

“We’re Mexican Too”: Publicity and Status at the International Line

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The Public at the Line

In Tijuana the “International Line” is not the border *per se*. Rather, *la Línea* refers to San Ysidro, the city’s main port of entry between Mexico and the United States, and to the area just south. It refers to the area that borders on the border, where the line forms to cross north. I have heard it speculated that *la Línea* is a bilingual pun summing up the border condition: two meanings sharing one word, one in Spanish and one borrowed from English. Neither meaning quite explains the name. Properly, *la Línea* could indeed refer to the international boundary, as in the phrase *la línea divisoria*, “the dividing line”—but in Tijuana the word is not commonly used or even understood in this sense. As a loan from English, it refers to the lines of cars and pedestrians waiting to cross. People ask, for example, if there is a lot of *línea*: is the line long? But I have never heard the word used to speak of a queue in any other context. *Línea*’s two meanings, neither of which stands on its own, run perpendicular to each other: an east-west line signifying prohibition and a north-south line signifying passage. The two are reduced to the point where they cross, as when my elderly roommate drew me a map of the port of entry and environs. “Let’s see,” I said, confused about which way the boundary ran and then, stumbling, not find-

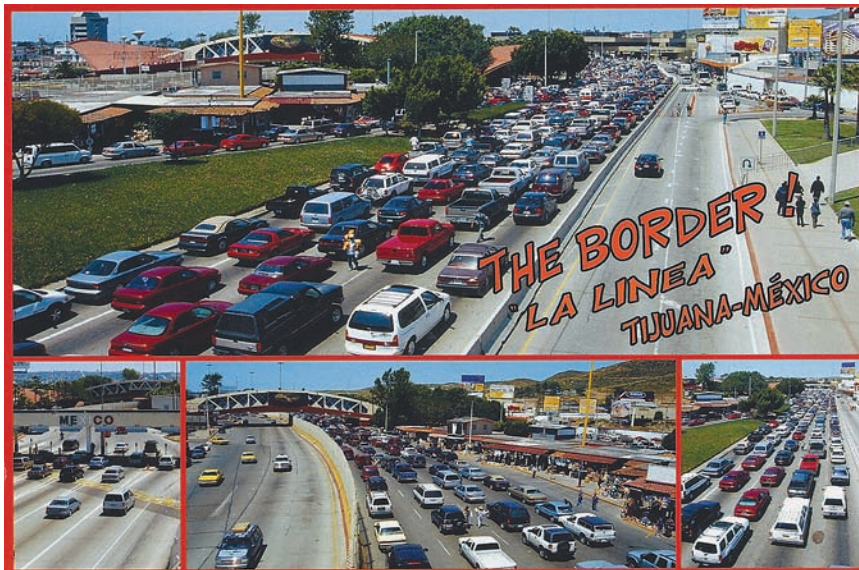
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ing a word for it: “Here, where the, the border [*frontera*] runs, the line [*línea*], the line of the border?” “Of the border,” she echoed, “well, that’s this, right here, it’s where they check your papers,” and she circled the row of tiny rectangles she had made to represent the one-person booths at which the U.S. immigration officers sit. For one who dwells here, the meaning of the border may be condensed to this point: the Line, prohibition and passage, a momentary confrontation, the perpetually repeated surrender of oneself and one’s documents for inspection to the representatives of the United States.

The Line is a busy place. The 110,000 crossings daily (110,000 presentations of visas, green cards, IDs; 110,000 of these muted exchanges, sometimes nothing more than a nod from the officer to pass one through) make San Ysidro likely the most-traveled port of entry in the world (Blum 2007). The port is designed to handle twenty-four lanes of crossing vehicular traffic, and even so the wait can be longer than two hours. The hustle is relentless and stifled. Cars idle, pedestrians shuffle forward, but all watch for the break that could make up another moment of waiting. Women run to beat others to the end of the line. A split-second laxity and another car has merged in front of you. In this dull tension, one would seem to rub shoulders with every social type imaginable: businesspeople, homeless people, housewives, gangsters, schoolchildren, church groups, construction workers, competition bikers, families on holiday, and so on indefinitely. Even as the crossers edge forward, keeping tabs on one another out of the corners of their eyes, they are themselves the spectacle of the Line—for instance, on postcards (see figs. 1–2), in hourly radio reports on their numbers, or on their own television channel, where surveillance-style takes of them are broadcast twenty-four hours a day.

To understand the Line’s significance for public culture in Tijuana, though, this essay does not focus on the colorful everyday sociality there. Instead, the ethnographic examples are drawn from one unprecedented day on which the Line was left virtually desolate, the lanes of traffic empty, the pedestrian crossers straggling through: May 1, 2006, when local involvement in the U.S. movement for immigrants’ rights succeeded in briefly shutting down the port of entry (see figs. 3–4). This conflictive act brought into relief a number of deeply rooted notions about the social world of the border. The Line emerges not just as the emblem of an entire vision of Tijuana but as the key site where that vision makes itself institutionally real—the version of “the public” able to establish relative dominance over and via this site also orders society far beyond the Line itself.

This dominant version of the *tijuanense* public reproduces itself, interpellates individuals into its imaginary, across a range of sites and genres of public com-



Figures 1–2 Postcards of *la Línea* at the San Ysidro International Port of Entry. Photograph by Antonio Blanco. Antonio Blanco/Distribuidora Cortez



Figure 3 The same view as in the lower-middle panel of figure 2 on the day of the protest

munication, from the circulating texts of the mass media to the public thoroughfare of the Line itself. Michael Warner (2002: 90) has advanced the notion of a public as “the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse.” But discourse circulates only through concrete, institutionally shaped contexts of interaction to which social actors have differential access and in which, given that access, they have different parts to play. For M. M. Bakhtin (1981, 1986), the idea of genre indissolubly unites spatiality, temporality, and subjectivity. Thus an understanding of publics as constituted through systems of genres may offer the possibility of a bridge between lines of thought on political public spheres, on physical public space, and on publics as audiences and readerships. The meeting in Town Hall where public authority is disputed is obviously linked to the newspaper that reports on it, which is in turn linked to the talk on the plaza. Each communicative form, in the site to which it is germane and with its correspondent parties to interaction, reproduces variations on a logic of publicity that ultimately is fundamental to the consolidation of a social group: “the public;” however divided



by dissent and disagreement, is still the basis of “the people,” a “we” that engages in these particular forms of public communication and interaction.¹

The dominant *tijuanaense* public is buttressed by multiple institutionalized practices; it constitutes a standard for public interaction. But as a standard, it is forever engaged in establishing itself against all that is nonstandard, other, “not Tijuana,” because its models for public coherence are precisely those against which Tijuana defines itself. In this, the *tijuanaense* public reproduces conundrums central to the bourgeois public sphere Jürgen Habermas (1989) described: its socioeconomic

1. I use the term *publicity*, as a more accurate translation of Habermas’s *Öffentlichkeit*, to slant understanding away from the spatial metaphor of *public sphere* and back toward the modalities of publicness.

