SYNTAXING THE NATION: RHETORICAL TEMPORALITY IN CONTEMPORARY U.S.

POLITICAL CULTURE

by

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(Under the Direction of Barbara A. Biesecker)

ABSTRACT

This dissertation re-theorizes "the people" as a syntactic effect or hegemonic temporality that abides amidst disagreement or "dissensus" in the usual sense. In Chapter One I read the "if, then" *conditional syntax* of the "too big to fail" post-financial crash discourse in order to argue that the syntax habituated the public to the status quo: the liberal democratic fantasy of state and the market working together for the common good. In Chapter Two I read the "has been" *past imperfective syntax* of the controversy over plans for an Islamic Community Center and Mosque in Lower Manhattan in the summer of 2010 in order to argue that the syntax re-animated the trauma of 9/11 and pressed it into the service of a national and bipartisan anti-politics of victimage. In turn, the controversy re-constituted an American national identity that was much needed following not only the financial crisis but also the failure of the war on terror (which, as I will discuss, were intimately related). Chapter Three looks at the dramatic shift in the national ethos just a few months later. In this last case study, I read the *historical present syntax* of the "Restoration Rallies" of Jon Stewart and Glenn Beck in the fall of 2010 in order to suggest that the "keep calm and carry on" administrative ethic of the rallies of Sanity and Honor re-civilized the nation once again, suturing the necessary dis-joint or "constitutive anachronism" at the non-heart of the nation. I conclude the project by suggesting why contemporary rhetorical and critical/cultural theory tends to ontologize particular syntaxes as "the way things are" and how a syntactic reading strategy offers a more nuanced, if frustrating, approach to thinking a present that is not always lived in the present tense.

INDEX WORDS: National Imaginary, Temporality, Syntax, Rhetoric, U.S. Political Culture

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DEDICATION

To Deb and Barb for raising me then raising me up.

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My sincerest thanks to all those who made this project possible.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

> "What does civility mean today?" and "Is civility an umbrella term that might guide us for future directions and a concept that transcends diversity, multiculturalism, respect and social justice?" For Rutgers, the answer to "civility" as a reinvented and reclaimed term has been a resounding YES!
>
> ~Anonymous, "Project Civility," Rutgers University[1]

Forms ethical perspective, the goal of Rutgers' Project Civility was expressly *anti* ethical, to dissociate a belief in civility or a civil *identity* from a set of civil rules or civil *behavior*.[2] Neither republican virtue nor repressive apparatus, civility is being re-imagined, in the words of Project Civility co-founder Kathleen Hall, as an inventory of "relatively modest" practices that one can take up or leave as is convenient:

> Allowing students and university staff to speak about civility, maybe coming up with campus wide classroom policies on cell phones and text messaging, and possibly drafting some rules of conduct on the university's fleet of buses, where students have been known to hog two seats while someone else is left standing.[3]

Dissociating civil means from civil ends enables colleges to "walk a fine line" between oppressing free speech and encouraging decency.[4] Forni summarizes well the bottom line of this purchase without investment: "civility should be promoted, not believed in."[5] However, if not investment or identification, to what might we attribute the "resounding YES!" of the Rutgers chorus?

The answer, which is also the problematic driving this dissertation, is *syntax* or that which is responsible for language's *civilizing* effects independent of whether or not that language *is* "civil." Unlike the concern with what "really" counts as civil language, which

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would call for a thematic or metaphorical approach to America's obsession with civil discourse circa 2010, a syntactical approach is specifically concerned with the disposition of things at the level of the sentence or the way in which the arrangement of words influences intelligibility. However, syntax is also concerned with order at the level of subjectivity, with the location of identities in time, made intelligible by the statement's dominant verb morphology. At a time when something called "the national conversation" is believed to be in dire straits, Project Civility is notable for the way in which it "promotes" conversation without "belief," order without ideology, or, put yet another way, syntax without theme.[6] To that end I take the "new civility movement" as exemplary of the important role that syntax—the hegemonic articulation of the verb phrase—plays in the production of the contemporary national imaginary and its obsession with civil discourse. The purpose of this introductory chapter is to explicate and justify this rhetorical-syntactic reading strategy, which I will use to re-theorize national belonging as a *verbal* as opposed to simply nounal effect—as a set of collective practices organized by the formal occupation of verb morphology (tenses, aspects and moods) rather than the circulation of trope and figure.

Indeed, it is neither investment nor belief to which the choral "YES!" responds but syntax, or syntactic temporality to be more precise. The first question is of the present: *What does civility mean today?* It is both a question *about* the present (marked with the modal auxiliary "today") and a question *in* the present (marked with the present tense morphology, "does"). It is an important question that raises the radical contingency of definition separated from its past and future, that exists only for "today." However, a civility that exists only for today is precarious because it has neither a past nor present in which to ground the "meaning" that Project Civility so desperately seeks. Thus the second question re-grounds civility by both

orienting it toward the future and attaching it to liberal maxims from which it can draw definitional force. This second question is *also* raised in the present tense ("is") but shifts quickly by way of its second clause to the future conditional mood, where most of Project Civility's definitional work occurs. In this hypothetical time, civility "might" be able to do all sorts of things that would be contradictory in the present and have certainly shown to be so in the past. Finally, the last sentence shifts to the "has been" of the past imperfective aspect, acting as if the collective civil "buy in" was always already in progress. Stuck between the anxious non-answerability of the present tense first question and the prosopopoeic frenzy of the past imperfective chorus is a hypothetical answer—in the form of a question—that one cannot *not* want: a "term" capable of "transcending" without contradiction the many vexations of modern political life. The upshot of this temporal confusion is a civilizing "YES!" rid of any uncivil constitutive antagonism—diversity, multiculturalism, even "time" itself—which might render this "YES!" always already a necessary fiction.

Put differently, the *syntactic* inconsistency from which the "YES!" emerges betrays the illusion of its thematic consensus. The "YES!" responds only to the second, non-antagonistic question, but leaves unanswered the first: *What does civility mean today?* That question must remain unanswered since well beneath the sociological problems of multiculturalism and diversity is a more fundamental, *rhetorical* problem: the impossibility of a "now" or a "today." It is easier to say "YES!" to a future hypothetical in which all things are possible than to a definition in the present, which rests on a "now" and the "here" that is always already split from itself. The consensus required of definition is always already the provisional effect of a hegemonic syntax. For a "YES!" to exist, in other words, there must be *simultaneous* agreement, an extrarhetorical experience of time that is not only equivalent to itself but also to

the experience of the rest of the choir that shouts the "YES!"[7] Therefore, the "YES!" of the

Rutgers chorus affirms not only consensus around an argument—the possibility of a civility

without antagonism—but also a collective experience in which everyone yells "YES!" *at the*

same time. The chorus, in other words, both covers over and begs the question of "the people."

