

It Is Right to Rebel Without a Cause*

*These grievances are not-all inclusive.

Ross Shields
December 2011
NYC

It Is Right to Rebel Without a Cause*

*These grievances are not-all inclusive.

Occupy Wall Street is: leaderless, without demands, and without a causeⁱ—though it certainly has a ground (both literal and figurative): *Wall Street* itself. But how does such a headless movement sustain itself as a desiring subject? This is both the major critique of the movement from outside—that it is unfocused—and the primary source of contention within. It is also the source of its strength and singularity (and, indeed, solidarity). *Ablata causa tollitur effectus*—Jacques Lacan pluralizes this classical formula, leaving us with “the effects are successful only in the absence of a cause” (*SXI* 128). He is speaking, it is true, of the cause of the unconscious—but *is it so much of a leap* to admit *Occupy Wall Street* as the subject of the unconscious of New York City? Lacan continues: “this cause must be conceived as, fundamentally, a lost cause. And it is the only chance one has of winning it” (128). Fighting for a lost cause, I will argue, is the only way that the *Occupy* movement can avoid being co-opted by traditional structures of representational politics or reabsorbed into the totality of global capitalism.

Sigmund Freud, in his *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, defines three modes of identification that could facilitate the formation of a group:

- I) identification via the establishment of a subject-tie with the rival (the father)
- II) identification via the establishment of an object-tie with the loved object.
- III) hysterical identification by means of a symptom

Representative democracy and fascism are structured by, respectively, identification with the father (mode I) and the choice of the father as object (mode II)—this can be illustrated by the distinction between being and having: while we *are* “the people” (a master signifier within political discourse, implying, implicitly, an excluded other) we can only *have* a dictator (the drawbacks of which require no gloss). Occupy Wall Street seems to defy both genre—the tension motivating it is the following: It claims “We are the 99%” while protesting “SPEAK WITH US, NOT FOR US.” How does an individual pronounce a “we” without speaking *for* a plurality?

I will ask whether the Freud’s third formula—hysterical identification by means of a symptom—provides the solution realized in the *Occupy Wall Street* movement, thereby cutting the Gordian knot of representation and avoiding its snarls.ⁱⁱ Identification by means of a symptom is, in Lacan’s reading of Freud’s text, “conditioned by its function of sustaining desire and is therefore specified by the indifference of its object” (*Écrits* 534). This is not to suggest that members of the OWS set are indifferent to their principles, but that the cohesion of principles into a unified platform or demand is not integral to the formation of the 99%.ⁱⁱⁱ The 99% coheres neither through positive identification through an *einzigster Zug*, a unary trait, nor via negative definition against an other: The 99% is not against the 1%. Any member of the movement will tell you this—but not *every* member. That’s kind of the point.

Some 70 years before Freud, in his “Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte,” Karl Marx argues that the material conditions of the small-holding peasantry and lumpenproletariat in

mid-19th-century France make them incapable of forming a class and thus *formally unrepresentable*: “They cannot represent [*vertreten*] themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master” (200). Lacan claims, in *Seminar XVII*, “the student is not displaced in feeling a brother, not of the proletariat but of the lumpenproletariat” (190). If, then, the student stands beside the lumpenproletariat, are we to understand that the student shares the latter’s “formal unrepresentability”? Could this formal unrepresentability be the stuff of the symptom involved in the construction of an identity *against representation*? Can that which is most unique, most singular—the symptom—form the basis of a collective? This would seem to confirm Hardt and Negri’s reading of the movement as a “protest against the lack—or failure—of political representation” (“Real Democracy,” Oct 2011). It does not, however, do justice to a discourse that explicitly rejects the formulation of concrete demands, making room, in the sublimation of the latter, for a politics of desire.

The “Group” Subject

It would be senseless to attempt to pinpoint the moment when *Occupy Wall Street* emerges as a group subject, or to attempt to determine its precise boundaries. The first pre-occupation meeting of the New York City General Assembly (the initial legislative body of Occupy Wall Street) declares that “NYCGA will have NO marshals, nor will any be recognized as such by the NYCGA, with any powers to make decisions on behalf of, or speak for, the NYCGA” (NYCGA 9/10/11: 1.3.2).^{iv} This sentiment is endorsed by the *Statement of Autonomy* passed by the GA on 11/10/11: “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. It is not for sale.”^v I will somewhat arbitrarily limit my analysis to the

statements of the NYCGA and Spokes Council as recorded in the minutes posted on www.nycga.net, and to the official documents (passed by consensus by the general assembly) of the *Occupy Wall Street* movement: the *Declaration of the Occupation of New York City*, the *Statement of Autonomy*, and the *Principles of Solidarity* (the last being “an official document crafted by the Working Group on Principles of Consolidation. The New York City General Assembly came to consensus on September 23rd to accept this working draft and post it online for public consumption”). Such a limitation is necessary but regrettable, in that it excludes the accounts of the Working Groups and the direct action of individuals.

Two sets of questions present themselves. First: What are the conditions of possibility under which individuals form a group like *Occupy Wall Street*? Inversely, to what extent does being in a group form these individuals? Lacan claims: “*Massenpsychologie* was translated by *Psychologies collective*, even though Freud explicitly began with what Gustave Lebon [sic] called the psychology of crowds. A collection, doubtless a collection of pearls, each being one of them, while it’s really a matter of accounting for the existence, in these crowds, of something that is called me (*moi*) [or *ego*]” (*SXXXIV* 5). A group will thus be considered as a collection or set of egos, bound together by some shared element or trait.

The second set of questions concern the impact of the group itself on society at large: Can the emergence of OWS be considered as a symptom of continued crisis of political representation? To what extent do the slogans surrounding OWS emerge from the unconscious of the New York City? Of the United States? This mode of inquiry presupposes a transposition of properly subjective relationships onto something larger than the proper subject. The group itself is here examined *in its capacity as subject*.

A certain equivocation will have been recognized in the above by the intent reader—

Does the subject of OWS take place at the level of the individual or at the level of the group? The ground of this equivocation is, however, internal to the very question of group formation. Subjective structure can manifest itself on at least two levels. On the one hand, there is the binding of individual egos in a group. From the point of each individual it will be a question of the relationship of him or her *qua* subject to the object of the group. On the other hand, a group, once constituted, can be itself considered as a subject in relation to something larger than it. In this case, the subject designated by the letters *OWS* will have to be examined in relation to the representational apparatus that confines it.