Figure 4 Municipal police officers guard the border against disruptions spilling into U.S. territory. In the background, pedestrian crossers approach the port of entry. The swath of bumps across the asphalt marks the border itself.

exclusivity and its conflicted relation to a national state. At the Line, these two conundrums come together with painful force—it is precisely the Habermasian legacy that makes the Line so central to the *tijuanaense* public. But this public depends also on the capacity of circulating discourse to evoke a sense of participation and, eventually, a response. Because the Habermasian model is just that, a model, it is reproduced in situated interaction, in texts, in dialogue, on the street. This makes it vulnerable to contestation. The normativity with which Habermas would endow it appears as an ongoing project, as various actors try to establish its logics of publicity as standard.

In Tijuana, legal access to the United States ratifies socioeconomic status in Mexico; the U.S. state becomes the authoritative source in which to anchor social value. If the crossers at the Line form a public, they do so in the first instance in relation to a foreign state. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), for example, regularly issues notices addressed to “the traveling public.”² As described above, this public would seem to include a range of social types too various to classify. In fact, however, the members of “the traveling public” belong to a single basic category. They are the documented: U.S. citizens, permanent residents, and visa holders. Members of all categories reside on both sides of the border, and they cross in an immense variety of patterns, for an immense variety of reasons. In all their variety, though, they are categorically distinct from their other, the undocumented. When the latter appear at the Line, it can only be with a certain stigma. They are picked out of the crowd, interrogated, held. This process marks them before the view of “the traveling public.” Approaching the booths, the single line of pedestrian crossers splits into several. All eyes look forward, gauging which immigration officer is moving crossers through the quickest, watching for any peculiarities or setbacks. All eyes catch the flash of the bright orange slip of paper referring a crosser to secondary inspection; all eyes follow as the officer escorts the suspect back to the counter where the preliminary grilling takes place. This counter is in full view, a backdrop to the booths as crossers wait to show their papers and, hopefully, answer just a question or two. As one hurries out, one may hear snippets of the interrogation: “Me no believe you!” exclaims an officer in broken Spanish, with all the bluster of amateur theatricals. But, failing this interrogation, the undocumented are gathered and displayed even more forcefully for what they are—failed crossers caught trying to “pass.” One may sometimes see lines of twenty or so of them being led back into Mexico, through those waiting to cross north. They are chained together, handcuffed, and they carry behind their

2. Numerous usages of the term by CBP may be found at www.cbp.gov.

backs little plastic bags filled with their belongings. People sneak glances, as surreptitiously as possible, or look away. Those in cars and buses, more concealed, may stare. One wonders who among them may join the show.

Though “the traveling public” is not simply composed of the concrete count of document holders (it lies, rather, in one’s sense of being addressed by the forms of publicity, one’s sense of these forms as inhabitable and presupposable), it is anchored in state institutions and practices. Visa holders make up the bulk of crossers,³ and the idealized figure of the upstanding, visa-holding citizen lies at the heart of the documented “traveling” public. Though the same visa is now available to all Mexicans, at the border it is deeply imbued with the significance of local belonging, for it inherits its meaning from the old Border Crossing Card.

The Border Crossing Card has been in existence in one form or another since 1918 and has always functioned as something of a special pass for Mexican border residents; in 1998 it was merged with the regular tourist visa for all Mexicans, and the laser visa was born. It is good for ten years, allows travel within twenty-five miles of the border (and beyond, with a simple six-dollar pass), and does not permit employment in the United States. By late 2006 more than 8.5 million Mexican citizens, or about 8 percent of the population, held one.⁴ In Tijuana the rate is far higher. By 2004 the U.S. Consulate had issued 1,153,268 visas for the Baja peninsula⁵—roughly a third of the inhabitants hold a visa, and though there are no figures to bear it out, these are certainly concentrated in Tijuana. Such statistics make it understandable why, despite the greater difficulty of obtaining the laser visa in recent years, the myth that it is “easy” for a resident of Tijuana to get one is still widespread. A local university professor even asked me what I could find interesting about the visa, since “everyone” has one. The visa, and membership in “the traveling public,” is virtually a requisite for local belonging.⁶

In this context, documented and undocumented may be counted among the most basic social categories. The distinction is not simply a matter of categorization but is the basis of the formation of social groups in daily life. The Line is connected to a whole series of scenes of public sociality to which different groups

3. I know of no statistics to bear this out. It is my impression, based on participation in the scopic regime of the Line—others’ documents are clearly visible when they are handed over to the officer.

4. I calculate these figures from statistics published by the U.S. Department of State (2006) and by Mexico’s census bureau, Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (2000).

5. Liza Davis (2006), a press officer for the U.S. Consulate in Tijuana, supplied this information.

6. U.S. permanent residents and citizens living in Tijuana should not be overlooked, but the relation of these constituencies to the *tijuanaense* public deserves treatment on its own.

have different rights and which they use variously as they articulate themselves. In this essay I present a set of examples all having to do with a single event—a demonstration at the Line—but drawn from very different communicative genres. I attempt to point out some of the affinities between these examples, how different genres echo into one another to reproduce the documented *tijuanense* public and the exclusion of the undocumented. The communicative forms examined are the media through which documented Tijuana as a social group is evoked and re-created, whether in face-to-face interaction on the street or in the production and circulation of texts—or even in simply “doing Line,” as this act is given meaning by a panoply of generically organized texts and interactions that go on at, and about, the Line.

The Flyer

The first example is the translated text of a flyer that I found stapled to a telephone pole in an older, working-class neighborhood in Tijuana:

The Great American Boycott 2006 [in Spanish]
The Great American Boycott 2006 [in English]
A day without latinos⁷
A day without latins [*sic*; in English]

It happens that on May 1 in the U.S. the movie A day without Mexicans [*sic*] is going to be made reality, this means that no Latino will work on that day in the U.S. and they have asked their compatriots for us not to buy anything American that day.

[They ask] this with the objective that they be recognized our right to work, to the education of our children and to medical services in that country.

What we're asking is that on May 1 nothing be bought in the country nor anything consumed in American chains, this means no Dunkin' Donuts, McDonalds, Burger King, Starbucks, Sears, Krispy Kreme, Walmart [*sic*], Costco, Office Depot, Home Depot and others . . . of the interminable list of American companies in Mexico.

I know it's an effort for everyone but it's the least we can do for those folks who are practically supporting our country with the remittances[.] I hope you can make this little one-day effort (May 1). A new demonstra-

7. In the 2004 movie *Un día sin mexicanos*, released in English as *A Day without a Mexican* (dir. Sergio Arua), all Latinos mysteriously disappear from California.

tion of force to put between the sword and the wall of conservative legislators who continue to fight migratory reform.

THIS MAY 1 DON'T WORK, DON'T GO TO SCHOOL, DON'T PUT GASOLINE [IN YOUR CAR], DON'T BUY, DON'T SELL!! LET'S UNDERLINE HOW IMPORTANT WE MEXICANS ARE TO THE UNITED STATES!!!