If rhetorical studies, as Michael McGee asserted long ago, is especially well suited to

capture "the people" at a particular historical conjuncture then my intention in this dissertation

is to re-theorize "the people" as a syntactic effect. Put differently, I redefine "the people" as the

name of a hegemonic temporality (which articulates to other rhetorical strategies) that abides

amidst disagreement or "dissensus" in the usual sense.[8] However, unlike the excerpt from

Rutgers—instructional for its syntactic slippage—the discourses of interest in this project

cohere around *specific* verb morphologies. Indeed, it is precisely the predominance of a given

morphology in organizing both consensus and dissensus that make a discourse "national." My

intention over the next three chapters, then, is to track specific civilizing or nationalizing

syntactic effects in the current conjuncture, cutting across discourse domains and partisan lines

of controversy.[9]

In Chapter One I read the "if, then" *conditional syntax* of the "too big to fail" post-

financial crash discourse. The conditional syntax was both a blessing and a curse, I argue,

because as it habituated the public to the status quo it also *deferred* what the "too big to fail"

imperative marked as impossible: the liberal democratic fantasy in which the state and the

market can work together for the common good. In other words, the conditional mood *civilizes*

because it makes possible a shared temporality on which the national conversation (or

controversy) depends. Whether or not the "too big to fail" discourse was "civil" is, on my

view, irrelevant to understanding the rhetorical production of the habitual mood's logics of

national belonging. Chapters Two and Three follow a similar pattern. In Chapter Two I read the *past imperfective* or "has been" syntax of the controversy over plans for an Islamic Community Center and Mosque in Lower Manhattan in the summer of 2010. The past imperfective syntax was a double-edged sword, I argue, because as it re-animated the trauma of 9/11—pressing it into the service of a national and bipartisan (a)politics of victimage—it also re-constituted an American national identity that was much-needed following not only the financial crisis but also the failure of the war on terror (which, as I will discuss, were intimately related). Chapter Three looks at the dramatic shift in the national ethos just a few months later. In this last case study, I read the *historical present syntax* of the "Restoration Rallies" of Jon Stewart and Glenn Beck in the fall of 2010. Like chapter Two, I suggest that the "keep calm and carry on" administrative ethic of the rallies of Sanity and Honor re-civilized the nation once again, suturing the necessary dis-joint or "constitutive anachronism" at the non-heart of the nation. It is to this "constitutive anachronism" of the social that this introduction will now turn, followed by a description of my syntax-driven reading strategy in the second section and, finally, a more thorough investigation of the project's rhetorical situation or the (non) present moment of civility in the third section.

From Simultaneity to Anachrony

The new civility movement has a *circulatory* as opposed to an intent-based or motivated ontology of public behavior. The goal, as an exhibition for the UC Davis' Civility Project explained, is to "combat" the "circulation" or "dissemination" of "uncivil words."[10] Words are not only the *means* to civility but the *ends* as well. Advocates (but not activists) for civility encourage the circulation of decorum in order to produce civil *effects* without the complicated (and potentially illegal) business of persuasion or intent. One need not believe in the public good

in order to trade in small acts of decency for the sake of the *e pluribus unum*.[11] The inverse is also true. Poor civil manners are attributed to the widespread availability of technologies, especially social media, which circulate invective and encourage users under the cover of anonymity to do the same. As Henry Giroux complained in a 2011 editorial for *Critical Studies in Media Communication*: "Instead of public spheres that promote dialogue, debate, and arguments with supporting evidence, we have entertainment spheres that infantilize almost everything they touch, while offering opinions that utterly disregard reason, truth, and civility."[12] Circulation, then, is both the cause and cure of the same problem: a nation of subjects who cannot abide their neighbors.

Several rhetorical scholars have critiqued the eagerness with which the field has taken up circulation as a kind of rhetorical ontology.[13] Megan Foley summarizes: "current scholarship problematically collapses the concepts of circulation and uptake, positing a voluntary and self-interested subject as the motor of publicity."[14] I agree with Foley, who roots her critique in Michael Warner's influential work on counterpublicity and attention, but wish to take as my critical point of departure not Warner but Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*. Set in stark contrast to the empirical perspective dominating nationalism studies in the mid-20th century, Anderson posited the modern development of reading publics as the condition of possibility for an experience of nationhood.[15] Made possible by increased literacy and the widespread availability of common texts, Anderson argued that the nation was an effect of reading publics who became retrospectively national by acts of reading that were presumed to necessitate an imagined "simultaneity" of experience. As historian Ed White summarizes, members of the national public "allegedly produced the experience of simultaneity *in its reading:* as A reads the newspaper, he imagines B, C, and D doing the same."[16]

When Anderson revolutionized the definition of the national as the effect of textual circulation, or "narrative address" to use Homi Bhabha's turn of phrase, he re-inscribed an irreducible immediacy within that reading practice called simultaneity.[17] Simultaneity, Ed White argues, is the condition of possibility for "feeling connected" or feeling national:

> A may be engaged in different daily activities from B, while perhaps even speaking a different vernacular from C or practicing a different religion from D. What is important, rather, is how A *feels connected* to B, C, and D in time and space…this analytical framework challenges any first emphasis upon cultural differences within the national community, insisting instead that the existential structures of space and time preceded and encompass such local differences.[18]

Unfortunately Anderson's reliance upon these "existential structures of space and time" is a problem for a strong theory of rhetoric.[19]

Simultaneity collapses the *act* or verb of reading (which might also be having read, will read, etc.) with its purported nounal *effect*—national identification—thereby eliminating any gap between the circulation of national discourse and its being experienced as real by the citizenry.[20] It is interesting that simultaneity should be doing so much *modern* work for Anderson because the crux of *Imagined Communities* is a distinction between, on the one hand, a pre-modern experience of sacred or *simultaneous* time and, on the other hand, the linear or progressive time that characterizes the modern experience of national reading publics.[21] It is significant that Anderson violates his own temporal distinction many times and, by the work's conclusion, refers to *any* collective or national experience—reading or otherwise—as one of simultaneity. Pre-modern communities experienced simultaneity as a communion with the divine and modern communities experience it in the act of reading. Anderson writes: "our own conception of simultaneity has been a long time in the making…simultaneity is, as it were, transverse, cross-time, marked not by prefiguring and fulfillment, but by *temporal coincidence*, and measured by clock and calendar."[22] Simultaneity is Anderson's prized term for rhetorical effectivity or the

possibility that a text might have uptake, force or influence in its moment of reading. However, Anderson never explains *how* that uptake occurs or, put differently, how members of a reading public come to imagine themselves as reading "simultaneously" with others.

