

Notes on Atmosphere

DORA ZHANG

What difference does an atmosphere make to an environment, a situation, or a horizon of possible action? If getting a handle on this question is tricky, it is in no small part because atmosphere itself names something elusive and vague: What kind of being does it have? And where exactly does it reside? Deriving from the Greek *atmos*, vapor or steam, combined with *sphaira*, ball or globe, in its basic sense the word refers to the envelope of gas surrounding the earth or any other celestial body.¹ Used figuratively, it has a much wider reach, indicating the characteristic tone or pervading mood of a surrounding environment or object. Its referent varies in ontology, but in ordinary speech we attribute atmospheres to a variety of things, including spaces, situations, individuals, societies, historical epochs, objects, and artworks.²

But for all their seeming haziness, atmospheres have real effects. They alter the kinds of things that can be said in a space, the kinds of actions that are thinkable, and the modes of sociality that are possible, and I want to suggest that we have still yet to fully recognize and attend to their importance as social and political phenomena of everyday life. A persistent atmosphere of hostility can cause someone

to drop a class, leave a community, or participate in a protest or a strike. Atmospheres play a role in shaping our “motivational propensity,” “the means by which masses of people and things become primed to act.”³ Take the case of “toxic atmosphere,” a common enough expression. US employment laws include protection against harassment resulting in an environment that “a reasonable person would consider intimidating, hostile, or abusive.”⁴ But *atmosphere* is a term we use to designate precisely what cannot be reduced to a set of discrete, easily identifiable actions that would count or be readily provable as harassment. It names something more nebulous. No one in the office or at the party says anything explicitly rude or does anything overtly hostile, and yet it might be quite palpable that someone is unwelcome.

The difficulty of recognizing the effect of atmospheres seems related to the term’s ambiguous ontology: it is difficult for what is in the air to attain the status of evidence because it only tenuously attains the status of fact.⁵ Created by a myriad of interacting elements—objects, bodies, relations, affects, colors, sounds, smells, speech, and so on—the atmosphere of an office or a classroom or a situation is difficult to pinpoint or localize, and thus always verges on fiction. How can we *prove* or even show what an atmosphere is like to someone else who has not felt it? And of course, how we feel it will depend on who we are, our relationship to others, our familiarity with certain cultural codes, and so on. Hence the ease with which claims about environments experienced as damaging or hostile for certain groups of people—women, minorities, students, workers—can be subject to doubt or simply dismissed by others. And so too invoking atmospheres in theoretical or analytic discussions appears tainted with irrationality or mysticism.⁶

In pointing to the necessity of taking atmospheres seriously, I join a growing number of scholars in a variety of fields—including philosophy, cultural studies, legal theory, geography, architecture, and urban studies—who have recently turned their attention to this concept.⁷ I draw on a range of perspectives to consider atmosphere in its philosophical, social, and political dimensions, which are often split off from one another in discussions of the topic. Given the capaciousness of atmospheres themselves, composed as they are of

myriad interrelated elements, discussing them requires a similarly capacious approach. In particular, my interests here are twofold. First, I want to examine how creating and manipulating atmospheres in retail and commercial settings have become features of contemporary capitalism. Corporations have long recognized and exploited the efficacy of atmospheres in affecting behavior, but these on-the-ground developments in managing and monetizing “mood conditioning” have largely been ignored by affect theorists.⁸

Second, given that atmospheres dispose us toward certain actions and make certain attachments available, what role can their deliberate fostering play in political life? I want to argue that the response to the growing ubiquity of atmospheric conditioning—as we see in the careful curation of “store atmospherics”—is not to become immune to their manipulation and curation but to become *more* sensitive, so as to work creatively to foster the kinds of atmospheres conducive to social transformation. This project of affective climate change is one that contemporary social movements are already engaged in, especially ones experimenting with new ways of doing politics. In the latter part of this essay, I will consider how atmospheres dispose us toward the world and open up new horizons of action via Amador Fernández-Savater’s assessment of the climate of the recent 15-M or *indignados* protest movement in Spain. In thinking about how to transition from the punctual assemblies and encampments in the plazas to the ordinary maintenance work of daily life, Fernández-Savater, one of 15-M’s most astute theorists, has posed the challenge as a question of how to organize not a movement but a climate. This latter question requires us to think about atmospheres not only in terms of contained built environments or urban spaces, as has been the focus of most discussions of this concept, but as a way to enable new “political horizons” across time and distance.⁹

In our everyday lives, the atmospheres generated by particular constellations of bodies—whether the presence of police in full riot gear at a peaceful demonstration, or the creation of a “safe space” to talk about difficult experiences, or the joy emanating from a gathering of friends at a party or strangers in a plaza—are ordinary, omnipresent sites of affective charge. Sensitizing ourselves to the affective climates around us allows us to be more deliberate about creating the

kinds of atmospheres amid which we want to live. My aim in this essay is to generate precise descriptions of those hard-to-pin-down but influential aspects of our environments that exist ubiquitously but often go unnoticed. This entails a mode of theorizing that aims less at defining or stabilizing a concept than at sensitizing us to it. The up-in-the-air quality, as it were, of such theorizing will no doubt be frustrating to some, but it is occasioned by the fact that this phenomenon defies our desire for conceptual integrity and resists our usual models of causality. None of this means that it is not worth taking seriously, even if it eludes our standard modes of analysis.



We begin with some orientations. Atmospheres are generally thought of as hazy, but their indeterminacy, as Gernot Böhme points out, lies in particular in their ambiguous ontology and location.¹⁰ Where exactly can they be said to reside? And should we attribute them to the objects and environments from which they proceed, or to the subjects who experience them? The atmosphere of a room cannot be said to be a property of any of the things in it, nor is it reducible to an internal psychic state in the perceiver that is simply projected outward. We may come upon a serene landscape, for instance, when we are ourselves greatly agitated, but we still sense this serenity and are often correspondingly changed by it. Atmospheres cannot be reduced to a projection of a subjective feeling, but neither are they purely an objective feature of the world. In Ben Anderson's formulation, they are "'revealed' by feelings and emotions but are not equivalent to them."¹¹ The usual oppositions here are slightly askew. In a way, atmospheres are entirely subjective and private, existing only insofar as they are sensed. Yet they also have a public, quasi-objective reality, perceptible by multiple people and irreducible to any one individual's sensations. They are real and really there, but their very mode of existence can seem to be a kind of unreality. And although they are intangible and cannot be localized, they are also readily sensible and can impinge on us with great force, even when we are not quite sure how to describe just what it is we are feeling.