This fractal manifestation of structure is a direct consequence of the late Lacan's emphasis on set theory. Set theory, in short, is the examination within and between sets of elements. To imagine this, take a pearl necklace as an example of a set. The necklace is, according to the precepts of set theory, adequately defined as the set of pearls that belong to it as elements. The signifier "pearl necklace" is nothing more than that which strings the pearls together (the *point de capiton* in Lacanese). What is important to note is that the designation of the necklace as *set* and the individual pearl as *element* is entirely relative. There is nothing to stop the pearl from being itself considered as the set of molecules composing it, or indeed to stop the necklace from being recognized as an element in a jewelry store. Subjective structure can thus arise at any level of organization, provided that it is sufficiently complex and structured. This axiom is the only way to justify the application of psychoanalysis (developed on a couch) to cultural phenomena. It is furthermore the concept behind the famous frontispiece of Hobbes' *Leviathan*, allegorical representation in general, and the imputation of subjective characteristics to the city, nation, or state. Any refutation of this principle implies a fetishization of the individual as a natural given or scientific reification.

This becomes easier to swallow by considering the multiplicity of voices within *any* traditional subject. The Freudian (and Lacanian) subject is the subject of the unconscious. “It” is what speaks. The spoken is, however, by no means united—it is much more the expression of mutually conflicting desires and drives. At a certain point, these mutually conflicting desires and drives are organized via a privileged signifier—they are strung together, as it were. The pronoun “I” or “we” is sufficient to this end, and represents the subject as the implied speaker—the position of enunciation—*behind* the enunciated content. The subject, properly a quasi-unified element, can also be considered as the set of voices that “it” (or “I” or “we”) represents. As of December 13, 2011, *Occupy Wall Street* has two major decision-making bodies: the General Assembly (NYCGA) and the Spokes Council. The voices recorded on the minutes of these assemblies are by no means unified—they do, however, speak with a “we” to indicate that a consensus has been reached. Assuming, preliminarily, that this “we” sufficiently defines a subject, we will have to ask: What holds “we” together? How does “we” inscribe “me”?

Identification

Identification is the process by which a set is unified as an element—as such, identification underlies both the adoption of a name and position within society, as well as the narcissistic play of ego and mirror relations (ideology) that mediates the inscription of “me”. It is additionally the process by which elements—individual egos—form a group. Lacan claims: “Identification in Freud is quite simply inspired. Because it is certain that human beings identify to a group. When they do not identify to a group, they’re finished and should be locked up. But I am not saying by this to what point of the group they must be identified” (*SXXII* 126). It will be precisely a matter of teasing out this point of intersection that makes possible identification, what

Freud calls the “tie” *among* individuals and *between* individuals and the group. There are three of them. These three points, which will eventually be mapped out by Lacan onto the registers of the real, the symbolic, and the imaginary, are introduced in *Group Psychology* as distinct modes of identification: through a subject-tie, through a libidinal object-tie, and through the symptom.

The first two are easily distinguished. Freud begins the chapter on identification with a consideration of identification through a subject-tie: “Identification is known to psycho-analysis as the earliest expression of an emotional tie with another person. It plays a part in the early history of the Oedipus complex. A little boy will exhibit a special interest in his father, he would like to grow like him and be like him, and take his place everywhere. We may say simply that he takes his father as his ideal” (*Group Psychology* 46). Freud continues to explain that, as the boy [or girl, *mutatis mutandis*] matures, he takes his mother as a sexual object, which will give a “hostile coloring” to the identification with the father that transforms in turn into a “wish to replace his father in regard to his mother” (47). This initial rivalry will go on to color all subsequent subject-ties and narcissistic engagement with the ego and its reflections.

The second form of identification represents, for Freud, the inversion of the first: “It may happen that the Oedipus complex becomes inverted, and that the father is taken as the object of a feminine attitude, an object from which the directly sexual instincts look for satisfaction; in that event the identification with the father has become the precursor of an object-tie with the father. The same holds good, with the necessary substitutions, of the baby daughter as well” (*Group Psychology* 47). In this inverted case, “identification has appeared instead of object-choice, and [...] object-choice has regressed to identification” (48). Here we say that the ego “copies the person [...] who is loved” ... “by means of introjection of the object into the ego” (49, 50). The distinction between these first two modes of identification is made by Freud between being and

having: “In the first case one’s father is what one would like to *be*, and in the second he is what one would like to *have*” (47).

Lacan will associate identification through the subject-tie and identification through the object-tie with, respectively, the *ideal ego* (which pertains to the imaginary) and the *ego ideal* (which pertains to the symbolic). Typically, he reverses the logical order of their genesis:

[T]he identification in question [mode 2] is not specular, immediate identification [mode 1]. It is its support. It supports the perspective chosen by the subject in the field of the Other, from which specular identification may be seen in a satisfactory light. The point of the ego ideal is that from which the subject will see himself, as one says, as others see him—which will enable him to support himself in a dual situation that is satisfactory for him from the point of view of love. (*SXI* 268)

While specular identification (with the ideal ego) is more immediate (Lacan calls it “mythical”), it can only be supported, retroactively, *after* the establishment of a symbolic object-tie (256). The ego ideal must first be introjected into the ego. By absorbing the sexual object into the ego, the ego takes on the characteristic of the object that will allow itself to see itself as the other sees it—as object. The “dual situation that is satisfactory for him from the point of view of love” is the combined work of both modes of identification. The ego (let’s name it *a*) takes another ego as its sexual object (let’s name it *a’*), from which it (*a*) borrows a unary trait (this concludes mode II). The adoption of the trait of the object (*a’*) allows it (*a*) to reciprocally value itself (*a*) as an object worth of love (this concludes mode I): “From his reference to him who must love him, he tries to induce the Other into a mirage relation into which he convinces him of being worthy of love” (267). The ideal of love is, in this reading, to simultaneously *be* and *have* the father.