A decade later and without reference to Anderson, Michael Warner re-energized "clock and calendar" in his influential typology of publics. Warner argued that "it is not texts themselves that create publics, but the concatenation of texts through time."[23] Indeed, Warner's sixth characteristic of publics is that they "act historically according to the temporality of their circulation."[24] "The punctual rhythm of circulation is crucial," Warner explains, because:

> Not all circulation happens at the same rate…and *this accounts for the dramatic differences* among publics…a public can only act within the temporality of the circulation that gives it existence. The more punctual and abbreviated the circulation, and the more discourse indexes the punctuality of its own circulation, the closer a public stands to politics. At longer rhythms or more continuous flows, action becomes harder to imagine.[25]

On Warner's view, all publics are textual in that they are constituted by the *speed* or rate of textual circulation if not exactly the texts themselves. Ron Greene endorses Warner's re-definition, arguing that "the problem of temporality" as formulated in Warner's work, "points to the need to redefine the object of public address as a spatial encounter at *differential speeds of circulation* and *durations of attention*."[26]

Via Warner, Greene displaces *rhetorical* work with a specific kind of political economy critique. That is to say, the critical communicative project that emerges from Warner's theory of circulation is to ascertain the *rate* of textual circulation as the determinant or extrarhetorical boundary that makes publics appear as such. As Greene describes it:

> Different publics exist in different temporal logics, with the most political of publics being associated with the 'temporality of the headline' and not, for example, the academic/intellectual 'temporality of the archive'…The increasing speed demanded of new technologies circulating public discourse suggests the beginnings of a qualitative break with the forms of punctuality associated with the modern idea of a public. The

modern forms of print and television, with their monthly, weekly, and daily news cycles and serialization are beginning to give way to an instantaneous and continuous 24/7/365 circulation of discourse.[27]

Greene goes on to describe the future of communicative scholarship as a grapple with "the new temporality of the network society," the "preferred temporality of rhetorical deliberation," the "preferred time of deliberation" in the digital age, and "the different temporalities of communication technologies."[28]

Greene and Warner come dangerously close to re-defining publics phenomenological: the name of a collectivized experience of subjects who, like members of Anderson's reading publics, "feel" national because of their temporal orientation or "logic." However, something like "the archive" isn't a temporal logic at all; it's a theme or a *signifier* that we might call a "speed." Themes describe the *effects* of signifieds as they are logically or rhetorically configured within discourse. Logics, on the other hand, describe the rules or conditions of possibility for some themes to make sense or "feel right." Ernesto Laclau explains:

> We are not, of course, talking about a formal logic, or even a general dialectical logic, but about the notion which is implicit in expressions such as 'the logic of kinship', 'the logic of the market', and so forth. I would characterize it as a rarefied system of objects, as a 'grammar' or cluster of rules which make some combinations and substitutions possible and exclude others.[29]

Laclau equates "logic" to the Lacanian "symbolic," or that register of reality or experience concerned with the rules of signification, of what counts as *logical* or sensible. The "symbolic" displaces the "real" and the "imaginary" or that register in which rules of signification are experienced "as real" or as necessary and not arbitrary. For Laclau, the "symbolic" is tropological in the sense that it is expressly concerned with non-determinant structural movements of combination, substitution, equivalence, and difference by which signs or ideas are made to appear real in the world. Speeds such as "the headline" or "the 24 hour news cycle,"

then, belong to the realm of the imaginary; calling these themes *logics* begs the question *how* a subject comes to feel, for example, like information is moving "too fast" or "is urgent" or that a another member of the reading public is "behind the times." Bypassing the logics of such temporal experiences turns the critical project into a kind of phenomenology. Subjects "feel" national because they experience the same time as other national subjects and the experience of that time is an effect of the *speeds* of circulation.

Greene essentially authorizes a return to Anderson's temporal ontology—reading publics are effects of an experience of simultaneity—with an updated inventory of the "speeds" of modern life gathered from Warner. The speed of circulation becomes the condition of possibility for subjects to "feel" national; the job of the critic is to find and name the *rate* of speed particular to a given discourse and its public under the assumption that all subjects experience that rate in the same way. Thus we return to a base/superstructure model of circulation in which the modes of production (technology, media political economy, the military-industrial complex) determine cultural "experience" by producing faster and more immediate mediated forms.

Warner and Greene's temporal "logics" are better understood as what phenomenologist Paul Virilio describes as a "regime of temporality," a "logistics of perception" or a *duree,* which is a self-referential and, therefore, inescapable instantaneity that *necessarily* results in the instantaneity of media and technological life. The *duree,* writes Virilio, permits no reflection, no critical distance."[30] Virilio's polemic perspective on the speed of contemporary mediated life suggests that this obsession with speed might be an old tale in a new form: nostalgia for the "old days" when one had time to think and time to deliberate. It is only against this idealized notion of a public sphere that took its time or, in Greene's words, the "preferred time of deliberation" that one can think the *duree* as rhetorical. From this perspective, time as such is not constitutively

dis-jointed. Rather, *modern* time has become "untimely" and rhetoric's task is naming the

multiplicity of new "speeds," inventorying their technological means of circulation, and

documenting their felt effects on publics. In the Lacanian sense, the rhetorician is to read speed

at the level of the imaginary and to render it suspect vis-a-vis the more organic time of the real.

Circulation is extrarhetorical, then, in two senses. First, it is extrarhetorical because it is the

effect of a self-same "simultaneity" or experience of a communal "I think" and, second, because

it is an umbrella term for a number of regimes of temporality that are artificial to the preferred or

natural temporality of human existence.

Circulation removes from the public sphere the constitutive *anachrony* that makes

possible political life. Circulation inverts the deconstructive ethics of the social in which it is

precisely the *impossibility* of simultaneity or the self-same experience of a present, the being

present of the self, that both drives and continuously thwarts the attempt to live life together.

The social or "*socius*," explains Derrida in *Spectres of Marx,*

> Binds 'men' who are first of all experiences of time, existences determined by this
> relation to time which itself would not be possible without surviving and returning,
> without that being 'out of joint' that dislocates the self-presence of the living present and
> installs thereby the relation to the other.[31]

The social is not a temporally coherent experience organized by textual circulation and perverted

by the speed of modern media technology but a provisional *answer* to a structural perversion

Derrida describes as "anachrony." In the words of Ernesto Laclau, "If, however, as [Derrida's]

deconstructive reading shows, 'ontology' – full reconciliation – is not achievable, time is

constitutively 'out of joint', and the ghost is the condition of possibility of any present, politics

too becomes constitutive of the social link."[32] This constitutive anachrony contaminates both

circulation and uptake, guaranteeing that there *can* be rhetorical agency because the uptake is not

determined from the start. Erin Rand describes this anachrony as the "gap" between intent and effect that makes possible rhetorical agency as such.[33]

Literary theorist Jeremy Tambling gleans a critical project from this anachronistic ontology of the social. "Thinking about 'anachronism' means considering what is out of time, what resists chronology."[34] For Tambling, "anachrony arises from the disparity between events and their narration" and, as such, all narration is structured by a trace of this dis-jointed time: a mark haunting the narration and reminding its audience that the reading experience can never be simultaneous because the narrative is always already structured around an impossibility of temporal coherence.[35] "No text," writes Tambling, "can be either anachronistic or writing which is of its time: all writing is both…there can be no punctual relationship between the writer and the work."[36] Neither, then, can there be a timely relationship between the audience and the work or *between members of an audience as such.* The literary project that emerges is primarily deconstructive; Tambling reads figures of anachronism as the traces of un-reconciled heterogeneity haunting the chronology the text.