A diffuse and ambient surround, atmospheres maintain a close relationship to a more familiarly theorized concept—mood—and the two are sometimes used interchangeably.¹² In recent affect theory

mood is often contrasted both with the more cognitive realm of emotion and sometimes also with the more physiological realm of feeling or affect.¹³ Moods are not intentional, not directed at specific objects, but are instead more ambient and hazy, like a surrounding or encompassing cloud. They also have a distinctive temporality characterized by duration. As Rita Felski and Susan Fraiman observe, “Instead of flowing, a mood lingers, tarries, settles in, accumulates, sticks around,” making them ill suited to the language of flows and intensities that has characterized one strain of recent affect studies.¹⁴ Like moods, atmospheres have an odd temporality. They can linger for a long time, as moods do, and remain relatively unchanged. Indeed, the very fact of age can lend a place what we call simply “atmosphere” without qualification, so we say of an old diner simply that it “has atmosphere.” At the same time, the atmosphere of a room can change in an instant, and it can perpetually form and reform, partly in response to responses to it.

Aside from its temporal oddities, the concept of atmosphere also adds to the concept of mood a spatial dimension. Böhme goes so far as to call atmospheres “spatial bearers of moods,” which fill spaces with a tone of feeling like a haze.¹⁵ Although this formulation risks turning space into simply a vehicle for moods that can be passed around like a ball, remaining untransformed, it illuminates how moods are not “in” us, just as they are not things we “have.” Rather, it is we who find ourselves in or, better yet, with them.¹⁶ But unlike our ordinary uses of “mood,” which is closely associated not only with subjective feeling but with caprice and idiosyncrasy, in ordinary usage the term *atmosphere* is unmistakably public and oriented outward—we do not speak of someone’s “interior atmosphere” in the way we talk about their interior emotions or moods. And we do not hesitate to attribute atmospheres to spaces even in the absence of people. Thus the concept makes evident not only the public aspects of affect but also its nonhuman dimensions. Affectively tinted spaces result from the constellation of all the elements in a particular environment, which also includes the configuration of space, the objects in the room, and the weather outside, such that it is possible to speak of the “mood work” of artificial light dimmers.¹⁷

Feeling the atmosphere is thus always an embodied perception that is more visceral than reflective, an awareness of being in a space

and of how other bodies, both human and nonhuman, are also present there.¹⁸ It is a matter of finding one's body not only affected by its surroundings but also not easily demarcated from them. For many critics, the interest in atmosphere derives in no small part from the fact that it gives the lie to our illusions of bodily integrity, showing the extent of its porosity. When we feel the atmosphere of a room, we are often feeling other people's feelings in the air.¹⁹ As Teresa Brennan points out, we express emotions like sadness or anger not only through speech or posture but also in molecular, chemical ways (she singles out olfaction) that happen beneath the level of conscious awareness, and as we do so we qualitatively alter our surrounding environment.²⁰ The physiological reality of affective transmission undermines not only the divide between the individual and the environment but also the dichotomy between the biological and the social, between what is a matter of chemicals and what is a matter of constructs. "The transmission of affect, whether it is grief, anxiety, or anger, is social or psychological in origin," but it is also responsible for bodily and physical changes. "In other words, the transmission of affect, if only for an instant, alters the biochemistry and neurology of the subject. The 'atmosphere' or the environment literally gets into the individual."²¹

We are thus forced to reconfigure traditional notions of subjectivity (not bounded by a self-enclosed bodily container but eminently porous) as well as agency (not proceeding from a centralized rational seat but embodied and distributed).²² Taking atmosphere as a primary aesthetic (in the broadest sense of the word) and social phenomenon of lived experience entails giving up the metaphysics of substance—and individualist politics—according to which "isolated things, objects, and individual physical persons constitute the dorsal spine of the real."²³ In the age of information and globalization, which has shown the hybridity of humans, other species, technology, and the environment, it should not be surprising that a number of thinkers have turned to the paradigm of gas and air—and, we could add, atmosphere—to invent a new philosophical grammar for the conditions of the present.²⁴



The corporate world, for one, has long recognized our psychic and bodily porosity. In marketing, in which *atmosphèrics* refers to “the intentional control and structuring of environmental cues,” researchers came to an obvious conclusion beginning in the 1960s: “If consumers are influenced by physical stimuli experienced at the point of purchase, then the practice of creating influential atmospheres should be an important marketing strategy for most exchange environments.”²⁵ Multisensory marketing and product design is now routine, supported by empirical studies of how our perceptions and judgments are influenced by sensory cues in both unconscious and cognitively mediated ways.²⁶ One recent study found, for instance, that the scent of a recognizable cleaning product led individuals to be tidier when eating, while others show that one mode of sensory perception is affected by another one—for example, items of clothing were rated as softer in the presence of certain scents.²⁷ And a cross-section of Manhattan stores from Bergdorf to Old Navy discovered that store temperatures varied as a function of the price of the merchandise: the higher the price point, the colder the temperature in the store. While philosophers debate the processes of “air conditioning” in our politics, retail corporations have been implementing it literally for some time.²⁸

Of course, the aestheticization of the commodity world is nothing new. Walter Benjamin famously located its origins in nineteenth-century Paris, positing it as a basic feature of high capitalism.²⁹ And the effects of aestheticization have been much discussed, from Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno’s famous critique of the culture industry to Jean Baudrillard’s theory of “sign-value” as a third category of value assumed by the commodity separate from use-value and exchange-value.³⁰ But these critiques have tended to focus on the proliferation of images and signs—via film, advertising, and other mass media—in the (especially urban) fabric of daily life. Atmospheres are not reproducible in the way that images, signs, and discourse are, nor can they circulate in the same way, but they have become an essential component of the aestheticization of everyday life, as the staging of not only appearance but increasingly of experience.

Atmospheric manipulation plays a crucial role in what has been dubbed the “experience economy.” In a 1998 article B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore argue that “staging experiences” represents the next frontier in the “progression in economic value,” after the extraction of commodities (agrarian economy), the manufacturing of goods (industrial economy), and the delivery of services (service economy). They define an experience as occurring “when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event”; in other words, when goods and services become merely vehicles for the actual commodity being sold, which is the experience.³¹

While the commodification of experience has always been integral to the entertainment industry, it has now spread to areas far beyond movie theaters and theme parks. This situation was foreseen by Andy Warhol, an early theorist of atmosphere. “New York restaurants,” Warhol remarked in 1975, “now have a new thing—they don’t sell their food, they sell their atmosphere. . . . They caught on that what people really care about is changing their atmosphere for a couple of hours. That’s why they can get away with just selling their atmosphere with a minimum of actual food. Pretty soon when food prices go really up, they’ll be selling only atmosphere.”³² Warhol’s description is now only slightly tongue-in-cheek. We might also think of bars, which are usually differentiated less on the basis of the products sold (you can get the same drinks at many places) than on the basis of atmosphere, which is crucial in determining the makeup of its clientele and the kind of sociality fostered there, which in turn converts its social capital into economic capital.³³ Warhol makes it clear that this cycle applies equally to the artist. “Some company recently was interested in buying my ‘aura.’ They didn’t want my product. They kept saying, ‘We want your aura.’”³⁴ At the same time that neoliberalism has resulted in the encroachment of market logic to domains previously held separate, aesthetic practices, especially those from theater and performance, have become co-opted by commercial interests in the service of managing behavior and disposition.³⁵ As the expectation grows that what were once goods or services increasingly become experiences, the creation and calibration

of atmospheres have become the tasks of a wide range of professions, including many forms of design, cosmetics, interior decoration, advertising, and marketing, to name just a few.