Freud points to a third form of identification, what Lacan will refer to as “of a strangely different kind”: identification by means of a symptom (*SXI* 257). I will cite the passage, which will prove central to my analysis of *Occupy Wall Street*, in full:

There is a third particularly frequent and important case of symptom formation, in which the identification leaves entirely out of account any object-relation [*Objektverhältnis*]^{vi} to the person

who is being copied. Supposing, for instance, that one of the girls in a boarding school has had a letter from someone with whom she is secretly in love which arouses her jealousy, and that she reacts to it with a fit of hysterics; then some of her friends who know about it will catch the fit, as we say, by mental infection. The mechanism is that of identification based upon the possibility or desire of putting oneself in the same situation [*in dieselbe Lage Versetzenkönnens oder Versetzenwollens*]. The other girls would like to have a secret love affair too, and under the influence of a sense of guilt they also accept the suffering involved in it. It would be wrong to suppose that they take on the symptom out of sympathy [*Mitgefühl*]. On the contrary, the sympathy only arises out of the identification, and this is proved by the fact that infection or imitation of this kind takes place in circumstances where even less pre-existing sympathy is to be assumed than usually exists between friends in a girls' school. One ego has perceived a significant analogy with another upon one point [*in einem Punkte*—in our example upon openness to a similar emotion; an identification is thereupon constructed on this point, and, under the influence of the pathogenic situation, is displaced on to the symptom which the one ego has produced. The identification by means of the symptom has thus become the mark of a point of coincidence [*zum Anzeichen für eine Deckungsstelle*] between the two egos which has to be kept repressed. (*Group Psychology* 49; *Massenpsychologie* 69)

Freud designates this third form of identification “hysterical identification” in his *Interpretation of Dreams*.^{vii} The account given there, some thirty years before, is virtually identical. Its partial reproduction may, however, be useful to the philologically-bent:

Thus identification is not simple imitation [*Imitation*] but assimilation on the basis of a similar aetiological pretension [*Aneignung auf Grund des gleichen ätiologischen Anspruches*]; it expresses a resemblance [*ein “gleichwie”*] and is derived from a common element which remains in the unconscious [*ein im Unbewußten verbleibendes Gemeinsames*]. (*Interpretation* 182-183)

Hysterical identification through the symptom is distinguished from identification through subject- and object-ties in that, firstly, it does not assume a libidinal object-relation with the other egos involved—the sympathetic bond is created rather *as a result* of the identification (whereas modes I and II presuppose the sympathy of a pre-existing object-relation for the identification to take place); secondly, it admits to immediate pluralization (whereas cases one and two are at this stage confined to relations between two egos—the dual number of love—“*una cum uno*”) (*Group Psychology* 93); thirdly, it is grounded on a repressed element shared by the egos involved. This repressed element is described alternately as *ein “gleichwie”*—where I am ‘just as’ you at some point, as a “similar aetiological pretension,” as an “analogy upon one point,” as the *desire* of putting oneself in the same situation (*Versetzenwollens*), as the *possibility* of putting

oneself in the same situation (*Versetzenkönnens*), and, most descriptively, as a *Deckungsstellung*, which refers to the intersection of train tracks. Whereas in the establishment of subject- and object-ties “the identification is a partial and extremely limited one and only borrows a single trait [*nur einen einzigen Zug*] from the person who is its object,” identification by means of the symptom is more substantial (49). It does not arise from any relationship with mommy or daddy, but rather from a “new perception of a common quality shared with some other person who is not an object of the sexual instinct. The more important this common quality is, the more successful may this partial identification become, and it may thus represent the beginning of a new tie” (49). Unfortunately, at this point in the argument, Freud breaks off. Thinking himself to have discovered an “emotional common quality,” he goes on to determine the root of this quality “in the nature of the tie with the leader” (50). Freud was openly hostile to leaderless (what he called “American”) groups. In his insistence on determining a leader, he is led to conflate this third radical possibility of identity formation with subject- and object-ties through the return of the father in the guise of the leader (*Führer*). As a result, the remaining sections of *Group Psychology* fail to distinguish conceptually between the three modes of representation. To pick up the pieces, we will have to examine the reinterpretation of identification proposed by the late Lacan.

In his late work, Lacan consistently matches identification through subject-ties, identification through object-ties, and identification by means of a symptom as, respectively, amorous identification with the father, neutral identification with the unary trait (*der einziger Zug*, translated above in the Freud as “only a single trait”), and hysterical identification involving (*faite de*) participation (see Lacan, *SXXIV* 2, 7; *SXXII* 169; *SIX* 39; Freud, *Massenpsychologie* 69). A number of difficulties present themselves. It is curious, for one, that Lacan would argue

that only Freud's second mode identification involves the unary trait (while it is clear in *Group Psychology*, to which Lacan is explicitly referring, that the formation of *both* subject- and object-ties proceeds via "*nur einen einzigen Zug*"). It is also difficult to see why identification with the father would be described as "amorous," when it is precisely identification via an object-tie that is directly libidinal in Freud, and which is, in Lacan's twenty-fourth seminar, considered to be neutral—"a trait that I said didn't matter, with a trait that is simply the same" and that "has nothing to do specifically with a loved person" (*SXXIV* 7, 2). While I do not propose to reduce these difficulties, it would be equally dishonest to overestimate their significance. Lacan's theoretical elaborations glossed above suffice to explain his liberal reinterpretation of identification through the subject-tie as amorous (imaginary rapport with the ideal ego), his constraintment of the unary trait to refer *only* to identifications involving an object-tie (the symbolic introjection of the ego ideal into the ego), and his characterization of the unary trait as having "nothing to do specifically with the loved object."