On my view Tambling's project, while instructive, over-corrects the problem of circulation by reducing all textual movement to anachrony. What Tambling's project does not attempt to account for, however, is uptake or the way in which the audience comes to understand itself as "simultaneous" or otherwise to those *also* imagined to be reading the texts. Tambling, in other words, eliminates to realm of the "imaginary" by reducing the symbolic—logics of textual coherence—to the real or the heterogeneity of chronology. To re-introduce the "imaginary" into Tambling's work we need to reconcile his reading strategy—which tracks textual dis-joints— with Warner's, which considers publics as the effect of a simultaneous experience of textual uptake called "attention." The intervention, which I intend to flesh out in the next section of the

introduction, is to move away from theme and figure—"anachronism" for Tambling and "rate of circulation" for Warner—and toward *syntax*, the hegemonic articulation of the verb phrase by which a text simultaneously produces "simultaneity" or a common temporal experience *in* the reading and also marks the very impossibility of that simultaneity by choosing one verb morphology over the other. My contention in the next section is that syntax, while a very old concept, holds un-tapped potential for rhetorical scholarship for the way in which it both re-produces and marks the impossibility of something like a "national conversation."

From Nouns to Verbs

The syntactic component of a language is the set of rules by which words and groups of words may be strung together to form grammatical sentences of the language.[37] Primarily the province of grammar within linguistics, syntax is a science that leaves no room for the inventional possibilities at the heart of rhetoric. As Peter W. Cullicover makes clear, syntax is concerned only with structure:

> The question of whether a string of words is a grammatical sentence of a particular language is completely independent of whether or not that string of words makes a true statement, is logically consistent, or makes much sense at all. The distinction between the form of a linguistic expression and its content is a fundamental one.[38]

From a rhetorical perspective, the distinction between form and content on which syntactic theory depends appears both absurd and unsustainable. Yet, by maintaining this distinction syntactic theory offers rhetoric something it is missing: a strong understanding of the rules of formation at the level of the *phrase*.

Whereas rhetorical critics are free to pick and choose their points of entry into any given discourse—from the word to the sentence to the narrative—syntacticians follow a rigid hierarchy organized specifically around the *phrase*.[39] The largest unit of syntactic analysis is the sentence, but the primary purpose of the sentence is as a starting point to parse out constituent phrases. A

phrase is *two or more* words that do not contain the subject-verb pair necessary to form a clause. Whereas individual words carry tremendous weight for rhetorical scholars (i.e. it makes a difference whether one describes a relationship as a "war" or a "dance"), words are only of interest syntactically when they produce *order* in combination. When a combination of words includes a head (the nucleus of the phrase), a specifier, and a complement then it is a *phrase* and phrases with noun or verb heads—known as *noun phrases* and *verb phrases*—are the most important.[40] Linguists parse constituent phrases from sentences using a variety of mapping techniques such as syntactic diagrams. Because a sentence must contain a noun phrase (NP) and a verb phrase (VP) in order to qualify as a sentence, the first split in the syntactic diagrams must be between the NP and the VP, as follows[41]:

```
                        S
              _____/ _____
            NP                   VP
          /    \              /     \
        ADJ     N            V        NP
         |      |            |       /  \
       Happy  linguists    make    DET   N
                                    |     |
                                    a   diagram.
```
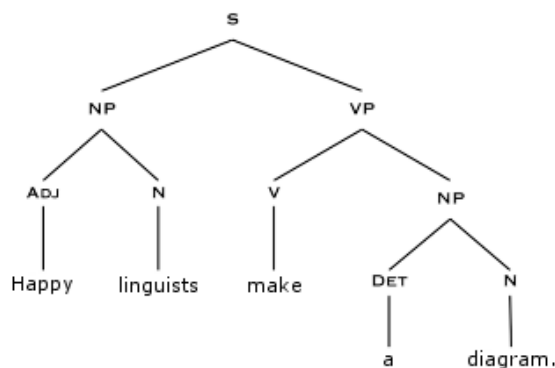
Fig. 1.1

The first division in the sentence is between the noun phrase (NP) and the verb phrase (VP), which occupy the same hierarchical level. Nested within the NP is an adjective (Adj), *happy,* and the noun head (N), *linguists.* Nested within the VP is the verb head (V), *make,* and a NP, *a diagram.* The nested NP, in turn, includes a determiner (Det), *a,* and the noun head (N), *diagram.*

When linguists say that syntax is "hierarchical" they are not making a statement about power; they regard "hierarchy" as a descriptive term that simply refers to the fact that phrases can nest within one another, as the following diagram of a noun phrase (NP) illustrates[42]:

```
                    NP
                   /|\
                  / | \
                 /  |  PP
                /   | /|\
               /    |/ | NP
              /     /  |/|\
             /     /   / | PP
            /     /   /  |/|\
           /     /   /   / | NP
          /     /   /   /  |/\
         /     /   /   /   /  \
       Det    N   P  Det  N  P /____\
```

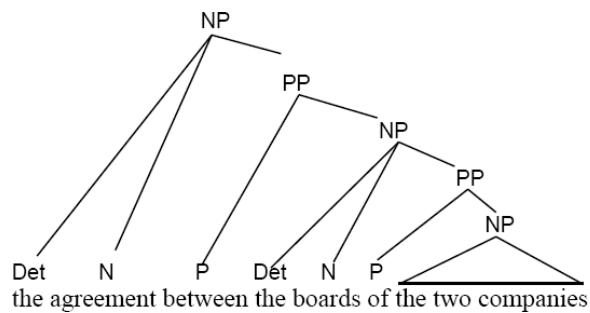the agreement between the boards of the two companies

Fig 1.2

The noun phrase contains three parts: a determiner (Det), *the*, the head noun (N), *agreement*, and a prepositional phrase (PP), *between the boards of the two companies*. Because the prepositional phrase is precisely that—a phrase—it also consists of its head (which, given the nature of the phrase, must be a preposition (P)), *between,* a determiner (Det) and a noun phrase (N), *the boards of the two companies*. In that noun phrase is nested a third prepositional phrase (PP), *of the two companies*, which contains its own noun phrase (NP), *the two companies*.

Of course, as a rhetorical scholar I am interested in hierarchy as a prescriptive aspect of syntax and, specifically, wish to suggest that the NP and VP in any given sentence are *not* equal because nouns do not have *morphology*. Morphology is the study of word forms; it is concerned with the way in which the same word, such as "thought," can have multiple morphologies: thought, think, thoughts, thinks, etc. Unless they are pluralized or made possessive, noun phrases do not have morphology. For example, "people" is always "people" no matter when they existed ("there were people" "the people are"); noun morphology does not depend on modifiers ("actually, people" "most people") or determiners ("a people" "the people"). Nouns cannot "morph." They can only be *displaced* by synonyms. The verb phrase, on the other hand, is ruled by morphology because its primary function is to situate utterances in time. The verb "to be," for example, must adjust to register the time of an event or utterance or both: was, is, will, am, etc.

