The Language of Contention

*Revolutions in Words, 1688–2012*

This book examines the relations between the material and political bases of contentious politics and the construction, diffusion, and endurance of contentious language. Beginning with the language of revolution developed from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries, it examines contentious language at work, in gender and race relations and in nationalist and ethnic movements. It closes with an examination of emotions in contentious politics, reflecting on the changes in political language since 9/11 and assessing the impact of religion and recent innovations in electronic communication on the language of politics.

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SIDNEY TARROW
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For Sue

Words can’t express . . .
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Acknowledgments

This book has been too long in the making: its beginnings go back to a conference at the University of Michigan in 1990, which marked the first stirrings of attention to meaning among social movement scholars. In Chapter 1, I draw on my chapter from the book that resulted from that conference (Tarrow 1992b), Aldon Morris and Carole Mueller, eds., *Frontiers in Social Movement Research* (1992); and on the work of other participants, especially that of William Gamson. A second effort was a fugitive paper, “Costumes of Revolt” (1992a), inspired by the historical work of Lynn Hunt on the French revolution (1984). It does not appear in this book, but Hunt’s work shaped what I have to say about revolutionary symbolism in Chapter 2.

Inspiration also came from a group of Cornell colleagues whom I joined in a project on “Contentious Knowledge” sponsored by Cornell’s Institute for the Social Sciences. Rebecca Givan, Kenneth Roberts, and Sarah Soule organized a conference on the diffusion of contentious knowledge (Givan, Roberts, and Soule 2010). The paper I contributed to that conference does not appear in this book either, but I am grateful to those colleagues for the opportunity to develop some of the ideas that will be found here.

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