How might we respond to the atmospheric engineering that is now a ubiquitous part of our built environments?³⁶ Marketing and design no longer focus on the staging of appearances but on the modes of “interaction” and the curation of “experience.”³⁷ In light of recent attention to issues of affect and mood, we would do well to expand our understanding of the range of phenomena aestheticization covers. The issue is not one resisting deliberate or engineered atmospheres (as false or inauthentic) in contrast with natural or spontaneous ones. Such a dualism of authentic versus degraded aesthetic experience may not be the most tactical mode of our contemporary “capitalist scenography,” where “atmospheres are made available as total settings of attractions, signs and contact opportunities.”³⁸ The critique of mass media tends to rely on developing a greater critical semiotic literacy, but it is not clear how this would work in the case of atmospheres, which do not act through representational or semantic means.³⁹ What is clear from the business of mood management and atmospheric engineering is that we are neither as self-contained nor as self-possessed as we like to think, eminently susceptible instead to myriad influences that escape our conscious awareness. To react to this simply by doubling down on bodily integrity or cultivating the armor of individual rational autonomy seems futile. Instead, I would argue that what we need is to cultivate *more* attunement to the atmospheres around us and to the possibilities they encourage or deter. We need to be more, not less, sensitized to the atmosphere, which means feeling and taking seriously what is in fact there in the air. Recognizing their efficacy in both our theoretical discourses and our practical political strategies allows us to think carefully about what kinds of affective climates are sustaining and sustainable for the world we want to inhabit.

But a problem arises when we try to be more specific about how exactly a certain atmosphere is created. When the topic is considered, it is usually from the perspective of reception rather than production. There are bodies of knowledge possessed by those in fields

designated as craft or trade, such as stage designers or gaffers, but it is difficult to explain analytically or to predict with any certainty the exact factors that cause an atmosphere to be the way it is or how to ensure that it will be one way and not another. Unsurprisingly, the most systematic attempts to think about this problem come from practical domains, such as marketing and psychology studies of store atmospherics, and the problems these studies encounter illuminate the limits of analytic approaches to atmospheres. They tend to proceed by breaking down the components of a built environment into categories, for instance, external and interior variables, layout and design, and human variables.⁴⁰ But inevitably at some point in the listing and tabulating process such studies run into difficulties. As the lists and tables unfold, growing ever more comprehensive—flooring, color schemes, lighting, music, scents, temperature, ceiling composition, width of aisles, placement of merchandise, employee uniforms, crowding, and so on—it becomes clear that there is in fact nothing that is not salient, nothing in a situation that does not contribute in some way to its atmosphere. The problem is compounded by a recursive responsiveness, especially on the part of human variables, in which people are affected by an atmosphere and their responses affect it in turn.

The failure of attempts to itemize and to break down an atmosphere into its components demonstrates that this concept names, in effect, the spatialization of relationality. The problem is that we are dealing with a kind of relationality that is total, the kind that has been called ecological, global, or cosmological.⁴¹ This renders it ill suited to analysis, which means the “breaking up of a complex whole into its basic elements or constituent parts.”⁴² Little wonder, then, that a phenomenon defined by interconnectedness and perpetual dynamism remains resistant to a stimulus-response model or mechanistic explanations of causality. Indeed, it is difficult to know what kind of causal model could fit the creation of an atmosphere. If it is clear that it does not belong to the causal paradigm of mechanistic determination, neither does it seem to belong to that of random chaos, or “acausal notions of mutual constitution.”⁴³ One alternative is the notion of emergent causality discussed by political and social theorists, who draw on the study of complex systems in the physical and

life sciences to understand the formation and development of cultural and political phenomena.⁴⁴ In cases of emergent causality, William Connolly writes:

a movement at the immanent level has effects at another level of being. But it is emergent in that, first, the character of the immanent activity is not knowable in precise detail prior to effects that emerge at the second level, second, the new effects become *infused* into the very being or organization of the second level in such a way that the cause cannot be said to be fully different from the effect engendered and, third, a series of loops and feedback loops operate between the first and second levels to generate a stabilized result. The new emergent is shaped not only by external forces that become infused into it but also by its own previously untapped capacities for reception and self-organization. So the new emergent is the result of a spiraling movement back and forth between interacting levels or relatively open systems.⁴⁵

Relays between different levels and between different systems result in the emergence of something new, and thus inevitably contain an element of surprise, since the effects cannot be fully predicted in advance. There is thus a perpetual feedback loop, where the atmosphere of a space affects the individuals in it, but their presence too acts on the atmosphere, which will be affected by their sensing of it in turn. In other words, an atmosphere is not only never fully predictable but also never finished, because how we sense it feeds back into and transforms it. This feedback loop works on multiple temporal scales. The present atmosphere is altered by recollections of past moods (nostalgia for bygone days, or relief about the overthrow of a previous regime) as well as anticipation of future ones.



However, the fact that atmospheres cannot be fully determined in advance does not mean that they are completely immune to intentional design, in much the same way that, although we cannot simply choose to be in a good mood, neither does this mean that we have no agency in the matter whatsoever. We have seen concerted efforts in atmospheric conditioning and manipulation in the realm

of commerce (and many other practical arts, including stage design and interior decoration), but, given their influence on motivational propensity, we might also wonder what political potential they have. It is common to talk about the “political atmosphere,” especially during exceptional moments that disrupt the status quo, such as the Arab Spring and Occupy Wall Street. In such cases we are usually talking about changes in the kinds of behaviors or conversations or thoughts that become newly possible. These are typically not legal, institutional, or material changes (which might well be the last to alter) but more ambient shifts in the collective mood and consequently—although the meaning of this “consequently” is exactly what is in question—in forms of sociality and action.

If the consequences of atmosphere are hard to pin down precisely, a similar puzzle confronts their creation. What would it mean to bring about a climate in which a collective is moved to act in the service of social change?⁴⁶ This question has been taken up by critic and longtime activist Amador Fernández-Savater, one of the most interesting theorists of the recent anti-austerity protest movement in Spain, in which he is also a participant. Organized largely by a grassroots group, ¡Democracia Real YA! (Real Democracy NOW), beginning on May 15, 2011 (hence 15-M), masses of Spaniards, or *indignados*, poured into the streets to demonstrate against economic inequality, high unemployment, a housing crisis brought on by predatory mortgages and the financial crash, bank bailouts and cuts to welfare, and corruption among political and financial elites. A few days later a group of *indignados* set up encampments in Puerta del Sol in Madrid and in Plaza de Catalunya in Barcelona, as well as in a number of smaller cities, which lasted for several months. According to an estimate from June 2011, 6.5 to 8.0 million people took part in the events during that first month, and a poll conducted in July 2011 showed that 15-M had an 80 percent approval rating among Spanish citizens.⁴⁷ The movement has subsequently won electoral victories on local and municipal as well as national levels, leading most prominently to the rise of the leftist Podemos party, now the third largest party in the Spanish parliament.⁴⁸