English scholar Jeanne Fahnestock explains that the "rhetorical consequences" of the English language are directly attributable to the extensive morphology of its verb system:

> Many writers on style consider verbs the most powerful part of a sentence…and psycholinguistic research suggests that English speakers do not begin to identify strings of words as *sentences* until a verb is present…While subjects tell us what the author's topic is, verbs reveal how the author believes those entities exist or act.[43]

The temporal contextualization performed by the verb phrase and its constituent elements are necessary for the noun phrase to function, but the verb phrase performs irrespective of the noun phrase's content. Notable for my purpose is that linguists beg the question of primacy between the noun phrase and the verb phrase by allocating them separate but equal roles: the formal verb phrase delivers contextual information and the substantive noun phrase delivers referential information. However, I argue that the verb phrase is of primary importance because its morphology simultaneously delivers form *and* content whereas the non-morphological noun phrase does *not*.

Syntax is more than hierarchical: it is *hegemonic*. The provisional closure of any noun as such is secured only through the temporal morphology of the corresponding verb phrase. In other words, because a noun is an identity, and all identities are hegemonic articulations, the noun's referentiality must rely on something *external* to it but still within the rules of the sentence formation: the verb phrase. If we consider a simple sentence, such as "I am here," for example, it becomes apparent that the N, *I,* is of secondary importance to the VP, *am here,* because it is only through the temporal information delivered by the VP that the I is retroactively constituted as such. The VP, *am here,* temporarily delivers the N, *I,* as part of the constitution of the sentence's temporality, what we usually describe as its *tense.[44]* Put simply, tense is the condition of possibility of subjectivity.[45] In fact, Edward Cone suggests that syntax must eventually turn to

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rhetoric because, while syntax can map the hierarchy of NP and VP, we can only "make sense of [events] as they unfold in time."[46]

Syntax is *overtly* concerned with the specificity of locating identities in time, with the way in which verb morphology produces or makes intelligible a subject. Syntax is not simply a set of impartial rules that govern sentences but, as Michel Foucault explains, "that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to 'hold together'."[47] Syntax makes it possible "to name this and that" or to have "common names."[48] Julia Kristeva describes syntax as the subjectivizing force of language that makes beings into subjects: "a single guarantee" and "an extraordinary appropriation of structure, limpid, to the primitive lightning bolts of logic."[49] Syntax, in other words, is both restrictive (because it indoctrinates beings into language) and productive (as the condition of possibility for anything like intelligibility, or the ability to be understood and make sense to others).

Whether a tense, mood, aspect, etc., it is the verb phrase, *not* the noun phrase, that sets in motion the linguistic wheels of hegemonic articulation. In his Gramscian shift toward a *logical* or formal understanding of ideology, Ernesto Laclau described the hegemon as "a particular element assuming a 'universal' structuring function within a certain discursive field—actually, whatever organization that field has is only the result of that function—without the particularity of the element *per se* predetermining such a function."[50] Hegemony, in other words, is a *logic* of identity formation by which a *thing* or noun—including an experience of affinity—is a provisional effect or a *part* that takes up the position of a non-existent whole. More often than not, unfortunately, hegemony—or "the hegemonic" to more accurately account for its nounal classification—has been collapsed with the totalizing entailments of ideology and both are made to refer to a fixed substance or *noun*. Usually the name of a *thing,* such as the United States or

Capitalism, hegemony has become the name for a particular *identity*, a proper name, which holds a stable position of influence or control.[51]

The hegemonic, however, can never be a proper name because that which comes to occupy the hegemonic position is never proper to itself. In other words, it never has the totalizing power that is ascribed to it. Rather, the "hegemon" is stabilized rhetorically. Hegemon, then, is not a noun; it can only be a *verb*, "to hegemon."[52] Hegemonic ascendance is always in process, always in movement toward totalization, and always under threat by other particulars competing for the status of proper noun. Ernesto Laclau explains,

> This further refinement and radicalization require us to engage in a very precise task: to move from a purely sociologistic and descriptive account of the *concrete* agents involved in hegemonic operations to a *formal* analysis of the logics involved in the latter. We gain very little, once identities are conceived as complexly articulated collective wills, by referring to them through simple designations such as classes, ethnic groups, and so on, which are at best names for transient points of stabilization. The really important task is to understand the logics of their constitution and dissolution, as well as the formal determinations of the spaces in which they interrelate.[53]

Laclau draws a careful distinction between hegemony as the naming of concrete agents and hegemony as a formal analysis. Put differently, Laclau is supplementing the dominant *political* understanding of hegemony as an agent or identity proper with a *rhetorical* perspective that emphasizes hegemony as a contingent articulation of forces that *could be otherwise* but, for reasons that require close rhetorical analysis, are not.

Syntax moves rhetorical critics beyond what Lauren Berlant describes as ""taking the temperature of the hegemony" toward taking the *temporality* of the hegemonic.[54] A syntactic reading strategy tracks the articulation of specific verb morphologies to other rhetorical strategies in order to understand the *logics* of articulation of which particular "themes," "hegemonies," or "nouns" such as the nation, the headline, or the subject are the *effects*. Syntax, then, is both immanent and transcendent to the current moment of civility. On the one hand, *all* "imaginaries"

depend on syntax to produce order by locating subjects in time. On the other hand, *specific* syntaxes do specific things within their historical conjuncture. Although, for example, the "past imperfective" might lend itself often to discourses of trauma, that is not *necessarily* the case. Indeed, while the entire goal of the next three chapters is to track the ideological leanings of specific morphologies including the conditional mood, the past imperfective, and the historical present there is nothing *necessary* about the way in which these syntaxes articulate to the dominant national imaginary. A grasp of the dominant syntax and its theoretical implications is only part of the critical task; trope and figure are another as they articulate the "symbolic" logics by which the syntax will find its immanent form in discourse.

Neither can the rhetorical critic assume that a given morphology is always addressing the same problem: the temporal dis-joint that structures the impossibility of the social. Indeed, precisely because national time is always "out of joint," American rhetorical history has seen an infinitude of punctual discourses—from war cries to social movements to presidential addresses to xenophobic disputes about "who counts" as an American—that channel the anxiety of temporal displacement. Though all of these *ontologically* serve isomorphic functions—to provisionally close the temporal gap that inhabits the identity marker "nation" or "American"— they do not have the same *ontic* function. Just as the "ontological function can never be reduced to its ontic content," so too it isn't enough to reduce *ontic* content—for example, the obsession with civility that emerged in 2010—to its *ontological* function. It is not enough, in other words, to simply point out that any given syntax is just *another* provisional temporal suture of the social. On the contrary, the rhetorical task is, in Laclau's words, to read the logics of articulation by which the "ontological function" is "attached to an ontic content…the point at which the ontic and the ontological fuse into a contingent but indivisible unity."[55] Therefore, the purpose of the

next and final section of the introduction is to read the specific rhetorical situation to which the civility turn circa 2010 provided one possible response. My argument is that the doubled and intimately related failures of the war on terror and the financial crash precipitated an ontic crisis of American identity addressed by various moments of national "civility."

