. For Aristotle, judicial oratory generally
reconstructs past action, and requires judges to adjudicate on matters that are occasionally
private, though also may be of public interest and therefore of personal interest to judges.
While the “Declaration” cannot be classified as judicial in terms of its reference to private
matters and in terms of the personal investment of its judges, the text is structured around a
series of accusations for past wrong doing, what Aristotle in Rhetoric called katêgoria, which
is characteristic of judicial rhetoric (1368b1). Aristotle contrasts katêgoria with apologia,
which Kennedy translates as, respectively, “accusation” and “defense.” Judicial rhetoric,
Aristotle tells us, is concerned with wrong-doing: that is, “doing harm willingly in
corravention of the law” (Rhetoric 1368b3). Generally speaking, katêgoria represents an
attempt to prosecute contravention, while of course apologia seeks either to argue that
corravention did not occur or that its occurrence was legitimate.

Importantly, for Aristotle there are two kinds of law that can be contravened: codified
law, which he calls idion, and which generally corresponds to our notion of a formalized
legal system, and what we might call tacit law, which he calls koinon, or common, and which
represents a culture’s values, or the sense of right and wrong shared (or held in common) by
most or all members of a culture. The distinction is significant, and not only for Aristotle, because codified law may fail to keep pace with a culture’s changing values. As will be discussed below, the “Declaration” certainly accuses elites of breaking the law, but perhaps more importantly, it accuses them of betraying the American community’s sense of what is right and what is wrong.

In addition to these two kinds of law, Aristotle further divides the law:

in two ways in regard to persons; for what one ought to do or not do is defined in regard to the community or in regard to individual members of the community. Thus, unjust and just actions are matters of being unjust and doing justly in two senses, either in respect to one defined individual or in regard to the community. (Rhetoric 1373b3)

In its concern with community as set forth here, judicial rhetoric begins to overlap with deliberative rhetoric. For deliberating over the framing of new laws suggests, for example, that individuals or groups within the broader community are engaging in behaviors outside the range defined as acceptable and perhaps petitioning the community to relax this range. Or, to the contrary, that the range has been violated and existing laws need to be bolstered. Whatever the case may be, both iterations of the “Declaration” emerge from this zone of overlap between judicial and deliberative rhetorics, a zone of *krisis* rhetoric, or rhetoric that is specific to situations calling for judgment.

Aristotle’s notion of *katêgoria* offers a way of thinking about how certain kinds of *krisis* rhetoric may affect community development. *Katêgoria* is translatable into three related English terms: “predication,” “assertion,” and “accusation.” The term is composed of

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114 See Kennedy’s footnote 183 for a fuller discussion of how these terms relate to our legal notions.
two parts: the prefix *kata*, which means “against,” and the verb *agôreyo*, which means “to express” or “to say,” or, more generally, indicates the activity of speaking. This verb is also linked, of course, to the noun *agora*, which means “discourse” and also referred to the place where public discourses took place in ancient Greece (Pianigiani). *Katêgoria* thus possesses a rich semantic field, referring to the activity of predication (attributing properties to a subject), to the activity of speaking (assertion), to the activity of speaking against somebody (accusation), and finally to the space in which such discourses may take place.

What this etymology commonsensically suggests is that *krisis* rhetoric must be deployed within certain communally defined spaces (the *Agora*, for example, or a modern courtroom, rather than, say, a theater) through a specific kind of predication that assigns to litigants properties that reflect a community’s legal and value system at a given moment. That is, institutional and doxastic categories of right and wrong are recruited into judicial situations as the means of adjudication. Through each of these frequent *krisis* situations, the community confronts the tensions of evolution. For the continuous recruitment and testing of these categories of right and wrong render them subject to reproduction and/or revision, and because these categories are constitutive of community, their reproduction and revision in judicial situations are consequential for a community’s self-identity and evolution. The momentousness of *krisis* rhetoric to the community clarifies why this rhetoric must be deployed in certain spaces; for the deployment of *krisis* rhetoric outside of these spaces represents dissociation and may signal the dissolution of a community.