Lacan indicates his interest in hysterical identification as early as 1958: "It was not until the chapter on identification in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* that Freud clearly distinguished the third form of identification, which is conditioned by its function of sustaining desire and is therefore specified by the indifference of its object" ("The Direction of the Treatment and the Principles of Its Power" in *Écrits* 534). Remarkable is the consistency with which this term is maintained. In his eleventh seminar, Lacan hints that the hysterical identification by means of a symptom hinges on the process of separation (*SXI* 257). In his twenty-second seminar Lacan claims: "It is here, namely, there, where I situated for you the place of the [*petit objet a*] as being the one that dominates what Freud makes the third possibility of identification, the desire of the hysteric" (*SXXII* 169). There is no contradiction, it should be

noted, between “indifference of its object” and the centrality of the role of the *petit objet a* in hysterical desire for the precise reason that the *petit objet a* manifests itself as the object to which one is indifferent—the *objet a* lacks a spectral image. It refuses to engage the dialectic of narcissistic identification (established, one will recall, by the conspiracy of subject- and object-ties), just as the symptom of hysterical identification “leaves entirely out of account any object-relation to the person who is being copied” (*Group Psychology* 49). But for some reason Lacan, like Freud, found himself unable or unwilling to fully articulate the mechanism of hysterical identification:

It may therefore seem to you that to approach identification through this second type, is also to “*beschränken*” myself, limit myself, restrict the import of my approach; because there is the other, the identification of the first kind, the singularly ambivalent one which is constructed on the basis of the image of assimilating devouring; and what relationship has it with the third, the one which begins immediately after this point which I am designating for you in Freud’s paragraph: the identification to the other through the instrumentality of desire, the identification that we know well, which is hysterical, but precisely which I taught you cannot be properly distinguished—I think you ought to be sufficiently aware of it—except when there has been structured—and I do not see anyone who has done it anywhere other than here and before it was done here—desire as presupposing in its underlay exactly as a minimum the whole articulation that we have given of the relationships of the subject specifically to the signifying chain, in so far as this relationship profoundly modifies the structure of every relationship of the subject with each one of his needs. (SIX 39)

The articulation of the mechanism of hysterical identification presupposes the “whole articulation that we have given of the relationship of the subject specifically to the signifying chain”—nothing less than the entire body of Lacan’s teachings. If Freud and Lacan were unable to go further into hysterical identification, it is because this body was not yet complete. I am not suggesting that such an undertaking is completed, or even capable of being completed—however, by reading later developments of the subject, especially in relation to the symptom, we may make some headway.

The Symptom

Lacan is not shy to point out that Marx invented the symptom: “It is in the symptom that we identify what is produced in the field of the Real. If the Real manifests itself in analysis and not only in analysis, if the notion of the symptom was introduced, well before Freud by Marx, so as to make it the sign of something which is what is not working out in the Real, if in other words we are capable of operating on the symptom, it is in as far as the symptom is the effect of the Symbolic in the Real” (*SXXII* 20). That Marx gets short shrift in *Group Psychology*, and that Freud “wasn’t interested in the Marxist experience” would itself appear symptomatic of a repression (if such speculative meta-psychoanalyzing will be permitted) (*SVII* 208). I propose that this formula, that Marx invented the symptom, should be taken literally, and that the very notion of the symptom in Freud is determined by the Marxian perspective. Hence, Freud’s allegory of the capitalist and the entrepreneur (respectively, the unconscious wish and the preconscious idea whose collusion enables a symptom to achieve representation in a dream):

A daytime thought may very well play the part of *entrepreneur* for a dream; but the *entrepreneur*, who, as people say, has the idea and the initiative to carry it out, can do nothing without capital; he needs a *capitalist* who can afford the outlay, and the capitalist who provides the psychical outlay for the dream is invariably and indisputably, whatever may be the thoughts of the previous day, *a wish from the unconscious*. (*Interpretation* 599-600)

It is only through the investment of capital in a thought that the thought is “empowered to obtain representation” [*zur Darstellung fähig geworden sind*] (601). Recalling that the dream is a symptom of the unconscious, we can ascribe a dual aetiology to every Freudian symptom: “in order to bring about the formation of a hysterical symptom both currents of our mind must converge. A symptom is not merely the expression of a realized unconscious wish; a wish from the preconscious which is fulfilled by the same symptom must also be present. So that the symptom will have at least two determinants, one arising from each of the systems involved in the conflict” (608). By reading “class struggle” into “conflict,” it becomes clear that the

symptom, in Marx, is nothing less than the revolutionary subject itself, the product of class struggle. The “two determinates, one arising from each of the systems involved in the conflict” are, in Freud, the entrepreneur (the preconscious idea), who contains the idea of the new, and the capitalist (the unconscious wish), who provides the motive force to carry it out. That they are in conflict indicates the conservative nature of the unconscious wish and the revolutionary nature of the preconscious idea. Their compromise—the backing of an entrepreneur by capital—is that of progressive reform: the mediation of the conservative and the revolutionary.

Readers of Marx will recognize the tenuous nature of such a compromise—that the gap between the *old* (who control the apparatus of representation) and the *new* does not fail to widen with every “progressive” step forward. It is not a coincidence that the crisis in representation attested by *Occupy Wall Street* corresponds to a crisis in capitalism, and that so much of the group’s rhetoric is concerned with addressing the grievances of an unregulated market. Whereas, in the past, the symptoms of society could be articulated as a concurrence of progressive reform and economic interests, the gulf between the two has widened to the point of breaking. The effect of the symbolic in the real (Lacan’s definition of the symptom) must be recognized in the following: The very apparatus designed to *symbolically* distribute the voice of the people has resulted in their *real* disenfranchisement. The crisis of global capitalism indicates that there is a hitch in the possibility of symptom formation—and that the only symptom now capable of representation is that of the impossibility of symptoms. This is demonstrated by Occupy Wall Street in the October 21, 2011 draft of the *Principles of Solidarity*, in which it was claimed: “Our single demand is for those with demands to be heard” (see break-out group discussion of the NYCGA 11/3/2011).^{viii} The symptom is, curiously, what is shared between the two levels of subject formation considered above (the individual as a member of the group; the group as

subject of the city). It is the exclusion from the representative apparatus that knots the individual members into a group, just as it is through the symptom of the crisis of representation that the group is specified as a subject. The crisis of capitalism is thus a crisis of representation—to develop the dialectic of the latter we will have to take a step back to mid-19th-century France.