One of the striking features of 15-M was the priority it placed on inclusivity, its desire to be, as Luis Moreno-Caballud puts it, a

“culture of anyone.”⁴⁹ A broad range of involvement, especially the participation of those who had never taken part in protests and who did not consider themselves activists, has been essential to 15-M since the beginning. This emphasis on inclusivity has necessitated new ways of doing politics in a way that “meets people where they are” instead of vice versa.⁵⁰ In a range of lucid, inventive articles in the popular press, Fernández-Savater has explored the propulsive role played by affective strategies in bringing about such new forms of political participation. We more or less knew how to organize a social movement, he writes in a 2012 article, “*but how do you organize a climate?*”⁵¹

In fact, Fernández-Savater poses this question at a moment of seeming impasse, a year after the protests began. 15-M’s International Outreach Assembly had declared a strike; it was suspending production—in this case, the production of activism—in order to assess how to address a series of issues, including decreased participation by nonprofessional activists and internal divisions within the movement, especially around outreach. While the debate focused mostly on 15-M’s organizational makeup, Fernández-Savater writes:

What I would like to add is that the 15-M is not only an organizational structure, but above all a new social climate. Together we have questioned that terrible weight of the official reality that says: *this is just the way it is [lo que hay es lo que hay]*. And so we could breathe. The macro situation remains the same, but now we see it from another place. It’s all horrible . . . but at the same time we have proven ourselves capable of producing another reality. And that automatically generates joy, a new emotional climate. The official reality is the map of what is authorized as possible: what it is possible to see, think, feel, and do. *We have opened up the map*. Now you can see, think, feel and do other things.⁵²

Assessing the social climate fostered by 15-M is a way of forestalling nostalgia for a movement that seemed on the brink of disbanding. It is to affirm that although the *acampadas* will not be resurrected as they were, what has happened there has changed the atmosphere. The alternate world built in that space made it newly thinkable to do politics outside the two-party system; evictions that had been

invisible because of shame were now in everybody's sight, and the link between democracy and capitalism no longer seemed so iron-clad. Asking about the climate created by 15-M is a way of understanding the diffusion of the movement into the larger body politic, by recasting both its spatial and its temporal dimensions away from punctual or significant events, and shifting the focus away from bounded entities, even one as loose as a "movement." (In a US context, such an attention might also counter the notion that the Occupy Wall Street movement was a failure, by asking what kinds of ideas or possibilities it made available over a larger temporal span, such as the now thinkable idea of single-payer health care.)

Those who were present at Puerta del Sol, or Tahrir Square or Zuccotti Park for that matter, can testify to the electrical mood of these places during large-scale assemblies, but the new climate created by these momentous events is what lingers after the tents have been dismantled and people have returned to their homes. Camps and demonstrations and marches are times of exception and thus cannot be maintained for the majority who are not professional activists. Eventually, people have to go back to "making their lives," and the question becomes whether the transformation experienced in the squares and on the streets can be sustained in an ordinary, everyday way.⁵³ What needs to be organized is an ongoing way of being affected by and being in the world.

The atmosphere of 15-M opened up what could be seen, thought, felt, and imagined, and the idea that remapping the possible can create changes in the actual is an idea that Fernández-Savater returns to time and again. He finds it in sources ranging from Antonio Gramsci's discussion of hegemony to Sun-Tzu's writings on military strategy. But I want to turn to a different discussion that brings into focus the role of affect in opening up a horizon of possibility, Heidegger's analysis of the disclosive power of *Stimmung*, or mood, which he sometimes uses interchangeably with "*Atmosphäre*."⁵⁴ In its simplest terms, Heidegger's claim is that it is only through mood that we are given a world that we care about. "Mood has always already disclosed being-in-the-world as a whole and first makes possible directing oneself toward something."⁵⁵ *Stimmung* is "not simply a

consequence or side effect of our thinking, doing and acting” but a primordial condition of our encounter with the world, prior to cognition and volition. “It is—to put it crudely—the presupposition for such things, the ‘medium’ in which our thinking, doing, and acting occurs.”⁵⁶ When we are in an anxious or fearful mood, the world appears threatening in a way that it does not when we are feeling joyful or exuberant, and Heidegger attributes far more power to the disclosive possibilities of mood than that of cognition.⁵⁷ We are never not mooded beings, and although we can certainly be unaware of our moods, it is only due to this primary affective force that any worldly project matters to us at all. “In an important sense, a mood creates our world at a given moment,” Jonathan Flatley writes, drawing out the political implications of Heidegger’s analysis. “Thus, in some moods collective political action might not even enter one’s consciousness except as something impossible, futile, foolish, or obscure. But, then, with a shift in mood, organized political resistance all of a sudden seems obvious, achievable, and vital, and it makes urgent and complete sense to storm the Winter Palace, to occupy Wall Street, or to strike.”⁵⁸ And just as an atmosphere makes certain actions permissible or more likely, it can also function as a set of constraints, delimiting—however loosely—what can be imaginable at all.

In their disclosive power, atmospheres can bring about a different vision of reality, disposing us toward some things and away from others. To be sure, this does not in and of itself guarantee any particular politics, and atmospheric conditioning can and has been used to repressive ends. Nevertheless, for Fernández-Savater, the disclosive and motivational power of the climate is what critics of the 15-M movement’s excessive emotionality such as Zygmunt Bauman have failed to understand:

What we loosely label affective or emotional—or, the unconscious base of our communal living—is precisely what moves us to consider a person who doesn’t live nearby as our neighbour anyway, and to then show up at their door to protect them from a forced eviction. The feeling that each of our lives doesn’t result in a single, isolated self, but rather, is interconnected with many other unknown lives (“we are the 99%”).⁵⁹

As we saw earlier, that permeability of the self and the thinking of relationality is precisely what an attention to atmosphere requires, even as it thereby poses problems to analytic thought.