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115 Generally, reproduction of these categories probably indicates a community in a state of relative stasis, whereas revision probably indicates a community in a state of transition and transformation.
The drafters of the final version of the “99% Declaration” took no such risks. For example, they delivered copies of the “Declaration” to all branches of government, thereby respecting the requirements of place. Moreover, the language of the text conforms to the standards of the American legal system; that is, among other things, it reproduces legal concepts, categories, and jargon. Furthermore, the text is framed by reference to common cultural values and, indeed, to certain doxa. However, while the “99% Declaration” toes a formal line, so to speak, its content represents a fairly radical revisioning and reconstituting of American culture. For example, among other objectives, it seeks to end home foreclosures, to ratify an equal rights amendment, and even to “arrest of any person or persons indicted or charged with war crimes for intentionally … engaging in warfare based on false premises or pretexts and the extradition of such individuals to the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court” (Section VII, 10).116

In his article on OWS for the *New Yorker*, Matthathias Schwartz describes the initial weeks of the occupation of Wall Street as “fifty-nine days of rude, anarchic freedom on a patch of granite in lower Manhattan” (fifth paragraph). During these fifty-nine days law enforcement officers made a number of individual and mass arrests, perhaps the most notorious of which was the mass arrest on October 1, 2011 of 700 people occupying the

116 In May 2012, a war crimes tribunal found former President George W. Bush and six of his cabinet members guilty for war crimes. If the legislation suggested in the “99% Declaration” were to pass, Bush and these members would face extradition. More generally, this proposed legislation exposes American government officials to international justice. See “War Tribunal.”
Brooklyn Bridge. A brief account of this episode and its consequences is offered on the website of http://www.the99declaration.org.

Among [those arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge]… were about 20 students from a small liberal arts college. A criminal defense attorney … was called by the students and administration of the college to counsel the students pro bono. On October 7th, the attorney visited the college and gave a talk … about how to avoid getting arrested and what to do if you happen to get arrested … After the presentation and discussion, the attorney asked some of the students what they were seeking by protesting. Not knowing much about the #OWS movement, the attorney took some notes … the lawyer [then] took the notes he made, did some research and drafted the 99% Declaration. The declaration was posted on the internet … and he requested comments, edits and suggestions … thousands of emails started to come in with suggestions for improvement. (About, first and second paragraphs)

The original website http://the99declaration.org was established to host the first iteration of and discussion on the “Declaration,” and it provided visitors with information about the project and about how they could get involved. It also solicited visitors to sign this first iteration of the “Declaration,” and provided a form for them to do so. On the webpage hosting the “Declaration” space was provided for visitor feedback. When I downloaded a copy of the first iteration of the “Declaration” on June 6, 2012, 62 comments, some quite long, had been offered. The second iteration was published after the July 2-4 convention and the website was updated as well.

As noted above, the “Declaration” went through two iterations. It is unclear when the first iteration was published. However, the website http://the99declaration.org went online on October 7, 2011, and since its purpose was to host the “Declaration” and provide a forum

117 For an unsympathetic view of these arrests see, for example, <http://www.foxnews.com/us/2011/10/01/500-arrested-after-wall-street-protest-on-nys-brooklyn-bridge/?test=latestnews>.
for discussion, it seems reasonable to assume that the first iteration was published on or about that date.

The first iteration of the “Declaration” consists of two sections: an exordium, in which the parties to the text are identified and the purpose of the text is briefly set out, and a divisio containing five sections: the first of which prescribes voting procedures; the second establishes a date, time, and place for Continental Congress 2.0; the third calls for the ratification of the “Declaration,” which was also called a “Petition of Grievances”; the fourth offers an inventory of suggested grievances; and the fifth terminates the text with a “public pledge” for specific political action in the event of ratification.

Interestingly, this first iteration of the “Declaration” is not directly addressed; no specific “you” is indicated. Instead, the context of the document, that is, the original website, http://the99declaration.org, invites visitors to assume the position of intended audience and to participate in the “we” constructed by this interface of text and context. This “we” is, therefore, complex.