The Crisis of Representation (Parliamentary Democracy and Fascism)

In his *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Marx argues that the material conditions of the small-holding peasantry and *Lumpenproletariat* in mid-19th-century France make them incapable of forming a class and thus *formally unrepresentable*:

They cannot represent [*vertreten*] themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master [*Herr*], as an authority [*Authorität*] over them, as an unlimited governmental power that protects them against the other classes and sends them rain and sunshine from above. (200)

As such, the small-holding peasants take up a position outside the normal paradigm of political representation. He is the manifestation of what G.W.F. Hegel calls the rabble, who, “cannot live in the manner of his estate [*Stand*], for no estate really exists for him, since in civil society that which is common to particular persons really exists only if it is legally constituted and recognized” (226; § 253). The rabble is beyond the apparatus of representation because it lacks a position within what Lacan refers to as the symbolic order—a position within a Hegelian “essential sphere of society and its largescale interests”:

All such branches of society, however, have equal rights of representation [*Repräsentation*]. If deputies are regarded as ‘representatives’, they are this in an organic, rational sense only if they are representatives not of individuals or a conglomeration of them, but of one of the essential spheres of society and its largescale interests. Hence representation cannot now be taken to mean simply the substitution of one person for another; the point is rather that the interest itself is actually present in its representative, while he himself is there to present the objective element of his own being. (Hegel 297; § 311)

Cast in terms of identification, we can claim that the *imaginary identification* that the constituent perceives with respect to his or her representative (the ideal ego)—“that the interest itself is

actually present in its representative”—is predicated on the *symbolic identification* with a position in (an essential sphere of) society (the ego ideal). What the small-holding peasant, the heir to the rabble, represents is, in the end, nothing but the failure of the parliamentary mode of representation itself—a hitch in the identification with the father.

What emerges for the small-holdings peasant in the passive form of “being represented” is the farcical repetition of a paternal metaphor: *Napoleon III*. Marx continues:

Historical tradition gave rise to the belief of the French peasants in the miracle that a man named Napoleon would bring all the glory back to them. And an individual turned up who gives himself out as the man because he bears the name of Napoleon, as a result of the *Code Napoléon*, which lays down that *la recherché de la paternité est interdite* [!!]. After a vagabondage of twenty years and after a series of grotesque adventures, the legend finds fulfillment and the man becomes Emperor of the French. The fixed idea of the Nephew was realized, because it coincided with the fixed idea of the most numerous class of the French people. (200)

If the identification through the subject-tie of the father signifies the smooth operation of “representation as usual,” Napoleon III, a proto-fascist dictator, falls under the aegis of the second mode of identification, through the object-tie: Napoleon III is instilled as object choice for the band of his followers. The small-holding peasants are represented by Napoleon III because they cannot otherwise form an identification. They have nothing in common:

The small-holding peasants form a vast mass, the members of which live in similar condition but without entering into manifold relations with one another. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse. The isolation is increased by France’s bad means of communication and by the poverty of the peasants. Their field of production, the smallholding, admits of no division of labour in its cultivation, no application of science and therefore, no diversity of development, no variety of talent, no wealth of social relationships. Each individual peasant family is almost self-sufficient; it itself directly produces the major part of its consumption and thus acquires its means of life more through exchange with nature than in intercourse with society. A smallholding, a peasant and his family; alongside them another smallholding, another peasant and another family. A few score of these make up a village, and a few score of villages make up a department. In this way, the great mass of the French nation is formed by simple addition of homologous magnitudes, much as potatoes in the sack form a sack of potatoes. (199-200)

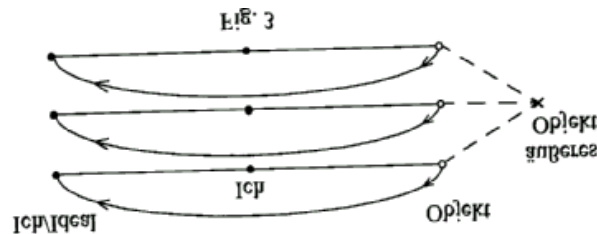
The distinction between a “class” (or *Stand*) and a “vast mass” can be understood as the distinction between a pearl necklace and a sack of potatoes. The former is organized. It is shot

through by the string of the paternal metaphor. The latter present a mere homologous magnitude. If a necklace breaks, all of the pearls fall. If one potato falls out of the bag, no one notices. The sack of potatoes, containing the lumpenproletariat and the small-holding peasants, does not form a unified set. It is incapable of narcissistic identification with the name of the father—a representative who would represent its demands in the political realm—because it has no unified demand.

To make up for the impossibility to form a set, the small-holding peasants must be artificially unified: “They cannot represent [*vertreten*] themselves, they must be represented. Their representative must at the same time appear as their master” (Marx 200). This is what leads Lacan to conclude, summarizing the argument of Group Psychology: “We’re interested in the unary trait because, as Freud emphasized, it has nothing to do specifically with a loved person. A person could be indifferent, and nevertheless one of his traits will be chosen as constituting the basis of an identification. This is how Freud believed he was able to give an account of the little mustache of the Führer, which everyone knows played a very important historical role” (SXXXII 3). The unary trait is what makes up for the failure of an organic unity of representation evidenced by the persistence of groups excluded from representation: the rabble (Hegel), the small-holding peasant (Marx), the singular (Badiou), *homo sacer* (Agamben), the subaltern (Spivak). The insistence of the symptom of unrepresentability in modernity proves the impossibility of an organic totality of representation, which leads Lacan to the distinguish between the whole one (*Einheit*, the unit of *a priori* synthesis) and the one marked as such by the unary trait (a function of *Einzigkeit*): “[T]he unifying One, the whole One—is not what is involved in identification. The pivotal identification, the major identification, is the unary trait. It

is Being, marked *one*” (SIX 95; SXVII 154). The group is marked *one* (note the passive voice) by the trait taken from the leader—it is falsely represented as a whole.