The example of preventing a neighbor's eviction given by Fernández-Savater refers to the massive housing and mortgage crisis that Spain experienced in the wake of the recession, which was exacerbated by the country's draconian mortgage lending laws and led to the eviction of over half a million people between 2007 and 2012, with millions more properties lying vacant.⁶⁰ One of the most effective organizations associated with 15-M is the Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca (PAH, Platform of Mortgage Victims), a direct action group that advocates for housing rights and aids those facing foreclosure and eviction. Via networks of local assemblies all over Spain, the PAH's "Stop Desahucios" (Stop Evictions) campaign has coordinated concerned neighbors coming together to physically block officials from delivering foreclosure notices and taking over control of buildings, an action that has also sprung up elsewhere in Europe.⁶¹ It has also helped evicted families repossess empty buildings that were under the control of the banks, asserting the simple message that powerfully foregrounds the question of what houses are for: "Ni casas sin gente, ni gente sin casa" (No houses without people, no people without homes).⁶²

The success of the PAH's campaigns has depended on what Fernández-Savater repeatedly describes as a sensitization that has taken place recently in Spain, like the growth of a new skin that is capable of feeling the plight of strangers as one's own plight or, as he puts it elsewhere, a way of "being affected in the first person."⁶³ When we charge someone with being "oversensitive," this usually means that they are too easily bruised, lacking the requisite defense mechanisms to get along in the world. But it is also a charge of sensing more than most people do, or would like to. As Sara Ahmed suggests, the charge of "over-sensitivity" could be translated as "sensitive to that which is not over."⁶⁴ Conceived thus, a sensitivity training worthy of the name would not be a banal nonsolution to a problem of discrimination or injustice but instead a potent form of politicization. Such sensitization happens, Fernández-Savater proposes, through an aesthetic recalibration such that the facts of reality cannot be felt to

be distant or impermeable to the self. The 15-M climate “isn’t just a social or political change, but also—above all—a cultural (or even aesthetic) transformation, an adjustment in perception (the threshold of what is seen and what is unseen), in sensitivity (what we consider compatible or intolerable in our existence), and in the idea of what’s possible (‘yes, we can’).”⁶⁵

Being affected by the atmosphere of indignation means becoming more sensitive to what is actually going on (e.g., opening one’s eyes to the extent of the foreclosures, or refusing the shame of being a victim of foreclosure) and feeling the current reality differently (as intolerable, feeling the plight of others in the first person, so as to be moved to show up at a neighbor’s house to prevent officials from carrying out an eviction). Relinquishing the idea of the individual as a strictly bounded, autonomous subject also means thinking beyond a “movement” that remains determined by boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. The point of the climate is that one cannot help but be affected by it regardless of who one is, and that one’s being affected—and subsequent ways of being in the world—affects the atmosphere in turn. This is why in seeking new ways of thinking about politics Fernández-Savater turns to the idea of a climate or an atmosphere rather than movement, as the name of something in relation to which one is not inside or outside.

Any such resulting effect would have to be at once ambient and diffuse (on the level of the nation or the “people”), and also enacted on a micro-scale in individual lives: larger weather systems as well as local climates. Even as people had to return to “making their lives,” there is something inaccurate about this expression, Fernández-Savater writes. “Because after being in the plaza, you are not the same, nor do you go back to the same life. Paradoxically, we return to a new life: touched, traversed, affected by the 15-M. What did each person do with that involvement?” There were people in music, film, and publishing in the plazas, along with teachers, students, journalists, nurses, social workers, and programmers. How have their “perspectives, practices and ways of being in the world” been altered by the encounter with 15-M?⁶⁶ These micro-changes will be the basis for the next wave of actions, in everyday ways, and the

question becomes one of constantly regenerating the atmosphere of 15-M on smaller scales in disparate locales.

That local actions have been effective is evident from the work of the PAH's neighborhood assemblies. But how is it that a small group of fifty people can stop an eviction, not just once but over and over?⁶⁷ Fernández-Savater approaches the question via Gramsci's distinction between a "war of maneuver" and a "war of position" as different strategies for revolution. Whereas the former is a punctual takeover by force, the latter, which for Gramsci is the only one possible in liberal Western democracies, mounts a gradual challenge to hegemony by displacing the dominant vision of the world with a new one:

15-M, when taken as a new social climate rather than an organization or structure, has redefined reality. What before was unseen (the very fact of foreclosure evictions happening) is now seen. What before was seen (in fact, normalized) as a "routine foreclosure of an outstanding mortgage," now feels like something intolerable. What once was presented as inevitable, now appears as something contingent.⁶⁸

This is what Fernández-Savater calls "strength [*fuereza*]" (the capacity to redefine reality, what's possible and impossible, seen and unseen) as opposed to "power [*poder*]" (economic, military, institutional might). 15-M has little power, but its strength "has led the institutions of civil society to a state of crisis: policemen who disobey orders and won't take part in evictions, judges taking advantage of any crack in the legal code to favor the foreclosed, journalists and media who empathize and amplify their messages, etc."⁶⁹ The claim is not that changing the atmosphere is sufficient to bring about transformation. Rather, it is that there is a link between material actions and immaterial affects that we cannot discount, even if these latter forms of motivational propensity are hard to pin down, and that, accordingly, the task of creating an atmosphere conducive to a livable world ought to be part of theoretical discourse as well as political praxis.

If atmospheres are charged with possibility, the vexed question remains of how they can be fostered. Unlike an object, the manufacturing of atmospheres, as we saw earlier even in controlled cases, is

impossible to fully systematize or predict. Turning to stage design as a practical craft that deals with precisely this task, Böhme has suggested that when it comes to creation we can only speak of “generators,” the conditions that need to be present for an atmosphere to emerge, although it is not certain that they will.⁷⁰ Although he is speaking of the atmospheres of contained spaces, a stage, a room, we can ask what such generators might be in more diffuse cases. I would argue that the first place we can look to is the ordinary practices of atmospheric creation we engage in as a matter of course, at home, at an office, in a classroom, at a hospital, in a park, in a meeting, at a party, and so on. In a classroom, to take an example close at hand, we know that arranging the chairs in a circle rather than in rows will likely have certain effects on group dynamics, or that certain inflections of voice promote or shut down others’ speech. Activists have long applied such knowledge to create particular kinds of spaces. In the recent case of Occupy Wall Street, we can see such atmospheric sensitivity in the protocols developed in the general assemblies to make sure everyone has a chance to be heard, such as the “people’s mic,” or “step up, step back,” which asks white men to cede the space to marginalized voices. To be sure, these practices do not always work, and the desired atmosphere can always fail to be created, but we should not underestimate the ways in which the modes of being opened up in one space carry over into another. What is at issue is how witnessing or experiencing general assemblies continues to affect us outside these exceptional spaces. It is clear that there will have to be experimentation and improvisation, but fostering particular atmospheres is something many of us already do, a *techné* that we would do well to think about more consciously.⁷¹

In opening up the map of the possible, language and narrative play a central role. Hence 15-M’s emphasis on finding slogans and messages that are easily comprehensible and contagious, bits of language—and space—in which “we all can fit,” which we can also see in the enormous success and impact of phrases like “we are the 99%.”⁷² Other strategies cited by Fernández-Savater include the detailed minutes that made it possible for those unable to attend meetings to read lively accounts and feel they were present. Similarly, a series of blog posts that Fernández-Savater published in the left-leaning

publication *Público* when the encampments first went up, “Apuntes de acampada sol” (“Notes from the Puerta del Sol Encampment”), often featured brief phrases he had heard while walking around the *acampadas*. These snatches of language diagnosed the situation at hand (“sin vivienda no hay viviendo” [without housing there is no living]), described the mood (“todo el mundo parece enamorado, mira qué sonrisas” [everyone seems to be in love, look what smiles]), and affirmed the creative project being undertaken (“La democracia que queremos *es ya la misma organización de la plaza*” [the democracy we want *is the same as the organization of the plaza*]).⁷³ These blog posts were designed to circulate these bits of language and to convey the charged atmosphere of the encampments to those who were not physically present. As is often noted, technology, especially social media, has played a new role in the ability to organize and coordinate actions and share information in recent social movements around the world.⁷⁴ In addition to the narratives delivered in traditional media outlets and by word of mouth, digital forms such as memes, GIFs, short videos, and hashtags have enabled new ways of bringing about affective attunement. For his part, Fernández-Savater finds in these forms not so much the anonymity sought by many literary experiments to dissolve the “I” of proprietary authorship as the possibility of a radical leveling, one in which, as in the retweet, one’s own name is simply one name alongside another, a name “like anyone else[’s].”⁷⁵