The text ends with a rousing call, a rhythmic series of exhortations in which the author for the first time addresses the reader directly as “you”: “DON'T WORK, DON'T GO TO SCHOOL, DON'T PUT GASOLINE [IN YOUR CAR], DON'T BUY, DON'T SELL!!” It is a comprehensive call to all interested parties to participate in the boycott in all its aspects, and it attempts to interpellate the reader directly by using the familiar form of the second-person singular, *tú*, expressed in the ending of each verb in the series. The text then immediately passes from singular to plural, always in the imperative mood, incorporating author and reader in the same social group: “WE MEXICANS.” Whoever “you” might be, without doubt you are part of this national “we,” whose interests and actions span borders. The text not only convokes the boycott. It also invokes this national and cross-border “we”; it attempts to reproduce it in the very act of communication, to interpellate the reader as part of it. This articulation of “we” is preliminary. It looks to the future. “We” wants to pass into the mouth of the reader; it wants the reader to articulate it himself or herself, on May 1, when “our” voice will resound before its true interlocutor, the society and the government of the United States of America. The text is a call to articulation; “we” refers reflexively to its own articulation in order to put itself into motion, to communicate its momentum, to continue its trajectory, to move the reader to take up “we” and articulate it anew, on May 1.

For Greg Urban (2001), the articulation of “we” is essential for the formation of a modern imagined community. He traces its use throughout a text foundational for the American nation, the Declaration of Independence, to show how it emerges in counterpoint with the “they” of the British. The flyer for the Great American Boycott, however, does not achieve so neat a contrast between the first and the third persons. The ritual incorporation of “you” the reader into “we Mexicans” is a weak gesture after the vacillations that lead up to it. This “we” is vulnerable; its articulation is not conclusive. It reveals the doubts and hesitations, the cleavages, with which the social group it tries to invoke is shot through.

For instance, the text begins by stating that “the Latinos” (third person) are asking their compatriots for “our” support. That is, reader and author are both “compatriots” and not Latinos. Two sentences later the author writes, using the same verb, *solicitar*, that “we” are asking for support. The intervening sentence

rather nonsensically proclaims that “the Latinos” want for “them” to be recognized “our” rights (as if “we compatriots” residing in Latin American countries should have the right to education and medical services in the United States). The first-person plural appears six times before the concluding paragraph, and in no case is it clear that it refers to the inclusive and cross-border group “we Mexicans.” That is, “we” does not emerge via any strict poetic structuring of the text. Rather, the “we’s” that do appear represent a series of slips and obfuscations. One may suspect that principal among these obfuscations is the identity of the author as a “Latino” and therefore not precisely a “Mexican” with the full right to address his or her “compatriots” resident in the home country—which points precisely to a breach between social groups that the final call “we Mexicans” attempts to seal over and that is evident from the first sentence, when “the Latinos” and “their compatriots” are referred to in the third and the first persons, respectively.⁸ By calling people of Mexican origin who live in the United States “those folks” who live in “that country,” the implication is reinforced of a “we” composed only of Mexicans resident in Mexico. As I shall show, that breach reappeared on the day of the boycott.

The flyer may be considered a prime example of a public text, not only because of its elemental form of distribution on the street, by the wayside, ideological site par excellence of what is public in the most general sense of the word, but also because of the flyer’s method of invoking its reading public, of referring to it and to its own nature as a communication. As explained above, “we” here is a reflexive mechanism. The continued existence of “we” and the group it refers to depends on its ability to project itself into the future, and it does this by subtly indicating its own nature as an articulation. If one follows Warner’s definition of a public as, among other things, “the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse,” the boycott flyer is a public-creating text because in its own circulation it evokes the imagination of the group in which it circulates. However, the public is never “everybody,” as it pretends to be, and this condition of denied exclusivity becomes patent around the border. The division between “they Latinos” and “we compatriots” is not only a matter of pronouns; there are also indications that both the author and his or her hypothetical reader are to be imagined as located within national territory and that their ties to the two countries in question are differ-

8. For Émile Benveniste (1971a, 1971b), while the first and second persons are formed as subjects in the linguistic exchange of “you” and “I,” the third person is left out of this play. It is not even an authentic person but simply a stand-in for the object of discourse, what passes between “you” and “I” in their dialogical constitution of subjectivity. Thus “the Latinos” remain, here, a nonsubject.

ent from those of the “Latinos.” The author concentrates on exhorting his or her readers not to consume; he or she enumerates American franchises in Mexico. Moreover, the first sentence conceals a parallel construction: the Latinos will not work, while their compatriots will not buy. A division of functions is sketched out, correlative with the division between two social groups (which, of course, ignores the rich variety of relations one may have with the United States, a variety that flourishes at the border): those who live *there* and those who live *here*; those who *work* there and those who *shop* there. This division was again expressed on May 1, for the suppositions that clouded the articulation of “we Mexicans” in the flyer were not mere idiosyncrasies of their author.

In sum, the flyer is a public text because of the mechanisms through which it evokes a social group by inviting the reader to actively take up its articulations. It also partakes of a long history of ideology about the street and about public communication on the street; its very mode of dissemination is a call to a certain audience and a reference to a tradition in which political action and the circulation of news on the street are intimately tied together.⁹ Moreover, the flyer bears the marks of an uncertainty over public space here, on the Mexican side of the border, an uncertainty about how to speak in this place, under what rights, and to whom. The uncertain identity of projected author and hypothetical reader reflects an unconsummated struggle over who may speak in public and on what basis: it is a struggle over the limits of “we Mexicans.”

The Poll

Support in Mexico for the Great American Boycott was organized almost entirely by the mass media. At the national level, a great deal of press was given to the boycott; it was taken up as a national affair, to the point that in coverage of the demonstrations in the United States the participation of immigrants from other countries was treated as a curiosity. Many calls for support were issued, all restricted to the notion that on May 1 one should not buy American products, and celebrity adherences to the boycott were well publicized. As far as I have seen, the organizers in America made no great attempt to elicit support in Mexico. Actions in the Mexican border cities were organized independently by local groups.

The next example is a newspaper poll, also from the days leading up to the boycott. It was produced in a formal institutional context and, to reach its audience,

9. This is not to say that the organizers of the boycott in Mexico relied only or even primarily on this tradition.

relied on circuits of distribution quite distinct from those of a flyer reproduced by photocopying and stapled to a telephone pole. The newspaper has also been ideologically a classic site of publicity; Habermas consecrated it when he analyzed the formation of the bourgeois public sphere on the basis of the historical emergence of the newspaper as one of its most basic institutions. As in the previous example, the text reflexively presents and puts into circulation an image of the group among which it circulates. This image takes up and expands on the same social division that compromised the “we Mexicans” of the boycott flyer.