Freud’s final “account of the little mustache of the Führer”—of the group unified by the unary trait—takes the form of the famous identification diagram:



Displaying both subject- and object-ties, Freud describes how a single object (the Führer or equivalent) can be instilled as the ego ideal (the function, recall, of the unary trait in Lacan) of a group of individuals. As a result of this *shared object-tie* (horizontal correspondences in the diagram), the individual egos inter into a *shared subject-tie* (vertical correspondences in the diagram). Each ego perceives the other as a potential rival, but, due to the external obstacles precluding direct sexual contact, submit to the conditions of an inhibited (*zielgehemmt*) relationship to the leader (*Group Psychology* 66). Freud’s model for this is that of a

troop of women and girls, all of them in love in an enthusiastically sentimental way, who crowd round a singer or pianist after his performance. It would certainly be easy for each of them to be jealous of the rest; but, in the fact of their numbers and the consequent impossibility of their reaching the aim of their love, they renounce it, and, instead of pulling out one another’s hair, they act as a united group, do homage to the hero of the occasion with their common actions, and would probably be glad to have a share of *his* flowing locks. (66)

If Freud’s “troop of women and girls” can serve to figure the emergence of 20th-century fascism (it would do well to recall here the bulk of love letters written to Hitler), one might do well to connect his description to the proto-fascist representative structures embodied by Napoleon III. Marx writes: “[Napoleon III] looks on himself, therefore, as the representative of the middle class and issues decrees in this sense. Nevertheless, he is somebody solely due to the fact that he

has broken the political power of this middle class and daily breaks it anew” (205). It is precisely by breaking the apodictic rapport between represented and representative that Fascism is able to supply a semblant that could take its place. Leadered group formation presupposes the severing of a real sexual relation with the Führer, just as the rise of Napoleon III presupposes the lack of any real connection to the people he represents (see Karatani 142-152). Marx and Freud reveal the fascist core at the heart of representative politics. Just as Lacan considers the specular identification of egos to be secondary to the symbolic identification with the ego ideal (the introjected object-tie), so Marx, read through Freud, demonstrates that fascism is not the perversion of representative democracy, but its purer (unmediated by the imaginary) form.

The *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* demonstrates the farce of representational democracy as it slips into fascism—a thesis elaborated by the social theorists of the Frankfurt school. It is only, however, with the linguistic turn of Lacan that an adequate articulation of Marx with Freud becomes possible. The condition then, of successful identification via the *einzigster Zug* (mode II), is the Saussurean arbitrariness of the sign—of the unary trait. Napoleon III *could have* been anybody, and for this reason he *could represent everybody*. The aporias of representative democracy becomes more pronounced as the gulf between the people and their representatives widens with every election. We must ask, then: Are conditions rife to merely repeat the situation analyzed by Marx? The historical conditions surrounding the *Occupy Wall Street* movement are quite different from that of the small-holdings peasant. I am then not trying to suggest that the occupiers represent a sack of potatoes (the final image I would like to associate with identification via object-ties [mode II]). While the small-holding peasants were isolate, self-sufficient, and cut off from one another, the occupiers are interconnected, interdependent elements of complex city, hyper-mediated through Facebook, Twitter, or

whatever. Nevertheless, OWS shares the formal impossibility of cohering in a demand or class with the small-holding peasants. The most cohesive document produced thus far by the movement, the *Declaration of the Occupation of New York City*, is able to formulate a list of grievances only with qualifying clause, set off by an asterisk, “*these grievances are not all-inclusive.” But neither does OWS hold together as so many pearls tied up by the string of the father (the final image I would like to associate with identification via subject-ties [mode I]—the narcissistic identification with the democratic representative). OWS is neither whole nor incomplete, but more radically *not-all (pas-tout)*—non-totalizable. We will have to turn, then, to the third possibility of identification, little discussed by either Freud or Lacan, to discover an adequate image of OWS.

Headless Desire

Hysterical identification by means of a symptom will provide us with the rubric necessary to interpret the *Occupy* movement. Freud takes a characteristically cynical perspective toward the appearance in society of “Gemeingeist, esprit de corps, ‘group spirit’, etc.,” which he interprets as a reversal of the “troop of women and girls” model (subject-ties predicated on the transcendence/impossibility of the mutually loved object):

No one must want to put himself forward, every one must be the same and have the same. Social justice means that we deny ourselves many things so that others may have to do without them as well, or, what is the same thing, may not be able to ask for them. The demand for equality is the root of social conscience and the sense of duty. It reveals itself unexpectedly in the syphilitic’s dread of infecting other people, which psycho-analysis has taught us to understand. The dread exhibited by these poor wretches corresponds to their violent struggles against the unconscious wish to spread their infection on to other people; for why should they alone be infected and cut off from so much? why not other people as well? And the same germ is to be found in the apt story of the judgment of Solomon. If one woman’s child is dead, the other shall not have a live one either. The bereaved woman is recognized by this wish. (*Group Psychology* 67)

Freud's analogy would seem to suggest that the 99% coheres in opposition to the 1%—that the protestors are jealous of the super-rich, and that this unconscious “hostile feeling” has been reversed into a “positively-toned tie in the nature of an identification” among the members of the collective who had previously been mere rivals competing among themselves to take up the place of the billionaire (67). While this analysis is tempting in its simplicity, it is unsuitable to our aims precisely insofar as it assumes, as Freud admits, “the influence of a common affectionate tie with a person outside the group” (67). I see no evidence to support such an assumption with respect to Occupy Wall Street. What Freud is here rehashing is the old Rousseauian/Darwinian myth of the primal hoard that, having killed the chief, enter into a social contract of limitations and rights designed to prevent his reemergence. The father is killed, but for that very reason operates more effectively on the unconscious level. *Occupy Wall Street* is, on the contrary, headless in both its conscious and unconscious structure.^{ix}

Though Freud focuses on groups with leaders, he speculates at one point in *Group Psychology* on the possibility of a leaderless group governed by an abstraction:

We should consider whether groups with leaders may not be the more primitive and complete, whether in the others an idea, an abstraction, may not take the place of the leader (a state of things to which religious groups, with their invisible head, form a transitional stage), and whether a common tendency, a wish in which a number of people can have a share, may not in the same way serve as a substitute. This abstraction, again, might be more or less completely embodied in the figure of what we might call a secondary leader, and interesting varieties would arise from the relation between the idea and the leader. The leader or the leading idea might also, so to speak, be negative; hatred against a particular person or institution might operate in just the same unifying way, and might call up the same kind of emotional ties as positive attachment. (*Group Psychology* 40-41)