Of course, even naming or describing an atmosphere can give it form and thereby alter it. Ahmed cautions against description that ends up being prescription: “The speech act which says the nation feels this or that way does something, it becomes an injunction to feel that way in order to participate in the thing named.” So when British citizens read about the hardening of mood over migrant workers in a newspaper, “it might be then . . . they can feel themselves to be or not in tune with the public. Attunement becomes a way of participating in a shared body without even being proximate to other bodies.”⁷⁶ But while there is reason to be wary of attunement as a normative injunction to be in tune with what was already there, as Ahmed warns, affects that circulate and create a sense of

being in tune across physical distance can also be a sustaining or indeed transformative force. Picking up on feelings, in speeches and articles as well as in conversation, can direct the anger of the populace, for instance, toward the actually responsible parties rather than scapegoats.⁷⁷ Attunement as a mode of participating in a shared body without necessarily being in proximity to other bodies is precisely what is at stake in the question of how to organize a climate. “Thinking about the (self) organization of the climate also involves thinking about links, connections, interfaces, communication. The common circulates through and is also constructed by images, stories and tools.”⁷⁸

This is why it matters that writing like Fernández-Savater’s is public and accessible, not only in Spain but also widely translated through channels such as *Guerrilla Translation* and disseminated internationally. The atmosphere of politicization that has emerged, he writes on the second anniversary of 15-M, “is at once a space of the highest conductivity where words, actions and affects circulate, an ecosystem that’s more spacious than the sum of its parts; a field of forces and resonances, and a common sense-building tale of what’s going on (with us). *The air is charged with electricity.*”⁷⁹ The metaphors in this narrative of what is going on perform what they describe, alive with affective charges for his readers. Thinking about new strategies and conceptual models for political action carries through at the formal level of writing, in which figures such as waves, foam, and skin attest to Fernández-Savater’s search for new images and figures of thought capable of bringing about a reorientation toward the possible. In the struggle to redraw the map of the thinkable and sayable and doable, “the skin—yours, mine, everyone’s—is the battlefield.”⁸⁰ On the skin, and in the air.

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DORA ZHANG is assistant professor of English and comparative literature at the University of California, Berkeley. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *Modernism/modernity*, *Print Plus*, *New Literary History*, and *Representations*, among other venues. She is completing a book manuscript on problems of description in modernist fiction.

Notes

1. "The spheroidal gaseous envelope surrounding any of the heavenly bodies," to be precise (*Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "atmosphere"). While the literal connection to air is attenuated in figurative uses of the term, it nevertheless usually retains a sense of englobing, enveloping, and surrounding. For a fascinating philological study, see Spitzer, "Milieu and Ambiance."
2. There is a sense of this term used without any qualifier (as when a neighborhood café is described as "full of atmosphere" or when something is said to "have atmosphere"), and we could say that what this usage really means is just that the character of an environment is distinctive enough to have impressed itself on us or to have solicited our attention in a way that cannot be ignored, usually because it has distinguished itself from whatever has become the norm (in this case, say, a Starbucks), which then becomes read as neutral, unmarked, and without atmosphere.
3. Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 220.
4. US Equal Employment Commission, "Harassment." Such behavior violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and the Americans with Disabilities Act.
5. Air is the very figure of ungraspability and, by extension, of unreality and fantasy (so we speak of building castles in the air or of having one's head in the clouds); what is "in the air" is associated with rumor, speculation, gossip, and guesswork. Little wonder, then, that the modern fact, imagined as neutral, resistant to manipulation, and the enemy of airy speculation, finds its figure in the opposite: solid, obdurate, and opaque matter. As Lorraine Daston writes, "If modern facts have an incarnation, it is as rocks: hard, jagged, plain rocks—the kind you might hurl at a window or stub your toe against" ("Hard Facts," 680).
6. Böhme, "Atmosphere," 113.
7. This new attention can be ascribed to the rise of affect studies, new materialism, ecocriticism, and an associated turn from objects toward processes, relations, networks, assemblages, meshwork, and so on. Theorists of atmosphere include Gernot Böhme and Peter Sloterdijk (philosophy), Ben Anderson and Nigel Thrift (cultural geography), and Teresa Brennan (psychoanalysis). I have also found helpful the work of Jonathan Flatley and Sara Ahmed on mood and affect. One strand of

thinking about the topic that I will leave aside here considers the question in terms of the Anthropocene and asks what is happening to the earth's atmosphere in our current age of rapid climate change. See Menely, "Anthropocene Air"; Ford, "Aura in the Anthropocene"; and Taylor, *Sky of Our Manufacture*.

8. Paul Allen Anderson points this out in an astute essay on affect and the music industry: "While strong theorists enunciate gorgeously abstract and ontologically ambitious visions of affect, the public and private life of affect at ground level has been quietly taking on a new shape as a richly industrialized concern of the digital era" ("Neo-Muzak," 812–13).
9. I borrow this term from Deborah Gould's *Moving Politics*, which considers the role of emotion in social movements, specifically ACT UP's fight against AIDS. "How do attitudes within a social group or collectivity about what is politically possible, desirable, and necessary—what I call a *political horizon*—get established, consolidated, stabilized, and reproduced over time, and with what sorts of effects on political action?" (Gould, *Moving Politics*, 3).
10. Böhme, "Atmosphere," 114.
11. Anderson, *Encountering Affect*, 145.
12. Martin Heidegger, for one, calls *Stimmungen* or moods a kind of atmosphere (*Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 67), as do affect theorists influenced by Heidegger, such as Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, 19.
13. There is no terminological consensus around the related terms *affect*, *mood*, *feeling*, and *emotion*, and some theorists distinguish among these more sharply than others. For helpful overviews, see the glossary in Flatley, *Affective Mapping*, and the introduction to Gould, *Moving Politics*. I will use the term *affect* as the broadest term encompassing *mood* as one of its forms, although I will often use the two largely interchangeably.
14. Felski and Fraiman, "Introduction," v.
15. Böhme, "Atmosphere," 119.
16. "An atmosphere is what is with someone, or around them; if a body might bring a lively atmosphere *with* them, that situation becomes lively. This 'withness' is striking: moods become almost like companions" (Ahmed, "Not in the Mood," 15).
17. Highmore, "Feeling Our Way," 431.
18. The importance of bodily awareness of being in a space in the phenomenological tradition has been influential in theorizing atmospheres,

notably in the work of Hermann Schmitz and later Gernot Böhme. See Schmitz, “Emotions outside the Box”; and Böhme, “Atmosphere.” See also Ahmed’s revision of Maurice Merleau-Ponty’s ideas in *Queer Phenomenology*, where she reminds us that how bodies take up and extend into space is not universal or undifferentiated, and social difference is produced in part by the history of responses to how different bodies inhabit the space.