Too Civilized to Fail

2010 was a banner year for civility in America, not only on college campuses but also in national forums across the country. In the beginning of the year, President Obama put civility at the top of the national agenda, describing American politics at the National Prayer Breakfast as a "broken" system in which people are "unable to listen to one another, to have at once a serious and civil debate."[56] Shortly thereafter, an attendee at a public hall meeting took the civility mandate to heart, offering up this infamously civil feedback for President Obama: "I've been told that I voted for a man who said he's going to change things in a meaningful way for the middle class. I'm one of those people, and I'm waiting, sir. I'm waiting. I don't feel it yet."[57] Around the same time Susan Herbst, President of the University of Connecticut, pursued a "more civil national culture" in her bestseller *Rude Democracy*.[58] Finally, *Time* Magazine ended the exceptionally civil year by selecting Mark Zuckerberg as its "Person of the Year" for making "cyberspace more like the real world: dull but civilized."[59] Dull but civilized is a marked departure from the widespread crises registered the year before.

Headlines in 2009 fretted over the deeply *uncivil* implications of a society that couldn't get its finances or its words together. The editors of *The New York Review of Books,* for example, chronicled a long list of crises implicated in the crash in a forum entitled "The Crisis and How to Deal with It" including a "housing bubble burst," "credit crisis," and "severe recession." "What gives us the jitters," summed up economist Jeff Matrick, "is that all of these

are related."[60] Echoing Madrick's concerns, Paul Krugman suggested that the financial crisis was a reflection of a deeper crisis in America, a social crisis in which "we have nothing underneath. When Americans lose their jobs, they fall into the abyss. That does not happen in other advanced countries, it does not happen, I want to say, in civilized countries."[61] In the *Boston Review* Noam Chomsky took the inventories of Madrick and Krugman further, adding not only a "food crisis" to the list but a full-blown "cultural crisis" as well."[62] A few weeks later the Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities Jim Leach concurred, summing up the national climate at the time as a "civility crisis at home and a civilization crisis abroad" in U.S. relations with Afghanistan and Iraq:

> It is impossible for a thinking citizen not to be concerned about American public manners and the discordant rhetoric of our politics. Words reflect emotion as well as meaning. They clarify—or cloud—thought and energize action, sometimes bringing out the better angels in our nature, sometimes lesser instincts.[63]

Leach then announced his "intention to launch…a 'civility tour,' visiting every state in the union and helping initiate discussions about the state of American civility."[64] Concluding that too many of the *wrong* words were destroying the *civilis*, Leach's antidote was to put more of the *right* words into circulation. [65]

In 2010 "civility" or the circulation of more of the "right" words became a way for Americans to manage a deep anxiety that their most privileged forms of national currency have lost value. Historically, Jeremy Engels summarizes, Americans have turned to incivility or "invective" speech often at precisely those moments when national subjects felt "a deep cultural anxiety about how 'civilized' Americans really were…they were anxious about national division, about partisan strife, and about democracy itself."[66] The circulation of civil behavior came to stand in for uptake or persuasion in a world where both manners and the market had "bottomed out." Borrowing from Bonnie Honig, civility became a rhetorical "site at which certain anxieties

of *democratic* self-rule are managed…such as the alienness of the law" or the dis-joint between signifiers and signifieds or words that "mean something" and words that are, well, just words.[67] Arguments over what counted as "civility," then, did more than simply police the boundaries of the nation to decide who belongs and who doesn't. The circulation of words *civilized* the nation by putting civilians back into a "national conversation" *even if* that conversation was, by most accounts, decidedly uncivil. When national subjects circulate "civility" they act as if civility means something concrete in the world. In this act of literality—of denying the metaphoricity or temporal disjoint of either civility or the nation—the nation is re-civilized because everyone "feels" on the same page, at the same time. It is this willed belief in "repetition" without "interval" that, Derrida reminds us, "separates savagery from civility":

> The 'enlightened spirit,' the cold clarity of reason, turned toward the North and dragging the corpse of the origin, can, having recognized 'its first error,' handle metaphors as such, with reference to what it knows to be their true and literal meaning. In the south of language, the impassioned spirit was caught within metaphor: the poet relating to the world only in the style of nonliterality.[68]

Civilized nations, in other words, recognize their words as meaning something *literal* in the world. Metaphoricity—the arbitrariness of language—is thus even more uncivil and more dangerous than words, which while impolite, still point to things in the world.

It's no surprise that Americans turned attention to restoring to their own civil literality at a time when other tried and true currencies were rapidly losing their value. By the turn of the decade the "firm ideological identification" that Slavoj Zizek observed amongst Americans immediately after 9/11 had all but disappeared.[69] In 2008, a BBC World Service Poll declared the war on terror a "failure" with both U.S. and international audiences;[70] international courts even convicted Bush and U.S. allies of "war crimes for their 2003 aggressive attack on Iraq, as well as fabricating pretexts used to justify the attack."[71] Especially damaging, argues Marita

Gronnvoll, were the "grievous abuses of power [that] perhaps forever knocked the United States from the moral high ground it claimed as justification for the invasion of Iraq."[72] If, as the *Brookings Institute* concluded in 2003, "The Iraq war validated a basic rule of American politics: the American public closes ranks in times of national crisis,"[73] then a decade later the "civility turn" in American political culture would be another attempt to do what the war on terror had not and, indeed, that nothing ultimately could. However, more was being replenished than what a writer for *USA Today* described in 2013 as the drained "Post-9/11 fervor" of the "Drawn-out Afghanistan War."[74] America's banks accounts were drained as well.

Chapter One picks up with the crisis-within-a-crisis that is the economic crash. In this chapter I read the ontological *temporal* crisis of nationhood as it was made manifest in the ontic crisis of "too big to fail." Specifically, I suggest in this chapter that the "too big to fail" imperative was especially threatening to the already fragile American way of life because it marked an impossibility of reconciliation of market/state logics that had shored up the liberal democratic narrative for centuries. I suggest that the "if, then" *conditional syntax* of the "too big to fail" post-financial crash habituated the public to the status quo as it also *deferred*—as all syntaxes worth the name do—reckoning with the market/state aporia structuring the nation. In other words, I suggest in this chapter that not only was the financial crash the "latest" crisis from which the civility turn could emerge but also that the conditional mood illustrates the way in which syntaxes *civilize* by making possible a shared temporality on which the national conversation (or controversy) depends.

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Notes

[1] Rutgers University, "History and Vision of Project Civility at Rutgers," *Project Civility*, 2015, projectcivility.rutgers.edu/about-project-civility.

[2] Bob Sutton, "The Civility Movement in Maryland," *Bob Sutton: Work Matters*, April 5, 2008, http://bobsutton.typepad.com/my_weblog/2008/04/the-civility-mo.html.