The “mega-marches” (*megamarchas*) carried out all over the United States on May 1 were proclaimed a resounding success by the Mexican press, as was the boycott in general. The local Tijuana press, following the national lead, had all along given the event very positive coverage, with multiple calls for “support.” On April 30 *Frontera* reported the general consensus with a full-page spread of testimonies: “*Tijuanenses* Will Support Boycott” (Ovalle 2006). The poll as a genre is a miniature *mise-en-scène* of society—in this case “*tijuanense*,” as the title proclaimed—the more so when organized and published by a newspaper whose motto is Identity and Expression of Tijuana (*Identidad y expresión de Tijuana*).¹⁰ The genre itself bears the reflexive reference that enables it to evoke a public of the type Warner describes.

The twenty-three people polled spoke of “participating” (*participar*) in the boycott, of “supporting” (*apoyar*) their “countrymen” (*paisanos*) who “live on the other side” (*que viven en el otro lado*).¹¹ Their language, in this respect, resembled that of the official press and of the flyer in the first example. But of these *tijuanenses*, two said that they work in the United States, eight said that they reside in that country, and two identified themselves as residents of neighboring municipalities in Mexico. Although the article’s title presents those polled as a minisample of *tijuanense* society, residence or rootedness was not a criterion for sample selection. The subtitle reads “Residents of the city interviewed at the International Line at the moment of crossing toward San Diego commented that on May 1 they will not go to the neighboring country, in support of the action announced.” Interviewed in the act of crossing the border, those polled are without doubt documented, possessors of papers of one sort or another for legal crossing. This criterion is the only one that, in practice, has given them the right to represent Tijuana in *Frontera*’s pages.

The poll as a genre is based on the figure of “the man on the street,” or the

10. See Bourdieu 1979. *Frontera* (*Border*) was founded in 1999 by an out-of-state chain.

11. *El otro lado* (the other side) is the most common way of referring to the United States.

“everyman” who can represent us all. With a handful of these, the average of public opinion is plumbed. In this case, a very particular street was selected to interpellate the “everymen”—the street of the International Line, where the “general public” comes preselected in a very particular fashion. The Line is used to represent Tijuana, the passersby of the Line to represent the *tijuanense* public in general. No vendors working there, for instance, were included. Despite all its variation, the sample was taken from a restricted social group: those with documents to cross the border. *Frontera* applauded the attitude of this group (named and defined by *Frontera*) and encouraged its participation in the May 1 boycott.

While the flyer revealed a division between Mexican “Latinos” and their “compatriots” south of the border, this poll at first appears to ignore that division, lumping together people who live and work on both sides of the Line and calling them all, indiscriminately, *tijuanenses*. However, the poll actually works just like the flyer: by covertly excluding those who lack documents to cross to the United States, it distinguishes between social groups on the basis of their relation to that country. It reflects the basic assumption that the *tijuanense* public *is* the documented “traveling public” of the CBP. The distinction between documented and undocumented is perhaps the grossest cut of social differentiation in this context, and it underlies as well the tremulous formulations of the flyer—for the Great American Boycott is, after all, the concern of the undocumented and of those who could, if only imaginatively or by implication, occupy their position. It was an attempt of the undocumented in the United States to represent themselves politically, to articulate themselves. Just as in the poll only the documented have the right *de facto* to represent themselves in public, as *the* public, the wavering identity of the speaker throughout the text of the flyer (what “we” does the author claim to speak for?) shows in what sense the undocumented lack here a position from which to speak and represent themselves in public. The author tries to speak for them, then as them, then again for them, and the entire attempt collapses in a mess of unclarity. The predicament is, perhaps (despite new seats in some state congresses for Mexicans abroad), as acute as in the United States, where at least the Great American Boycott did, in fact, happen. If the border, and the documents for crossing it, is the principal idiom of social distinction here, social distinction is also fundamentally a matter of publicity, of how and on what basis a group represents and articulates itself. These texts, the flyer and the poll, do not merely paint an image of social groups and their distinctions. The self-image the poll provides to those among whom it circulates is one of the very mechanisms by which a documented public re-creates itself; the flyer attempts to open space for a social group that would include the undocumented.

The Demonstration

To explore the connection between publicity in Tijuana and documentation for crossing the border, I switch here to examples of situated public interaction. As the idea of the documented *tijuanense* public is applied in face-to-face interaction, it works similarly to articulate and re-create social groups. As in the first two examples, the nature of the public space of the street is central, but here it appears in dispute. A passing confrontation reveals the structure of social distinction that underlies the sense of authorization (or lack of it) for speaking or appearing in public, even in the most casual ways.

On May 1 a number of people, not content with “supporting” the boycott from the silence of their homes, attempted to shut down the highway crossing north to the United States through the San Ysidro port of entry. This action was carried out within the same framework of “support” (*apoyo*) for the boycott; its declared motive was to keep people from crossing to the United States and spending their money there. *Frontera* did not look favorably on this effort, titling one report “Botched Blockade” (Villegas 2006). Much was made of a policeman injured with a plastic water bottle, which caused a “hemorrhage on his forehead” and led “the attempts at violence between activists and police to become even more raw” (San and Villegas 2006). *Frontera* made it known that “police prevented the demonstrators from assaulting drivers” and that the demonstrators “hurled offenses against whoever passed by foot or by car.” In the context of a successful boycott and a day of peaceful mass demonstrations in the United States, the Tijuana media portrayed the demonstration at the Line as a small black stain. Of twenty-two people arrested, the televised news chose shots of young men, the sort regularly seen on TV arrested for robberies and other violent crimes, and not of older men and women or people of middle-class aspect, in particular, of the organizers, whose strategic arrest broke up the demonstration.

The crossing was closed only briefly about midday. Before that, the police were in effect the ones carrying out the blockade, farther back and out of sight of the demonstrators. They let vehicles through for about fifteen minutes of every hour, apparently by agreement with the demonstration’s organizers. After the crossing was closed completely, the police proceeded to arrest the latter. It was then easy to clear the area little by little, though when I left at 6 p.m. the police were still there, ambling about the deserted lanes along with a few scattered demonstrators.¹²

12. The demonstrators were of mixed ages and classes, but they were predominantly middle-class or well-to-do working-class. Many had apparently heard the demonstration announced on the news.

Contrary to news reports, confrontation was not the tone of the day. Most demonstrators used the rhetoric of national-racial solidarity to try to convince the motorists not to cross the border. They approached the cars and talked to the drivers through rolled-down windows. Every time a car turned around to return to Mexico, the demonstrators applauded, and those in the car usually left grinning and shaking their fists in a sign of solidarity. The logic of *apoyo*, with its emergent social divisions, as seen in the boycott flyer, was frequently expressed. For example, a professionally printed sign held up by an older middle-class couple begged passersby, “Let’s not consume in the United States for this day” (No consumamos en Estados Unidos por este día [note the first-person plural]). Despite this relatively innocuous rhetoric, and the presence of the municipal police—including the tactical unit; sections from the patrol, touristic, and canine divisions; the mounted police; and the elite unit (sitting in vans in the back with their automatic weapons)—at several points demonstrators did confront the occupants of cars, frustrated in their attempt to carry out their quotidian border crossing.¹³ I focus next on a case in which the confrontation between a driver insistent on crossing and demonstrators who had taken it on themselves to represent the interests of the undocumented articulated the dispute over the border that I believe central to social stratification and public life in Tijuana.