This first iteration of the “Declaration” opens with a recitation of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and segues to a paragraph that begins “BE IT RESOLVED THAT WE, THE PEOPLE of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, in order to form a more perfect Union, by, for and of the People, shall elect citizen Delegates between June 1-7, 2012 to attend and convene a NEW CONTINENTAL CONGRESS …” (The 99% Working Group, second paragraph). A collective addressee is invoked through both the third-person pronoun “we” and the word “People,” and this addressee is directed to act. Interestingly, the text thus seems to perform a sleight of hand, presuming the very collectivity it seeks to solicit, which may be one of the reasons that the core OWS community found it
offensive. Still, this presumption of collectivity and unity gives the text a powerful rhetorical edge, for it seems to be the work of a large collective speaking as a single, powerful voice, rather than the difficult rhetorical work of a few individuals trying to achieve consensus within a broad community. The text thus deploys, on the one hand, an implicit *argumentum ad populum* to gain adherence from its addressees and, on the other, a pre-constituted “we” derived from both a historical “we” grounded in the 236 year old Declaration of Independence and the contemporary “we” of OWS that interpellates addressees.

This first iteration of the “Declaration” calls for addressees to vote for delegates in their districts who would attend Continental Congress 2.0 on the week of July 4, 2012 to “deliberate, draft and ratify a PETITION FOR REDRESS OF GRIEVANCES” (The 99% Working Group, Section II, first paragraph). It also calls for them to offer feedback on the grievances listed. A typology of twenty categories of grievance is offered, covering areas as diverse as “Ending the War in Afghanistan and Care of Veterans,” “Term Limits,” and “Health Care for All.” Each of these broad categories, in turn, contains one or more demands. For example, the first category, “Elimination of the Corporate State,” demands “… an immediate ban on all direct and indirect private contributions of anything of value, to all politicians serving in or running for federal office in the United States. This ban shall extend to all individuals, corporations, ‘political action committees,’ ‘super political action

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118 See the “99% Declaration,” *Working Group* for the original iteration. Both the website [http://the99%declaration.org](http://the99%declaration.org) and the “99% Declaration” were amended after Continental Congress 2.0. On the first iteration of the text, a magnified copy of the section of the Declaration of Independence reading “We the People” is placed directly under the title header “A New Declaration,” and underscores the text’s embodiment and reproduction of community. It also connects the text with the Declaration of Independence and thereby represents a tacit appeal to tradition. This appeal is amplified by the recitation of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which follows directly below this picture of the Declaration of Independence.
committees,’ lobbyists, unions and all other sources of private money or things of value, including but not limited to, direct or indirect gifts and/or promises of employment” (The 99% Working Group, Section IV, 1). This demand reflects an increasingly widespread alarm about the undue political influence of corporations and associations, such as unions. The demand is formulated in a declarative, compound sentence that is easy to read (that is, is free of jargon) and therefore easy to disassemble for analysis and debate. All demands in the first iteration of the “Declaration” are formulated like this, ensuring that a broad group of people would be able to reflect on the issues and participate in the ensuing debate. The result of the debate online and at the Convention would be a list of grievances to be presented to the different branches of the U.S. government, which could be converted into legislation.

The second iteration of the “Declaration” retains some of the original form and language of the first iteration, but it is clear that feedback from online discussions and the discussions at Continental Congress 2.0 made a substantial difference. The second iteration is divided into three sections. The first section is comprised of eleven (short) paragraphs and represents an exordium that identifies the parties interpellated and sets out the purposes of the text. The second section is a divisio of fourteen subsections, which together constitute the “petition for redress of grievances”; each of these subsections is formatted as a resolution clause – that is, each begins with one or more perambulatory clauses and concludes with one

119 The 2010 Supreme Court decision on the Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission case arguably exacerbated this alarm over undue political influence. The second category of the “99% Declaration” addresses this Supreme Court decision.
or more operative clauses. The third and last section is a short peroration, which admonishes the United States government to respond ("Failure to address our grievances will result in legal action taken in federal court….We will also bring this document to the court of public opinion, the most powerful court of all") and reaffirms the collectivity of first iteration of the text ("The sovereignty of the United States derives from We, the People") (99% Declaration Steering Committee, Section XIV). Unlike the Declaration of Independence, this "Declaration" is unsigned, which arguably impairs its impact. Furthermore, its release set off a series of disavowals within the OWS community. Nevertheless, the text represents a position within the OWS community, even if it is a controversial position, and offers a sense of some of the rhetorical possibilities being exploited by the community.