[3] Associated Press, "Yo, Jersey! Rutgers University Wants You to Be Nicer. You Got a Problem with That?," *Fox News*, September 27, 2010, http://www.foxnews.com/us/2010/09/27/yo-jersey-rutgers-wants-try-little-civility-got-problem/.

[4] Mary Beth Marklein, "Civility Problems Cause Uproar on College Campuses," USA Today, (April 26, 2011), http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/education/2011-04-26-college-campus-civility.htm.

[5] Alan Schier Zagier, "Civility Efforts Seek Better Behavior on Campus," *Yahoo News*, November 1, 2012, http://news.yahoo.com/civility-efforts-seek-better-behavior-campus-165206952.html.

[6] I borrow this emblematic phrase from The Wilson Center, which along with National Public Radio (NPR) recently launched a joint project entitled "The National Conversation." According to the project's website, it aims to provide the "non-partisan and civil…level of discourse the nation deserves through a thoughtful and challenging exploration of the most significant problems facing the nation and the world," The National Conversation, *Wilson Center,* http://www.wilsoncenter.org/thenationalconversation.

[7] "Consensus" has two sets of dominant meanings: the usual sense of "agreement" or "collective unanimous opinion" and a second, physiological sense of "general agreement or concord of different parts or organs of the body in effecting a given purpose; sympathy," "Consensus, N.," *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed March 4, 2014, http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/39516. Consensus, as Kendall R. Phillips has argued, presumes "a type of preliminary state in which people are enmeshed" or a pre-existing connectivity that assumes people would, if they could, exist in general concord with one another," Kendall R. Phillips, "A Rhetoric of Controversy," *Western Journal of Communication* 63, no. 4 (Fall 1999): 488.

[8] Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," *Social Text*, no. 25/26 (1990): 56–80, doi:10.2307/466240; Kendall R. Phillips, "Spaces of Invention: Dissension, Freedom, and Thought in Foucault," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35, no. 4 (2002): 328–44, doi:10.1353/par.2003.0010; Thomas West, "Beyond Dissensus: Exploring the Heuristic Value of Conflict," *Rhetoric Review* 15, no. 1 (October 1, 1996): 142–55.

[9] I borrow my understanding of conjuncture from Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London; New York: Verso, 1988); Michel Foucault and Robert Hurley, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction.* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990); Ronald Walter Greene, *Malthusian Worlds: US Leadership and the Governing of the Population Crisis* (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1999).

[10] Jessica Mayhew et al., *Paper Takes: The Power of Uncivil Words*, June 20, 2013, UC Davis Humanities Institute Civility Project, http://dhi.ucdavis.edu/archive/civilities.

[11] William Eric Davis, *Peace and Prosperity in an Age of Incivility* (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America, 2006).

[12] Henry A. Giroux, "The Crisis of Public Values in the Age of the New Media," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 28, no. 1 (March 2011): 10.

[13] Michael Warner's work Exemplars of the "circulatory" perspective include: Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2002); Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture*, no. 1 (2002): 49. For exemplars of circulation's uptake see Nathan S. Atkinson, "Celluloid Circulation: The Dual Temporality of Nonfiction Film and Its Publics," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 1 5, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 675–84; Catherine Chaput, "Rhetorical Circulation in Late Capitalism: Neoliberalism and the Overdetermination of Affective Energy," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 43, no. 1 (2010): 1–25; Cara A. Finnegan and Jiyeon Kang, "'Sighting' the Public: Iconoclasm and Public Sphere Theory," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 377–402; Ronald Walter Greene, "Rhetorical Pedagogy as a Postal System: Circulating Subjects through Michael Warner's 'Publics and Counterpublics,'" *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88, no. 4 (November 2002): 434; Christian Lundberg, "Enjoying God's Death: The Passion of the Christ and the Practices of an Evangelical Public," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95, no. 4 (2009): 387–411, doi:10.1080/00335630903296184; Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York; Cambridge, Mass.: Zone Books ; Distributed by MIT Press, 2002); Michael Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," *Public Culture*, no. 1 (2002): 49.

[14] Megan Kathleen Foley, "The Rhetorical Figuration of Intimate Abuse and the Configuration of Public Uptake" (Ph.D., University of Iowa, 2008), 26, http://books.google.com/books?id=Q34s_nmTVQAC&printsec=frontcover#v=onepage&q=trapani&f=false.

[15] Benedict K. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised (London: Verso, 1991); Craig J. Calhoun, *Nationalism* (U of Minnesota Press, 1997).

[16] Ed White, "Early American Nations as Imagined Communities," *American Quarterly* 56, no. 1 (2004): 49–81, doi:10.1353/aq.2004.0014.

[17] Bhabha, *Nation and Narration,* 3.

[18] Ed White, "Early American Nations as Imagined Communities," *American Quarterly,* 56, no. 1 (2004): 56, my emphasis.

[19] Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny, "Introduction: From the Moment of Social History to the Work of Cultural Representation," in *Becoming National: A Reader,* ed. G. Eley and R. G. Suny (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 3 – 37.

[20] Erin J. Rand, "An Inflammatory Fag and a Queer Form: Larry Kramer, Polemics, and Rhetorical Agency," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94, no. 3 (August 1, 2008): 297–319.

[21] Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and The Profane: The Nature of Religion* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1987); Megan Foley, "Serializing Racial Subjects: The Stagnation and

Suspense of the O.J. Simpson Saga," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 96, no. 1 (2010): 69–88, doi:10.1080/00335630903512713.

[22] Anderson, *Imagined Communities,* 25, my emphasis.

[23] Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 2002, 62.

[24] Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 2002, 68.

[25] Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 2002, 68.

[26] Warner, "Publics and Counterpublics," 2002, 438.

[27] Greene, "Rhetorical Pedagogy as a Postal System," 437.

[28] Greene, "Rhetorical Pedagogy as a Postal System," 438.

[29] Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London; New York: Verso, 2000), 76.

[30] Paul Virilio, *Desert Screen* (London; New York: Continuum, 2005).

[31] Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York; London: Routledge Classics, 2006), 193.

[32] Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(s)* (London; New York: Verso, 2007), 69.

[33] Rand, "An Inflammatory Fag and a Queer Form."

[34] Jeremy Tambling, *On Anachronism / Jeremy Tambling* (Manchester ; New York : Manchester University Press ; New York : Distributed in the U.S. exclusively by Palgrave Macmillan, 2010., 2010), 2.

[35] Tambling, *On Anachronism / Jeremy Tambling*, 5.

[36] Tambling, *On Anachronism / Jeremy Tambling*, 13.

[37] Maggie Tallerman, *Understanding Syntax*, Understanding Language (New York: Arnold, 1998).

[38] Peter W. Cullicover, *Syntax 2ⁿᵈ Ed.,* (New York and London: Academic Press, 1982), 4.