The distinction between a “leader” and a “leading idea” collapses from the Lacanian perspective to the extent that the father is replaced by the function of a name—a signifier. If we are to take the concept of a leaderless group seriously, it will not take the form suggested above by Freud. Whether the master is of flesh and blood or signifier makes no difference from the point of view

of structure. If *The 99%* were such a “leading idea” or “master signifier” it would express the identity of the group positively (via a “common tendency” or “wish in which a number of people can have a share”) or negatively (via “hatred against a particular person or institution”). Again, what we witness among the Occupiers is neither one nor the other. To see in the movement the expression of a common tendency, wish, or enemy is to assume a unary trait where none in fact exists. One voice of the NYCGA recognizes the impossibility of the formation of the 99% through “all the causes the majority of us believe in”:

If we’re going to say we’re the 99% we have to stick with issues the 99% of this country agree with. He is an anarchist, bisexual environmentalist, against the war on drugs. This is not 99% of the United States. We are at an impasse where this can be symbolic or substantial. If we embrace all the causes the majority of us believe in, this will be a symbolic movement. If we focus on Wall Street and corporations, we have a chance of changing things and getting the 99% behind us. (NYCGA 9/29/2011: 13.3.6.1. [block])

A single “wish in which a number of people can have a share” simply does not exist—to adopt one would be to effect a “symbolization” (the Lacanian resonances of the nameless protestor are compelling) of a movement that has a chance to be “substantial,” that is, rooted in the real.

If we want to avoid such projections, and preserve any edge the movement might have, it must be recognized that the only thing “we” have in common is our symptom—the “sign of something which is what is not working out in the Real” (Lacan, *SXXII* 20). The 99% does not form a whole that could find representation through a single stroke. The 99% is not against the 1%. This would be the algebra of majority rule, and foreign to the intent of the movement.

Occupy Wall Street is a protest against such rational bookkeeping. Its percentages do not add up for the precise reason that they represent *not* a fraction of the whole or its complement, but what we recall from our grammar school days as a *remainder*. 99% is the *rest*—it is the remainder of the Hegelian rabble turned on its head (*à la* Marx), no longer a negligible fraction that could be assuaged by charity. And yet the difference from Marx is clear. *Occupy Wall Street* does not

constitute a class, for it has no demand. We are then not witnessing the movement of the margin (Hegel's rabble) to the center (the mechanism of class struggle), but something much more radical—the *marginalization of the center itself*. *Occupy Wall Street* is the unconscious of the representational apparatus, and as such the symptom of what is, in the end, nothing more than the *very failure of representation*. As a sign of the real, the *Wall Street* symptom joins the ranks of the great failures of modernity—for example—the collapse of signification and the non-existence of the sexual relationship. It stands, as such, alongside the other two great lost causes of the 20th century: psychoanalysis and Marxism.

Lest one suppose that we are engaging in what Slavoj Žižek satirizes as a “kind of deconstructive game in the style of ‘every Cause first has to be lost in order to exert its efficiency as a Cause,’” it is important to emphasize the material basis of psychoanalysis, Marxism, and *Occupy Wall Street*—whether we are dealing with the materiality of the signifier or the materiality of class struggle (Žižek 7). If the real, the most material thing out there, is, for Lacan the failure of symbolic—and if the fabric of history is woven, in Marxian thought, by a series of crises—it will be recognized that the symptom of *Occupy Wall Street*, of the crisis of representation, is dynamically linked to its own failure as a movement. The inability to organically unify, the dissenting voices, the radical heterogeneity and conflict within the 99%—these are its strengths. Freud is often quoted as having stated that psychoanalysis would only be possible in a society in which it was no longer needed. Likewise, the principles binding *Occupy Wall Street*: horizontalism, direct participation, etc., are impossible in the world as we know it—and yet, for all that, OWS is not a utopianism. Despite the *Vision and Dreams Working Group*, the protestors are most actively concerned with getting by from day to day, staying warm, and eating.

Definitions are now possible. Recall that Freud's description of hysterical identification hinges on the *desire* of putting oneself in the same situation (*Versetzenwollens*), or the *possibility* of putting oneself in the same situation (*Versetzenkönnens*), and that this "point of coincidence between the two egos ... has to be kept repressed" (*Group Psychology* 49; *Massenpsychologie* 69). We conclude: The symptom is *Occupy Wall Street*. *Occupy Wall Street* is the symptom of the failure of representation. The symptom—individualizing singularity—can form the basis of a group provided that it remain empty. The cause of hysterical group desire is the absent cause. The protestors are protesting their groundlessness (hence the concern with physical space). The desire being sustained by *Occupy Wall Street* is democracy in the face of its own impossibility. Let us take the chanting seriously: "This is what democracy looks like."

With the collapse of the distinction between leader and leading idea comes the collapse of the distinction between a leaderless movement and a movement without a cause. A movement based on the crisis of representation can have two outcomes: It can be co-opted (the perennial fear of the occupiers) by a symbol—master signifier or unary trait—as the force of the potentially revolutionary small-holding peasantry was co-opted by Napoleon III, *or*, in drawing strength from its own groundlessness, it can subvert the dominant discourse from which it represents the exclusion. But all of this is articulated perfectly well by the occupiers themselves. What justifies casting *Occupy Wall Street* in the language of psychoanalysis? If I am to avoid the critique of stating the perfectly obvious in hermetic jargon, I will have to be very clear. My analysis ends with a prescription: Only by continuing under the banner of an absent cause ("lost" is too melancholic) can *Occupy Wall Street* continue to provoke in the subject to which it represents the unconscious the anxious, productive question: *Che vuoi?*—What do you want? To

modify a slogan of Mao's (who, crossed with James Dean, paints a pretty portrait of the *Wall Street* protestors): It is right to rebel without a cause.