What follows is an excerpt from my field notes on May 1, 2006:

A young man in a white dress shirt earnestly exhorts her [the driver] to support her race. Behind him a group of much younger teenagers shout: “¡Váyase por el cerro!” (Go through the hills, or, by way of the hills, i.e. illegally, by foot through the desert, as the poor must). The young man goes on exhorting her. She is indignant. She waves her arm and shouts, “¡Flojos! ¡Flojos!” (Lazy bums! Lazy bums!). I do not see how, but the young people start to bounce her minivan. It gains momentum, higher and higher it flies. She tries to hold on, laughing. I do not know how she started laughing, but she is grinning and laughing as if she were on a carnival-ride. Her glasses jounce off her face, they are stuck there at a crazy angle, she cannot reach them. She

In the morning several older people took turns at a loudspeaker, directing the crowd—presumably they had organized the demonstration. Of corporate groups, only the braceros made an appearance, but soon they scattered through the crowd. One or two leftist groups handed out propaganda. The most diligent participants, who arrived very early in the morning and stayed until the very end, were a large number of “punk” teenagers. As for party politics, a candidate for Congress from the right-wing National Action Party showed up in the morning with a contingent of supporters but was booed away.

13. While shutting down the border is a common tactic for demonstrators in Ciudad Juárez and other border cities, in Tijuana no attempts had been made for many years.

tries to hold on and grab her glasses at once. I have a vivid impression of the bright pink lipstick on her puffy middle-aged face, her permed hair, her big cockeyed glasses, her hand reaching up toward her face, and the grin she cannot help. The police are there instantly. They are professional, quick, and calm.

The words “Go through the hills” constitute a direct accusation aimed at those who enjoy the coveted privilege of legal, documented crossing.¹⁴ When the teenagers tell the woman, “Váyase” (Go), using the polite form of the second person, they address her not as a consumer on the point of breaking the boycott but as a possessor of documents. (“Váyase por el cerro” of course echoes the vulgar “Váyase a la chingada”—roughly, “Fuck off.”)¹⁵ They interpellate her in the role of having papers, and one may imagine that, possibly, her answer of “Lazy bums! Lazy bums!” reciprocally recognizes the teenagers not just as rabble-rousing no-goods but as at least potential undocumented crossers—for “lazy” is not only a stereotype of the demonstrator but also, in certain circles, an epithet that continues to circulate of the migrant to the United States. Later that day I again heard the words “through the hills,” which appear in my notes next to the chant “[We of] the working[-class] race are not criminals” (*La raza obrera no somos criminales*). Again, the use of the first-person plural indicates, if not who speaks precisely, then whom the speaker identifies with or pretends to represent. I do not know where the teenagers were from. They were dressed as “punks,” a youth style that in Mexico has preserved its association more with anarchism than with music.

In any case, the point is not to indicate whether an “authentic” undocumented identity spoke for itself in this scene but to mark a shift away from the delegative mode of representation (*we* “support” *them*) that excludes the undocumented, to a mode in which “we” includes them, or even refers exclusively to them.

In this brief exchange of imprecations (“Go through the hills” and “Lazy bums!”), two social groups articulated themselves, re-created themselves, and defined themselves one with respect to the other, dialogically, around the issue of their manner of crossing the border. The border-crossing document guarantees or underlies a social role—it is the basis of the woman’s indignation, of her sense of her own right to be there and to carry on with her business as well as to call these young people names. As the state’s recognition of the individual and authoriza-

14. *Por el cerro*, “through the hills,” forms a standard conceptual pair with *por la Línea*, “through the Line.” While here they represent the distinction between undocumented and documented, they recursively represent a significant status distinction among undocumented travelers as well.

15. Thanks to Humberto Félix Berumen for pointing this out.

tion of his or her named identity is usually sanctified in a birth certificate, so that posterior use of the name relies on the state's original baptism (Silverstein 2005: 11), so this woman speaks from a position consolidated by the authority of the U.S. state. The teenagers, and the undocumented people they (try to) represent, speak from outside this officialized system of social recognition. The logic of their speech is precisely the traditional logic of the demonstration. It is the attempt of the demos, of "a part of those who have no part," to force its way into public space, to speak and be heard there (Rancière 1999: 99).¹⁶ This logic was also the basis of much of the discourse on the Great American Boycott. It was spoken of as a clamor for society at large to recognize the "sleeping giant," the undocumented immigrants said to be normally "invisible."

The accusation "Go through the hills" and the sudden crystallization of opposite positions with respect to the border (a division that opposed those who go to spend to those who go to work, those who have papers to those who do not) exceeded the original logics of "support" and "boycott." Recall the formulation from the flyer: the Latinos will not work, and their compatriots will not buy. At this moment, the demonstration revealed another logic: the universal application of the border, the border as egalitarian and absolute. For that day it would exist for everyone as it exists every day for those who do not have access to documents and the social power that they imply. If you want to go, go through the hills. From the time the closing of the border was undertaken, the demonstration could no longer be about a boycott exactly. A boycott is voluntary by nature; the expressions closest to that original intention took the form of supplications and persuasions ("Let's not consume in the United States for this day" — because a boycott is also, a priori, the action of those who have the power to consume; it is a call to think of oneself as a consumer). A boycott is projected in a public space of rational debate between autonomous actors, not in the space created by the irruption of what has been excluded. The idea of the boycott and the idea of closing the border are not, at root, compatible. This is why, when a couple in suits got out of their car to approach a young man and ask him, "Don't you think it should be voluntary?" they had to repeat their question, without success. "Young man! Young man! Don't you think it should be voluntary?" He remained stiff and mute, eyes fixed, hands gripping his sign. The suited couple were appealing to the logic of the

16. Jacques Rancière writes of democracy as the emergence of politics via a dispute over the parts that count in society, of a democracy as a society constituted around this appearance of the part not counted in a way that unsettles all systems of count. He opposes this democracy to "postdemocracy," in which public opinion is continually on show for itself via a "system of polls and simulations" (Rancière 1999: 103)—recall *Frontera's* "Tijuanenses Will Support Boycott!"

boycott, a logic that permitted them to retain their privilege without question—although, in the end, only with the help of the municipal police.

A demonstration is an appropriation of public space, the manifestation of “those who have no part.” The demos speaks in public by taking the public space. The anger of the woman who shouted, “Lazy bums! Lazy bums!”—the anger expressed by many motorists—is the anger of those who see their space invaded. The premise of “go through the hills” is that *now*, today, “we” who normally occupy the space of the hills are *here*, at the Line, where normally “we” cannot *appear* (fully, that is, as normally we pass through here only in disguise, for example, with fake papers), where we have neither part nor voice. And when we appear where we cannot appear, our simple appearance causes a major disturbance in the system. The demonstration in the first instance is a matter of the *right* to appear in public. This implicit reference to the very act of appearance is the reflexive mechanism that turns the demonstration, as a genre of political communication, into the kind of event that constructs a public.