19. See Hatfield, Racioppo, and Rapson’s classic work *Emotional Contagion*. For an overview of the literature on affective transmission, see Gibbs, “After Affect.” This includes contagion across great distances, mediated by technology.
20. Some critics are skeptical of “outside in” models of emotional contagion—in which emotions originate in the “crowd,” for instance, and then get taken in by individuals. As Ahmed warns, this risks transforming emotions into properties that someone “has” and subsequently passes on, “as if what passes on is the same thing” (*Cultural Politics of Emotions*, 10). But it is not necessary to conceive of affective transmission as proceeding unidirectionally, untransformed by the reactions of individuals or, indeed, spaces. Indeed, such a model follows only if we assume the very notion of the closed individual that Brennan’s discussion of the transmission of affect is trying to dismantle.
21. Brennan, *Transmission of Affect*, 1.
22. For more on distributed agency, see Coole, “Rethinking Agency.”
23. Sloterdijk, *Neither Sun nor Death*, 139.
24. “All previous natural languages, including theoretical discourse, were developed for a world of weight and solid substances. They are thus incapable of expressing the experiences of a world of lightness and relations. Consequently they are not suited to articulate the basic experiences of the modern and the postmodern, which construct a world based on mobilization and the easing of burdens” (Sloterdijk, “Against Gravity”). Sloterdijk identifies several versions of globalization, which he sees as a phenomenon that has been going on for millennia (*Neither Sun nor Death*, 190). See also Serres, *Conversations*, 121.
25. Turley and Milliman, “Atmospheric Effects on Shopping Behavior,” 193. In a survey of the sixty published empirical studies of the influence of marketing atmospheres on consumers in 2000, Turley and Milliman concluded that, despite diversity in methodologies, every study found “some type of statistically significant relationship between the atmosphere and consumer behavior” (195). The marketing studies I discuss

here focus on atmospherics in retail, but it is also worth noting the increasing emphasis on emotional intelligence and “affect climates” in human resources. For an example of efforts to reshape the emotional norms of the workplace, see Ely and Meyerson, “Manly Men,” a study of attempts to improve workplace safety by moving male workers on a Shell oil rig away from conventional masculine displays of prowess and invulnerability.

26. For an overview of recent empirical studies in cognitive science and psychology, see Spence et al., “Store Atmospheric.”
27. See Spence et al., “Store Atmospheric,” 482. See also Gibbs, “After Affect,” for a similar claim about the inseparability of intermodal sensation from the perspective of cultural studies.
28. “The air that, together and separately, we breathe can no longer be presupposed. Everything must be produced technically, and the metaphorical atmosphere as much as the physical atmosphere. Politics will become a department of climate techniques” (Sloterdijk, *Neither Sun nor Death*, 245).
29. See Benjamin, “Paris of the Second Empire”; and Benjamin, *Arcades Project*.
30. See Horkheimer and Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*; and Baudrillard, *For a Critique*. Böhme insists on what he calls “staging value” as a distinct feature of postwar capitalism in affluent societies, separate from use-value and exchange value but also from Baudrillard’s sign-value, which he argues recognizes the importance of commodities’ *symbolic exchange* value (what its consumption signals to others about the consumer, “the use value of the exchange value, so to speak”) but loses the specificity of the aesthetic dimension by reducing it solely to a matter of price (“Critique of Aesthetic Economy,” 76).
31. Pine and Gilmore, “Welcome to the Experience Economy.” They note especially that the development of new media technologies has led to whole new genres of interactive and increasingly immersive experience, such as interactive, multiplayer games and virtual reality.
32. Warhol, *Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 159.
33. In a stark example of literally selling atmosphere, in 2009 the British gastronomes Sam Bompas and Harry Parr, who describe themselves as creating culinary “experiences” and “events” rather than objects, created a London pop-up bar called Alcoholic Architecture. Set in an industrial basement space, the bar served drinks in the form of a cloud of breathable gin and tonic vapor that filled the room. See Jacob, “Alcoholic Architecture.”

34. Warhol, *Philosophy of Andy Warhol*, 77. Warhol theorizes aura in terms of distance, in ways that partly resonate with Benjamin's well-known discussion. Böhme calls Benjamin's notion of aura a kind of "atmosphere as such, the empty, characterless envelope of its presence" ("Atmosphere," 117), although I would add that *aura* seems less affectively charged than the term *atmosphere*. For a discussion of the continuing importance of the concept, see Kaufman, "Aura, Still."
35. For instance, Pine and Gilmore's later book, *The Experience Economy*, is subtitled *Work Is Theater and Every Business a Stage*. Paul Allen Anderson notes that the user interface of Spotify and Pandora mood playlists "are tools for building permeable microclimates or microspheres of mood within which individual users attempt to manage their diverse portfolios of resilience, hope, optimism, and self-efficacy. . . . The ability to convincingly perform a normative positive mood at work and in social interactions is the baseline measure of high psychological capital. In this context, mood management is the quintessence of affective labor in the ever-expanding service economy" ("Neo-Muzak," 815).
36. This is not limited to the commercial sector but also concerns the institutions of the state. Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos has drawn attention to "atmospheric lawscapes" that render reciprocally invisible space and normativity. "In the context of law and the city, an atmosphere is the way varying degrees of normativity and space appear every time, thus managing to dissimulate the fact that space is fully given to law and law is fully given to spatiality . . . an engineered atmosphere is not the exception but the rule" ("Atmospheres of Law," 42).
37. On interaction, see Howes, "Hyperesthesia."
38. Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, "Atmospheres of Law," 41. Bille, Bjerregaard, and Sørensen also argue against the stigma of inauthenticity or artificiality attending the deliberate staging of atmospheres ("Staging Atmospheres," 34).
39. Paul Allen Anderson writes similarly: "Achieving escape velocity from mood manipulation and 'the sensual logic of late capitalism' is more than unlikely. Instead, we should descend into the phenomenology of music and moods. Once there, we might feel around for the warm pulse points of capital as we experience the sonic architecture of expertly calibrated and monetized moods" ("Neo-Muzak," 818).
40. For an example, see Turley and Milliman, "Atmospheric Effects," 195.
41. See Morton, *Ecological Thought*, for a theory of the whole as ecological. Sloterdijk and Bruno Latour theorize the modes of relation