The potential of the *Occupy Wall Street* movement is to change the dominant discourse. And not in the limited sense of introducing new issues and raising awareness (though this is good too—and has already begun). More radical still, OWS has the potential, in demonstrating its internal contradictions, to change the structure by which representation proceeds—structures *do*, it would appear, march in the streets! Lacan told student protesters in 1969: “the revolutionary aspiration has only a single possible outcome—of ending up as the master’s discourse. This is what experience has proved. What you aspire to as revolutionaries is a master. You will get one” (*SXVII* 207). If *Occupy Wall Street* can resist the formulation of a new master—whether leader or leading idea—it may produce “another style of master signifier,” “a new signifier that wouldn’t have any kind of meaning” (*SXVII* 176; *SXXIV* 66). The concern of analysis with producing the signifier without meaning—with “de-meaning” the symptom—presents significant parallels to what I have attempted to draw out of the *Occupy* movement. Lacan concludes:

The symbolically real isn't the really symbolic. The really symbolic is the symbolic included in the real, which clearly has a name—it's called lying (*le mensonge*). The symbolically real, being that part of the real that's implied inside the symbolic, is anxiety. The symptom is real. It's even the only truly real thing, that is, the only thing that preserves a meaning in the real. That's why psychoanalysis can, if given the chance, intervene symbolically to dissolve it in the real. (*SXXIV* 45)

Occupy Wall Street, qua symptom, is the symbolically real. It is the reaction to the really symbolic—lying—*le mensonge*—which is the best caricature I have heard all day of representative politics.

Endnotes

ⁱ In the sense that a single-issue movement has a cause or demand—e.g., women’s suffrage or ending the war in Vietnam. The question of whether or not to make demands has been present since the first pre-occupation meeting. No other issue is more divisive. At any rate, the protestors are clear to indicate the lack of consensus regarding the issue:

There has been some controversy about bringing up the discussion of demands at all. Some have noted that they believe at one point the GA said there would not be demands. We have noted on the back of the sheets that two instances that proposals have been brought to the GA concerned with demands. The first was brought September 27th. It was tabled. On 10/16, there was a discussion about a release of a statement in response to demands and the New York Times, saying that the GA has not reached a consensus regarding demands or the preamble. And that the list of New York Times demands was never presented to the GA. The source is the NYCGA website. (NYCGA 10/30/2011 [facilitator])

ⁱⁱ Please do not read negative connotations into “hysteria”—I use the term to distinguish it, in the psychoanalytic tradition, from neuroses, perversions, and psychoses. The normal case drops out of psychoanalytic investigation, thus, everything is *either* hysterical, neurotic, perverse or psychotic.

ⁱⁱⁱ An early poster flirted with the concept of demand, stating, “This is our one demand,” and depicting a ballerina on top of the iconic Wall Street bull statue. A later communication listed a series of no fewer than eleven demands, all claiming to be “our one demand” (<http://occupywallst.org/article/a-message-from-occupied-wall-street-day-five/> posted on 9/22/2011). The question of demand was then taken up by the Demands Working Group, which, after a crisis involving the unauthorized submission of a list of demands to the *New York Times*, has since been unable to get its proposal approved by the GA. There exist at least two major informal documents articulating demands: the Liberty Square Blueprint and the 99% Declaration, but, again, both have failed to achieve consensus.

^{iv} All Occupy Wall Street material is available at www.nycga.net under either *resources* (for documents) or *assemblies* (for GA minutes).

^vAs evidence of the focus on inclusivity (and that 99% is not a mere slogan), note the following changes between the draft of the *Statement of Autonomy* submitted on 11/9/11 and that approved on 11/10/11:

We welcome all, who, in good faith, ~~act to end corruption and corporate influence in government, and who~~ petition for a redress of grievances through non-violence [...] Our only affiliation is with the people, ~~who want to end the entanglement of big business and government.~~

^{vi} *Objektverhältnis*, “object-relation,” should not be confused with *Objektbindung*, “object-tie.” Freud’s point is that this third form of identification does not presuppose a libidinal relation (like that of parent to sibling which undergirds the first two cases) to the person with whom one identifies (See *Massenpsychologie* 69).

^{vii} The taxonomy of hysterical identification is less clear in *Group Psychology*, which states: “This is the complete mechanism of the structure of a hysterical symptom” in reference to the statement “You wanted to be your mother, and now you *are*—anyhow so far as your sufferings are concerned” (48). To avoid

confusion and in agreement with Lacan's usage, I will maintain hysterical identification proper to refer *only* to the identification by means of a symptom that "leaves out of account any object-relation."

^{viii} If this statement were approved by the GA (it was not) it would represent a confirmation of the Arendtian thesis that the "right to have rights [...] and a right to belong to some kind of organized community" are more basic than any specific demand or grievance (Arendt 296-297).

^{ix} This can be understood according to the model developed during Lacan's middle-late period: While the primal hoard constructs an *all* via the excepted other (the rejected father), a hysterically-identified group is *not-all*.

Works Cited

- Arendt, Hannah. *Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt, 1976. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. Trans. James Strachey. Ed. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1989. Print.
- . *The Interpretation of Dreams*. Trans. James Strachey. Ed. James Strachey. New York: Harper Collins, 1998. Print.
- . *Massenpsychologie und Ich-analyse*. Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 2007. Print.
- Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. "The Fight for 'Real Democracy' at the Heart of Occupy Wall Street" in *Foreign Affairs*: 10/11/11. Online. <<http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/136399/michael-hardt-and-antonio-negri/the-fight-for-real-democracy-at-the-heart-of-occupy-wall-street>>
- Hegel, G.W.F. *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*. Trans. T. M. Knox. Ed. Stephen Houlgate. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2008. Print.
- Karatani, Kojin. *Transcritique: On Kant and Marx*. Trans. Sabu Kohso. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT P, 2005. Print.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Écrits*. Trans. Bruce Fink. New York: Norton, 2006. Print.
- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book VII: The Ethics of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Dennis Porter. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton, 1997. Print.
- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book SIX: Identification*. Trans. Cormac Gallagher from unedited French typescript. Private use only.
- . *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book SXI: The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton,

1998. Print.

---. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book SXXVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*. Trans.

Russell Grigg. Ed. Jacques-Alain Miller. New York: Norton, 2007. Print.

---. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book SXXII: R.S.I.* Trans. by Cormac Gallagher from
unedited French typescript. Draft 2. Private use only.

---. *The Seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book SXXIV: L'insu que sait de l'une-bévue, s'aile à mourre.*

Trans. Dan Collins. Third Corrected Draft, 2009. Private use only.

Marx, Karl. "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte" in *Selected Writings*. Ed. Lawrence

H. Simon. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1994. Print.

Žižek, Slavoj. *In Defense of Lost Causes*. New York: Verso, 2009. Print.