The confrontation between the motorist and the “punk” teenagers was not just a fleeting configuration, rapidly dissolving in the Rabelaisian chaos of the demonstration-carnival. It repeats, albeit slightly differently, the connection among documentation, *tijuanense* publicity, and the articulation of different “we’s” that was seen in the boycott flyer and the poll “*Tijuanenses* Will Support Boycott.” I continue with the words of an individual whose role in the demonstration that day may have been singular but whose views are not.

The Informant

I was approached by a man in his forties, exceptionally upright, with graying hair neatly trimmed and his crisp plaid short-sleeved shirt tucked in. He exuded vitality. He bubbled at me (and I paraphrase): “Are you a reporter? I work for the state! In the Department of Information and Analysis! See?”—and he drew my attention to his belt, bristling with radios and cell phones, and to the heavy professional camera hanging from his neck. I explained that I was an anthropologist doing research for my thesis on Tijuana. In a confidential tone he pointed to the demonstrators a little ways off and, with the same irradiation of optimism and self-confidence, told me: “These are not Tijuana. They do not represent me.” He went on (I paraphrase again): “In my opinion, the police should remove them, by force if necessary. Why? Because I have the right to move wherever I want, and they are taking that right from me.” I asked him if he said the demonstrators were “not Tijuana” because he thought they had actually come from

the United States just for the day. “No,” he said, “[I said it] because they don’t represent Tijuana.”

In one blow, the informant identified himself with the figure of the motorist, positioned himself among the documented, and identified this group as the legitimate *tijuanense* public. This public not only deserves the protection of the authorities but is unique in its right, as he put it quite accurately, to *represent* itself in Tijuana’s public space. This is no longer merely a question of occupying public space physically; it is also a matter of doing so discursively. The twenty-four lanes of traffic north become, suddenly, the emblematic space of the city’s publicity—which is the same slip made by the poll “*Tijuanenses* Will Support Boycott.” This time, however, the slip is made emphatically. The right to represent Tijuana is welded to the right to cross—with no consciousness of the oddity of feeling so fully one’s right to move “wherever” while standing just a few meters from the port of entry.

The informant not only implied the connection between the right to mobility and the right to representation. He exercised it in our very conversation, in the alacrity with which he stepped into the role of *tijuanense* citizen to opine to the anthropologist, who here represented a window onto a much broader public, “a public in the truest sense of the word,” as Immanuel Kant would have it. He did not doubt for an instant his right to opine. From the time he declared to me, “These are not Tijuana,” it was the private citizen who spoke, not the public servant, precisely as Kant imagined it in an essay that helped found the classic notion of the public sphere.¹⁷ The informant stepped into a wider arena of communication and took it on himself to represent Tijuana, all in one neat gesture.

The demonstrators do not represent Tijuana. He does. He had no doubt that his own viewpoint represents his city, and he had no doubt in representing Tijuana before the eyes of a public to which I am the medium. In fact, he considered it necessary, given the probability that I would confuse what I saw with the true Tijuana.¹⁸ It could be said that our brief conversation formed a point of articulation between the *tijuanense* public sphere and a broader one—depending on

17. Kant (1970: 56) wrote that “in so far as this or that individual [a civil servant] . . . considers himself as a member of a complete commonwealth or even of cosmopolitan society, and thence as a man of learning who may through his writings address a public in the truest sense of the word, he may indeed argue without harming the affairs in which he is employed.”

18. This concern is not uncommon. I have had people go to a great deal of trouble to demonstrate to me that the highly visible city of shacks and unpaved streets is not the real Tijuana and certainly not their Tijuana. “These are not Tijuana” is a dialogic response to a well-established discourse: Tijuana’s “black legend” as a city of vice and crime (and, now, poverty). See Berumen 2003 for a study of this legend’s roots in America’s Prohibition.

where exactly the informant imagined the echo of his words would end. The public in question is *tijuanaense* in particular because the informant established it as such with his very first asseveration, “These are not Tijuana.”

His representation of the *tijuanaense* public hinged, then, on the question of rights—the right to mobility and the right to public expression, which is tied to the right to represent the group as a whole, that is, Tijuana. The informant had, he told me, studied law. When he spoke of the “right to move wherever I want,” he committed, as I have said, a slip. The right to “move wherever” is, technically, a constitutional right of the Mexican citizen. By ignoring that, *de facto*, only those with documents for crossing the border have the “right” to use that particular highway, the informant conflated the privilege of crossing to the United States with the constitutional right of the Mexican citizen to move freely in national public space.¹⁹ Mexican citizenship appears as incomplete without the supplementary authorization of the United States, sanctified in a border-crossing document. It is as if the “right” to circulate north ratified the full exercise of those rights that are normally invested in the individual via his or her Mexican birth certificate.

The informant was not the only one at the demonstration worried about violating people’s “right” to cross. I overheard a number of demonstrators voice a concern that was not acted on: that among those who were kept from crossing there were “gringos” and that it was wrong to hold these people up, for, after all, “it’s their country.” As if we were not precisely in Mexico; as if, in this part of Mexico, foreigners had more right to pass than nationals, simply because they are directed toward “their” country. The comment shows incomprehension of the boycott, addressed precisely to American society in general, and therefore especially to the gringos. The worry about inconveniencing them portrayed them as innocent bystanders, with no part in the matter, and the address of them as improper. This incomprehension was an outgrowth of the logic of “support” that made other Mexicans the demonstration’s main interlocutors (“Let’s not consume in the United States for this day”). However, the concern not to inconvenience gringos is precisely the informant’s logic carried to its conclusion: if the “right” to move wherever comes with the “right” to cross, then those with the most “right” to cross have the most “right” to pass through this zone. On the one hand, the

19. As I understand U.S. immigration law, no documents confer on a foreign citizen a *right* to enter U.S. territory: “A visa doesn’t permit entry to the U.S. . . . A visa allows you to travel to the United States as far as the port of entry . . . and ask the immigration officer to allow you to enter the country. Only the immigration officer has the authority to permit you to enter the United States” (U.S. Department of State n.d.).

worry traces distinctions between social groups, “we Mexicans” versus “the gringos.” On the other, it orders groups in a continuum, according to their “right” to cross the border.