- under globalization and the cosmos. See Morin, “Cohabiting in the Globalised World,” for a helpful summary and comparison of the two.
42. *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “analysis.”
 43. Connolly, “Method, Problem, Faith,” 342.
 44. Other discussions of emergent causation approach the idea via the work of Gilles Deleuze—for instance, DeLanda, “Emergence, Causality, and Realism.” Ben Anderson also discusses emergent causality in the context of atmospheres (*Encountering Affect*, 152).
 45. Connolly, “Method, Problem, Faith,” 342–43. Or, as Connolly describes elsewhere, of political phenomena such as “the American evangelical-capitalist resonance machine”: “It is a mode in which new forces can trigger novel patterns of *self-organization* in a thing, species, system, or being, sometimes allowing something new to emerge from the swirl back and forth between them: a new species, state of the universe, weather system, ecological balance, or political formation” (*World of Becoming*, 44).
 46. Flatley asks a similar question in “How a Revolutionary Counter-mood Is Made.” His case study is the formation of the Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement among black workers at a Dodge Main plant near Detroit in the late 1960s. I use the terms *atmosphere* and *climate* interchangeably. While there are contexts in which the two need to be distinguished, what I am interested in here is the idea of an ambient, collective, affective surround.
 47. See RTVE, “Más de seis millones,” for the participation number.
 48. One important difference between the aftermath of the 15-M movement in Spain and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States is that in the former the activist energy has been directed (not without internal controversy) into electoral politics. For an important and thorough account of the international roots of the Occupy Wall Street movement, including its underrecognized links with 15-M and its subsequent success in establishing links with long-standing Latino and immigrant organizations, see Lawrence, “International Roots.”
 49. Moreno-Caballud, *Cultures of Anyone*, 4. This emphasis on inclusivity was related to but distinct from the emphasis on horizontality that later characterized the Occupy Wall Street movement (Lawrence, “International Roots,” 5).
 50. Fernández-Savater, “How to Organize a Climate?” I have given English translations of Fernández-Savater’s articles in the bibliography when available. I have made a number of silent modifications to translations throughout. Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

51. Fernández-Savater, “How to Organize a Climate?”
52. Fernández-Savater, “How to Organize a Climate?”
53. Fernández-Savater, “How to Organize a Climate?”
54. “It seems as though an attunement is in each case already there, so to speak, like an atmosphere [*wie eine Atmosphäre*] in which we first immerse ourselves in each case and which then attunes us through and through” (Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 67; *Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, 100).
55. Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 129.
56. Heidegger, *Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*, 68; *Grundbegriffe der Metaphysik*, 101.
57. “The possibilities of disclosure belonging to cognition fall far short of the primordial disclosure of moods in which Dasein is brought before its being as the there” (Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 127).
58. Flatley, “How a Revolutionary Counter-mood Is Made,” 503–4.
59. Fernández-Savater, “Strength and Power.”
60. For an overview of the situation, see Hedgecoe, “Spain’s Happy Indignants.”
61. See Boulton, “Neighbors Form Human Chain,” on neighbors preventing an eviction in Bristol, United Kingdom. The PAH’s “Stop Desahucios” campaign had, according to its own figures, prevented or suspended 2,045 evictions as of August 2017. See Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca, afectadosporlahipoteca.com/category/propuestas-pah/stop-desahucios (accessed November 30, 2017).
62. Ada Colau, one of the PAH’s founding members, was elected mayor of Barcelona in 2015 as leader of Barcelona en Comú, a newly formed “citizen’s movement” built from a coalition of leftist parties. See Hancock, “Is This the World’s Most Radical Mayor?”
63. Fernández-Savater, “*El enemigo es la guerra.*” He is speaking of the reaction to the 2004 Atocha station bombing and why it did not become another 9–11. He argues that the social response to the event set up new forms of politicization that altered the Spanish landscape leading up to the *indignados* movement of 2011. “No extraen tanto su fuerza de un programa o una ideología, como de una afectación en primera persona. . . . Sentirse afectado es en primer lugar sentir que tu vida no puede continuar igual, que algo pasa y que has de hacer algo con eso que ocurre y te ocurre” (It does not derive its force from a program or ideology, but rather from a way of being affected in the first person. . . . To feel yourself affected is in the first place to feel your life

can no longer continue in the same way, that something has happened and that you have to do something about what is happening and what is happening to you). See also Fernández-Savater, “Skin and the Theatre”; and Fernández-Savater, “Strength and Power.”

64. Ahmed, “Against Students.”
65. Fernández-Savater, “Strength and Power.” At stake in the new vision of reality disclosed by an atmosphere is something like what Jacques Rancière calls a “redistribution of the sensible” (*Politics of Aesthetics*, 40). Rancière’s ideas have influenced Fernández-Savater’s thinking. In addition to the affinities with the redistribution of the sensible, Lawrence notes that the notion of intellectual equality described in Rancière’s *Ignorant Schoolmaster* resonated with the willingness of activists to cede authority to those arriving at the camps for the first time (“International Roots,” 12).
66. Fernández-Savater, “How to Organize a Climate?”
67. Fernández-Savater, “Strength and Power.” In a scene in chapter 13 of Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man* that closely tracks these events, a group of neighbors in Harlem come together to prevent the eviction of an elderly African American couple in response to the change in atmosphere created by the narrator’s impromptu speech. He says, “‘What’s happened to them [the couple]? They’re our people, your people and mine, your parents and mine. What’s happened to ’em? (278),” and “‘These old ones are out in the snow, but we’re here with them. . . . They’re facing a gun and we’re facing it with them” (279). For a discussion of mood and setting in this scene, see Flatley, “What Is a Revolutionary Setting?”
68. Fernández-Savater, “Strength and Power.”
69. Fernández-Savater, “Strength and Power.”
70. Böhme, “Art of Stage Design.”
71. I am inspired by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s account in “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading” of the everyday theorizing that, for Silvan Tomkins, makes up affect theory, in which we create theories of what shameful or joyful experiences are like from the accumulation of ordinary experiences. I am suggesting that atmosphere generation is similarly a site of everyday theorizing.
72. Fernández-Savater, quoted in Lawrence, “International Roots,” 12.
73. Fernández-Savater, “Apuntes.” These quotations are all from the first blog post (May 20, 2011), which begins with an anecdote about Herodotus, thereby fashioning him into a kind of historian of the camps.

74. For more on this in the Spanish context, see Moreno-Caballud, *Cultures of Anyone*.
75. Lawrence, "International Roots," 13.
76. Ahmed, "Not in the Mood," 24. Ben Anderson makes a similar point: "[The act of naming] may itself intensify, enhance, or otherwise change an atmosphere as intentions, ideas and beliefs are layered into it" (*Encountering Affect*, 155).
77. Citing Alison Jaggar's notion of "outlaw emotions," Gould argues that "one of the most significant aspects of social movements is that they are sites for nurturing counter-hegemonic affects, emotions, and norms about emotional display" (*Moving Politics*, 41). A climate can be sparked by and exist alongside a movement, even if it may spread beyond it.
78. Fernández-Savater, "How to Organize a Climate?"
79. Fernández-Savater, "Seeing the Invisible."
80. Fernández-Savater, "Strength and Power." For examples of imaginative figures, see also Fernández-Savater, "Waves and Foam"; and Fernández-Savater, "Skin and the Theatre."

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