It was noted earlier that the second iteration of the "Declaration" is structured around a series of accusations, and it was suggested that these accusations represent disarticulations within the broad, national community. It was also suggested that these social disarticulations represent the basis for new articulations. It is now the moment to offer evidence for these claims. The second full paragraph of the text begins:

Our country is beset by problems too great to fit comfortably under the constructs of liberal, independent, or conservative rubrics. No single label fits, no single ideology suits, but what we all have in common (left, right, and center) is that we are all being marginalized and defeated as we struggle for life, liberty, happiness

120 For example, Section I reads “Whereas, our freedom of speech and the right to a government of the People, for the People, and by the People has been corrupted by the influence of money; Whereas … [perambulatory clauses] We therefore demand the following: 1 … [operative clauses].”

121 It is not clear how many people attended Continental Congress 2.0, so this “we” is rather vague. However, given the critical attitude of other OWS groups, it can be inferred that the event was relatively poorly attended.

122 See, for example, <http://press.nycga.net/2012/02/23/ows-pr-statement-on-99-declaration>.
The institutional and governmental policies pursued by the moneyed interests of the elite 1% have destroyed the ability of our government to guarantee the rights and meet the needs of the People. (99% Declaration Steering Committee, third paragraph)

This paragraph constructs two of the parties that the text seeks to interpellate: the 1% and the 99%. As was discussed at the beginning of this chapter, when Adbusters initially called for the occupation of Wall Street it crafted a justification that would presumably draw in a politically and socially diverse group. This strategy is replicated and amplified in this iteration of the “Declaration.” The text rejects the viability of previous political categories, thus erasing what otherwise might be impregnable divisions separating “the People” into “liberals,” “independents,” “conservatives,” etc. Once these divisions have been erased, the text seeks to establish a common ground upon which to construct a unified identity. That common ground, however, requires the disarticulation of a small group: “the elite 1%,” responsible for “marginalizing and defeating” the 99%. Interestingly, “the elite 1%” are explicitly defined – they are “moneyed interests.” The 99%, on the other hand, are defined implicitly; they are the victimized, non-moneyed interests. As such, they seem to represent the enabling condition for the categorization of the elite. The picture of the 99% community that emerges from this one paragraph is disturbing because the 99% are either characterized negatively (as victims) or in terms of the elite (they are the non-moneyed interests). They possess no positive characteristics. The following paragraph simply amplifies this trend:

The elite 1% have enjoyed inordinate power and influence over our lives as they inundate us with propaganda through their media conglomerates and extract the wealth of our nation only to deposit it outside of the country. All the while they are delighted by our inability to recognize and address our common plight in any meaningful way. (99% Declaration Steering Committee, fourth paragraph)

The 99% are once again depicted as oblivious, disorganized victims who suffer the despoiling of communal resources and the mockery of a truly perfidious master class. These two paragraphs appear to be an example of the figure auxesis, for they form a crescendo that
culminates in the final line depicting the 99% as mocked, and that segues into a four word, bold type paragraph. **No MORE … No LONGER!** This ecphonesis represents a pivotal moment in the text, and this sense of pivoting is amplified by the white space punctuating this gnomic paragraph. If prior to this moment the text defined the 99% negatively, that is, in terms of the 1%, in what follows the 99% come into clear focus. It is worth citing this section at length.

We are the truckers, the teachers, the first-responders, the engineers, the self-employed, the unemployed, the off-grid and organic farmers as well as the cutting-edge, fully-wired, digital entrepreneurs. We are the butchers, the bakers, the builders and the makers. We are the foundation and life-blood of our country! We, as representatives of our Congressional Districts across this great nation, gathered in Philadelphia for a cause much greater than ourselves. If we are to succeed in renewing our democracy in the name of the People, we must put aside the petty partisan differences that might divide us. We must recognize that many of those differences have been created, demonstrated, and amplified by the 1% in their efforts to maintain control and increase their own profits at the expense of the rest of us. (99% Declaration Steering Committee, sixth paragraph)

The long, anaphoric, asyndetic list of very different occupations creates a sense of speed and force that explodes with the exclamation point. The overall effect achieved through tone and figuration in the first few sentences is of vehemence and of a kind of diversity that is both rich and somehow familiar (perhaps due to the suggestion of a nursery rhyme in the second sentence). And although the pace slows somewhat after the exclamation point, the style tends to the grand, which seems befitting for the work of those involved in “a cause much greater than [them]selves,” and which makes this disparate group sympathetic to readers.