When the informant says, “These are not Tijuana,” he confounds “the traveling public” with the *tijuanense* public, exactly as seen in the example of the poll “*Tijuanenses* Will Support Boycott.” He makes the twenty-four lanes north a synecdoche for Tijuana as a whole. He makes the city again a *ciudad de paso*, a “city of passing,” but in a sense quite different from that of the pejorative stereotype—he represents Tijuana as a city of people whose very tie to Tijuana and sense of local citizenship are rooted in their “right” to pass the border and leave Tijuana (temporarily) behind. For him, Tijuana is a city of people with the “right” to cross, whether they do so constantly or almost never. The rest, those who believe in solidarity beyond borders and who are ready to enforce the border for all in an attempt to create that solidarity, “don’t represent Tijuana” and should not occupy public space or attention. The informant mobilizes an image of local belonging in which full Mexican citizenship, along with the full right to public expression, to debate on matters of public interest and to influence them, is intimately linked to the privilege of crossing the border legally. It is a basic social right: as the informant later explained to me, the two governments have the responsibility of guaranteeing free transit between the two countries.

We met again two months later in yet another classic site of the public: the plaza of Town Hall, where a World Cup game was being shown. As at the Line, the informant went to pains to distinguish himself from the crowd and to inform me, a bit more subtly this time, that it did not represent Tijuana. He approached me and greeted me cheerfully, explaining that he was not working but practicing his hobby—photography. As before, he simply brimmed with contentedness. Again he leaned toward me to share a confidence. “As I’m sure you can tell,” he grinned, “I don’t like soccer. But some excellent pictures may be had of the fans.” Again he took charge of explaining his “culture” to the anthropologist: soccer, he said, is much more popular in the south, but “here” not so much. “Here” baseball is the sport. The classic contrast between “here in Tijuana” and “there in the south,” meaning virtually anywhere else in Mexico, did not arise from nowhere; it was a direct continuation of our conversation two months before, an elaboration on the same social groups and the distinction between (documented) *tijuanenses* and (undocumented) migrants, stereotypically from “the south.” In contrast to the public of soccer fans, supposedly centered in the southern part of the country, the informant gave me a description of the baseball public. It was a neat image

of the same public he had described a month before, at the Line, in terms of its legal bases. A lot of the people who go to San Diego to see the Padres, he said, are Mexican. He emphasized (I quote verbatim): “It’s the *same public* that *here* goes to see the Potros [Tijuana’s local team].” The statement was as conclusive as if he had said, pointing to the soccer fans dressed in the green T-shirts of the national team, “These are not Tijuana.” Without speaking either of documents or of the border crossing, the informant resuscitated the same *tijuanense* public by means of an emblematic image that makes clear just how much of a presupposition the “right” of crossing the border is for membership in that public. In his fantasy of self-representation, the *tijuanense* public joins an international public in the Padres’ stadium, while in the Potros’ stadium those who have no visa to go and see the Padres remain invisible.²⁰ But the *tijuanense* public continues to depend on them. As in Urban’s analysis of the Declaration of Independence, “we” emerges in counterpoint with “them.”

Though these words on baseball made clear enough that the soccer fans before us were “not Tijuana,” the informant brought home even more forcefully the comparison between them and the May 1 demonstrators and his own distinction from both. After speaking of sports, we turned to what had happened on May 1 (and some probing by the informant of my knowledge of various left-wing groups — “not to repress them!” he assured me, after boasting of a complete list of those even vaguely interested in the Zapatista and anarchist movements). The informant was the one who clarified to me that the event had fallen apart when strategic arrests were made. He spoke of the arrest of one organizer in particular with great satisfaction: Jaime Cota, a well-known local activist and “leader of the Zapatistas in Tijuana” (as the informant put it). “Man,” he grinned, “I got a really great shot of him” — and the informant very colorfully imitated for me the choked face and futile strugglings of Cota being dragged off backward by a firm police arm about the neck.²¹

Just as he detests soccer and its fans but finds photographing them a source of pleasure and distinction (he boasted of his participation in various amateur

20. It is striking that the baseball fans I have talked with all mentioned straightaway that they go to San Diego to see the Padres. A few told me they wanted a U.S. visa for the exclusive purpose of attending Padres games.

21. The Zapatista collective with which Cota worked is named in honor of Cosme Damián Sastre Sánchez, a young man who in 1999, having just been selected to represent Tijuana at a national Zapatista convention, was detained by the police. His death the next morning was recorded as a suicide. Thus the informant’s jovial questions are not terribly benign; he addresses me as potentially someone to be likewise monitored. The Zapatista political presence in Tijuana is minimal.

photography exhibits), there is no doubting how he feels about the demonstrators. Via his camera, the pleasure it brings him and the way he uses it to launch himself into other scenes and circles (those of amateur photographers, or the professional world of the state), the informant distances himself from the crowds that surround him. His expressions of enthusiasm bring the soccer fans and the demonstrators into poetic parallel. His relationship to them is the same. They are both the object, finally, of a communicative activity that allows him to move in a realm he constructs as beyond them. As in his conversation with me, he takes them as the third person in the construction of his own subjectivity and as belonging to a different social group, the contours of which he traces and inhabits without any need to say “we.”

Conclusion

In his classic analysis of the bourgeois public sphere, Habermas (1989) examines an impressive variety of discursive genres situated in their interactive contexts. Drawing on periodicals, novels, private letters, theaters, cafés, salons, and get-togethers in homes, he shows the connections among these, how the discourses that circulate through these diverse settings complemented one another to form a complicated unity, joined by intergeneric and interdiscursive links. When he comes to the twentieth century, however, this rich suggestion for an anthropological approach to publicity disappears.

The literature on the public sphere that has followed in Habermas’s wake has criticized him for the disparity between his analyses of public life in the seventeenth and the twentieth centuries (cf. Calhoun 1992). However, he has largely been followed in terms of a focus on the fragmentation of the public sphere into multiple pressure groups and on the mass media. One might easily analyze Tijuana’s public sphere in these terms, focusing on the core institutions of the public sphere, the formation of civil society, and the proliferation of local interest groups. To do so, however, would be to ignore a much more basic fragmentation: the social distinctions that separate large-scale groups. These distinctions are still fundamental to the structure of the public sphere as a whole—that is, the variety of modes and notions of publicity, their social distribution, and their interconnections.

In the examples analyzed here, one sees a coherence (always under construction) among public scenarios—the Line, the newspaper, the street, sports enjoyed live or on television. And one sees how a particular social group, the *tijuanenses*, uses these scenarios to articulate itself as a public. Sometimes its formulations

are in dispute. In all the examples, however, the *tijuanaense* public may be seen to inherit the full burden of a whole mess of intertwined notions: the polis; the city; citizenship; the pueblo (town) as a political corporation; status groups fixed by law, rights, and membership by birth. At the same time, it inherits liberal notions of democracy, the middle class, variable status, upward mobility as social legitimacy itself, freedom of expression, the private property holder, and so on. These notions are mobilized in interaction, interwoven and confused in the daily disputes over status and border crossing in Tijuana. Each of the examples analyzed is a moment of evocation of the *tijuanaense* public, which at the same time situates itself in an ever-more-extensive context of regional, national, and international publics, organized around the most various themes.