This section begins to construct the sense of community that informs and pervades this iteration of the “Declaration.” For throughout the “petition for redress of grievances,” the construction of community continues. Take, for instance, the first perambulatory clause of Section II. “Whereas, the People have been disenfranchised by an election system that is
unjustly weighted in favor of the major political parties …” (99% Declaration Steering Committee). The 99% community is articulated around a disarticulation from the party system. They thus disavow a political system that they feel does not represent or inadequately represents them. Another example occurs in Section VI. “Whereas, the government of the United States has violated solemn treaties made with Native Americans, these violations have served to deprive them of their property and liberties, and this persecution has led to injury and death for Native American people” (99% Declaration Steering Committee). A specific ethnic group is here assimilated into the 99%. The textual construction of their victimization echoes, in obviously more dramatic tones, the construction at the beginning of the text of the victimization of the entire 99%. Unfortunately, because the text is unsigned it is not clear if Native Americans (some or all) approve of this assimilation. As discussed above, the People of Color Caucus eventually dissociated from OWS, as have other groups, so it seems inadvisable to assume that the inclusion of Native Americans in this text is approved of by Native American communities.

While the final iteration of the “Declaration” exhibits a number of rhetorically savvy moves, it seems unlikely that the text will have the kind of impact the drafters probably are seeking. The failure to feature a list of signers ultimately undermines the claim of representation implied by the document. Many OWS groups have disavowed the text and distanced themselves from the group responsible for the 99% campaign. Paradoxically, and perhaps even unfortunately, in the effort to forge community this group ended up fracturing it.
A Pew Research Center report issued on July 12, 2012 revealed that Americans and Europeans felt more discouraged about the economy in mid-2012 than they did just four years ago in September 2008 (*Pervasive Gloom*, 3). And only 31% of Americans and 6% of Spaniards and Italians polled expressed confidence in their national economies (3-4). Moreover, less than half of Americans and Europeans polled felt that it would be “easy for young people today to become wealthier or to get a better job than their parents” (11). Given this pessimism, it is unsurprising to discover in the same report that the appeal of capitalism seems to be weakening. Only 67% of Americans, 50% of Italians, and 47% of Spaniards polled believed that “most people [are] better off in a free market economy” (16). The profound social disaffection reflected in these statistics and documented at length in this Pew report represents an important impetus for the American and European protest movements of 2011-2012.

Through rhetoric these movements have given voice to this pervasive disaffection and have caused public and private institutions – specifically, governments and banks – to take heed. Speaking through the voice of Crassus in *De Oratore*, Cicero observed that “three things alone … can carry conviction [*fidem faciendam*]; I mean the winning over [*concilentur*], the instructing [*doceantur*] and the stirring [*moveantur*] of men’s minds” (II.121). As the present study has attempted to demonstrate, an important strategy of the 2011-2012 protest movements has been the rhetorical creation of conviction, both at and beyond the boundaries of movement communities. For instance, consciousness raising texts
like *La Ballata degli Incazzati* sought to recruit diffident adherents by reconciling what seemed to be personal predicaments with the interests of the movement. In other words, motivated by economic and political regimes that subjectivize important segments of the general population as marginal, these movements have mobilized through rhetoric: from the body rhetoric of occupation; to the textual rhetoric of political pamphlets and manifestos; to the visual rhetoric of posters, such as *Adbusters*’s ballerina poised atop the Wall Street bull sculpture; to the numerary rhetoric of the 99%|1%. And, of course, these movement rhetorics have summoned counter-rhetorics: the body rhetoric of police cordons; the textual rhetoric of city ordinances passed to stifle protests; the visual rhetoric of photos showing tear-gassed demonstrators; the numerary rhetoric of arrest and injury statistics.

No matter how small, each new rhetorical intervention constructs, cultivates or even demolishes identification, thereby changing the structures and vectors of these protest movements. Of course, some interventions have greater impact than others. For instance, promotion of the “99% Declaration” either fractured or evinced a fracture within Occupy Wall Street, leaving the core movement substantially weakened. However, in translating the Spanish protest movement for an Italian audience, even an obscure, epideictic pamphlet like *Indignados* can win supporters and encourage amplification of the movement across borders.
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