In each example the social divisions traced out differ slightly. But they have a common basis of division: modes of border crossing, most roughly, documented or undocumented. The “we’s” of the flyer, the *tijuanenses* of the poll, the informant’s baseball fans, all graft onto one another. Each group involves institutions and rituals that shape different circulations of discourse and identification. They interpellate different concrete groups of people. But their constituencies overlap, their logics overlap, and their constellation forms a thickness of coincidences that reinforce one another.

The examples traced out what in gross terms boils down to a binary division, recalling the one Habermas drew between a bourgeois public sphere and a “plebeian” public sphere he explicitly set aside. In Mexico in particular, a “double public sphere” has long been recognized (Escalante 1992: 271).²² Claudio Lomnitz (1999: 9) writes that we must examine “how the practices and institutions of the public sphere [according to the bourgeois model] and of cultural modernity articulate with another series of practices and institutions” (my translation). He associates the practices and institutions of the bourgeois public sphere with utopian, modernizing projects and points out that their failure to become general to society has everything to do with the lack of uniformity in the application of the law and in the reach of state institutions—thus suggesting that the difference between documented and undocumented at the border fits in a long cultural history.

This binary division is not limited to national society. Rather, it implies a system of categorization that involves ever-more-distant social groups, those with which one interacts daily and those that exist mainly in the imagination. It involves American citizens of different stripes, and it may be extended all the

22. Fernando Escalante Gonzalbo (1992) points out the interdependence of the popular and elite public spheres.

way “down” to include the Central American immigrant who does not “even” have papers to be in Mexico. This continuum of categories has implications for public life in Tijuana and for our understanding of publicity in general. Local, national, and global publics all articulate in complicated relation to one another; they appear as interdependent rather than competing.

In examples of the struggle and conflict involved in articulating social groups in Tijuana vis-à-vis the border, the interrelation between different publics is immediately evident. From the very beginning, the *tijuanense* public, however much it would claim local hegemony, appears in dialogue, disputing the city’s public space both physical and discursive.

The informant does not merely represent Tijuana and the public life of the *tijuanenses* to me. The public represents itself through him. He articulates, and the public articulates itself in his words to me. Through the flyer, the poll, the demonstration, and the words of the informant, I have traced the circulation of a discursive formation that determines a social space. Tijuana, the Line, Town Hall, the stadium of the Padres and that of the Potros, the street, the hills, and the “other side” all appear imbued with meaning and value in relation to one another, as do the social groups that use these spaces differently, can say different things in them, and have different rights with respect to them. The discourse in circulation, always bearing the traces of institutional centers of authority like U.S. Customs and Border Protection, is taken up and rearticulated. As it is rearticulated, it forms the context in which it is communicated: the Line as public property of the documented, or as place of political emergence of the undocumented, who belong in the hills. Obviously, this discursive formation, the public, is vulnerable in its reinstatations. Just as the “we Mexicans” of the boycott flyer was undone by certain presuppositions that the author could not eliminate from his or her own language, the documented *tijuanense* public is vulnerable, for example, if only for a moment, to a group of young “punks” standing in the middle of traffic and shouting, “Go through the hills!”

Postscript

I end with two ethnographic footnotes from the May 1 demonstration at the Line. The first consists of a policeman’s words as he pushed demonstrators back in an effort to clear the street. Smiling, he told them, “We’re Mexican too.”

The smile is proffered in the act of removal, in the act of exercise of state power, the officers physically advancing on the demonstrators with Max Weber’s famous claim to a legitimate monopoly on violence borne visibly on their bod-

ies in the form of their riot gear and weapons, reinforcements with even heavier firepower right around the corner. The smile appears as an indulgent cushioning, an appeal to the demonstrators to recognize (before it is too late) the legitimacy of the possible violence and of the threat itself. The appeal is the inverse of the flyer's with which this essay began. Instead of an appeal to those who support the undocumented to rise up and speak in public with the full legitimacy and the full security of truly representing "we Mexicans" (an appeal that fell flat, in the very attempt to articulate it), this appeal to recognize "our" national commonality is an appeal to silence. It is an appeal to remove oneself from the street, from sight, from public discourse itself because, after all, "we" the police are also Mexican, and "we" all understand the complications of our national "we." To cohere, it requires silence. The double public sphere must remain double if "we" are to remain a nation at all. The demonstrators are requested to cooperate in their own marginalization.

If a larger public sphere coheres out of the conflictive elements that could be discerned at the Line that day, it is based not on tolerance of conflict but on processes of marginalization, institutionalized at multiple levels. It is not based on the creation of a space in which disagreeing parties can differ as equals. Heterogeneous elements are held together in the tenuous silencing of some, the tenuous relegation of their modes of publicity and their opinions (if "opinions" may be had as such in these modes) to other scenarios "offstage." The broader solidarity is built on mechanisms of exclusion, and although the demonstration did take place, discrepancy of view appears as threatening. It requires a full display of police force (including the informant with his walkie-talkie and camera), strategic arrests, selective blows, and a smiling, gentle but firm reminder: "We're Mexican too."

The second ethnographic footnote comes from a demonstrator and may be construed as something of an answer to the policeman. It is entirely in the same frame but points to the failure of the appeal to submit, to marginalize oneself. It may even be read as a repetition of the policeman's words, but entirely reinflected: "But we're Mexican too!" I overheard it as I passed a group of women, talking among themselves about another who had just been dragged off by the police: "If over there they treat them like dogs and here too, what then?" (Si allá los tratan como perros y acá también, ¡¿qué pues?!).

Never mind the undocumented in the United States, never mind what is suffered in a land where one is no longer a full person before the law, a citizen. Neither in their own country are the undocumented citizens, neither in their own

country are they not marginalized and silenced in the same fashion. This woman's exclamation draws the firmest link yet between the undocumented in the United States and the demonstrators at the Line—and yet she does not say “we.” The parallel she makes is structural: in both countries the same marginalization is suffered, and efforts to speak, for the undocumented to articulate themselves, are met with violence. The “we” came a moment later, though, from one of her companions. “The government doesn't support us [*no nos apoya*] in the slightest,” she said (and I paraphrase); “just the opposite.” She reverses the boycott's logic of “support,” and in the act articulates a “we” that unhesitatingly includes both demonstrators and undocumented. “We” are the ones in need of “support,” “here” as “there,” and the challenges we face as we try to articulate ourselves on either side of the border are not dissimilar.

The larger commonality of the national group is but a claim, these women seem to say, the lie to which is given in the suppression of the public sphere's untoward elements. The exclamation *qué pues* is a challenge as much as it is a plaint; it rings with the tones of street fights: what then, what are you going to do about it then? It is a challenge to recognize the violence of repression that every day is written out of the national narrative, as public discourse and interaction weave together a fragile sense of national identity—fragile, still, in this country where the nation-building project has been so robust. State violence is not, in the end, legitimized. The women's frustration reveals the extent to which ideals of citizenship and equality are intuitively part of common understandings of the gap between what Mexico is and what it should be. A state cannot build a nation by treating its citizens “like dogs”: ¿qué pues?!

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