[39] That is not to say that rhetoricians have not paid attention to syntax. Advocating a neo-classical or "close textual" approach to rhetorical criticism, Michael Leff has drawn considerable attention to the "iconic" effects of syntax, which links the arbitrariness of words to the "psychological" dimension of human experience, Michael Leff, "Dimensions of Temporality in Lincoln's Second Inaugural," *Communication Reports* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1988): 26–31; G.P. Mohrmann and Michael C. Leff, "Lincoln at Cooper Union: A Rationale for Neo-Classical Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60, no. 4 (December 1974): 459; Michael H. Short and Geoffrey N. Leech, *Style in Fiction: A Linguistic Introduction to English Fictional Prose*, 2nd. ed., (Pearson, 2007).

[40] William O'Grady, *Syntactic Development* (University of Chicago Press, 1997). A number of tests help linguists determine whether a phrase is present including the substitution test, which requires that syntactic units can be replaced by an element such as they, it, or do so; the movement test, which tests that phrases can move to different parts of the sentence; and the

coordination test, which states that a group of words forms a constituent if it can be joined to another group of words by a conjunction like and, or, or but. See O'Grady, *Syntactic Development,* 162.

[41] Eli Evans, "Syntax: Why Graphs?" *Logos Talk.* 9 November 2005. http://blog.logos.com/2005/11/syntax_why_grap/

[42] Karl Hagen, "Analyzing Sentences," *Polysyllabic,* n.d. http://www.polysyllabic.com/?q=book/export/html/64.

[43] Jeanne Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style: The Uses of Language in Persuasion* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 154.

[44] I will often say "tense" as a general shorthand for the morphology of the verb phrase because it generally an easily understood term. However, verb morphology occurs in a number of ways, tense being only one; aspect and mood are other important verb morphologies. In certain places of the dissertation I will deal specifically with non-tense morphologies and in others tense will be of specific concern.

[45] Inderjeet Mani, *The Imagined Moment,* 29.

[46] Edward T. Cone, "On Derivation: Syntax and Rhetoric," *Music Analysis* 6, no. 3 (October 1, 1987): 252, doi:10.2307/854204.

[47] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Reissue edition (Vintage, 1994), xviii.

[48] Foucault, *The Order of Things,* xvii.

[49] For Kristeva, being has an existence independent of time; a sort of pre-linguistic "rhythm" to use her preferred term of art that is only made intelligible by syntax, Kelly Oliver, *The Portable Kristeva* (Columbia University Press, 2013).

[50] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, 2nd ed. (London; New-York: Verso, 2001), xii.

[51] For an excellent illustration of the nounal perspective on hegemony and ideology see Chaput, "Rhetorical Circulation in Late Capitalism: Neoliberalism and the Overdetermination of Affective Energy," 6.

[52] Here I am reminded of God's declaration in the Bible: "I am a verb."

[53] Butler, Laclau, and Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality*, 53.

[54] Lauren Gail Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2005), 20.

[55] Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2007), 226.

[56] Matt Loffman, "Obama Calls For More Civility in Politics: 'Something's Broken'," *ABC News Blogs*, accessed February 6, 2015, http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/politics/2010/02/obama-calls-for-more-civility-in-politics-somethings-broken/.

[57] Tunku Varadarajan, "What Did Velma Hart Expect?," *The Daily Beast*, September 21, 2010, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2010/09/21/velma-hart-obama-supporter-taken-in-by-her-own-illusions.html.

[58] Susan Herbst, *Rude Democracy: Civility and Incivility in American Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010).

[59] Lev Grossman, "Person of the Year 2010: Mark Zuckerberg," *Time*, December 15, 2010, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2036683_2037183,00.html; David Von Drehle, "Person of the Year 2010 Runners-Up: The Tea Party," *Time*, December 15, 2010, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2036683_2037118_2037102,00.html.

[60] George Soros et al., "The Crisis and How to Deal with It," *The New York Review of Books*, June 11, 2009, http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2009/jun/11/the-crisis-and-how-to-deal-with-it/.

[61] Soros et al., "The Crisis and How to Deal with It."

[62] Noam Chomsky, "Crisis and Hope: Theirs and Ours," *Boston Review*, October 2009, http://www.chomsky.info/articles/200909--.htm.

[63] Jim Leach, "With Malice Toward None" (National Endowment for the Humanities, The Convocation of State Humanities Councils, National Endowment for the Humanities, Omaha, Nebraska, November 6, 2009), http://www.neh.gov/about/chairman/speeches/malice-toward-none.

[64] Leach, "With Malice Toward None."

[65] In the ontological sense, civility is *always* at risk because there are no external guarantees of the "civilis," Dana L. Cloud, "'Civility' as a Threat to Academic Freedom," *First Amendment Studies* 49, no. 1 (2015): 13, doi:10.1080/21689725.2015.1016359.

[66] Jeremy Engels, "Uncivil Speech: Invective and the Rhetorics of Democracy in the Early Republic," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 95, no. 3 (August 2009): 321, doi:10.1080/00335630903156453.

[67] Bonnie Honig, *Democracy and the Foreigner* (Princeton University Press, 2009), 7.

[68] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Corrected edition (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 278.

[69] Slavoj Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London: Verso, 2002), 45.

[70] BBC World Service Poll, "US 'War on Terror' Has Not Weakened al Quaeda, Says Global Poll," September 28, 2008, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/sep-08/BBCAlQaeda_Sep08_rpt.pdf.

[71] Glenn Greenwald, "Bush and Blair Found Guilty of War Crimes for Iraq Attack," *Salon*, November 23, 2011, http://www.salon.com/2011/11/23/bush_and_blair_found_guilty_of_war_crimes_for_iraq_attack/.

[72] Marita Gronnvoll, "Gender (In)Visibility at Abu Ghraib," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2007): 372.

[73] Caroline Smith and James M. Lindsay, "Rally 'Round the Flag: Opinion in the United States before and after the Iraq War," *Brookings Institute,* Summer 2003, http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2003/06/summer-iraq-lindsay.

[74] Rick Hampson, "Drawn-out Afghanistan War Drains Post-9/11 Fervor," *USA TODAY*, September 5, 2013, http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2013/09/05/911-anniversary-afghanistan-war-syria/2771437/.

CHAPTER 2

HABITUAL NATIONALISM AND THE CONDITIONAL MOOD IN THE US BAILOUT

CRISIS

> In late 2010, Americans discovered that the Federal Reserve had loaned far more money to "too-big-to-fail" corporations than we had been originally led to believe…Though millions of American[s] were upset by this, they appeared resigned to the reality that the US government had become, in effect, an insurance company for giant corporations.
>
> ~Bruce Levine, *Get Up, Stand Up: Uniting Populists, Energizing the Defeated, and Battling the Corporate Elite*[1]

By all accounts, the U.S. federal legislature's response to the 2007 financial crash followed the governing-by-crisis protocol emblematic of the neoliberal state of exception.[2] $1.5 trillion dollars worth of legislation was rushed through Congress, bypassing deliberation and debate.[3] President George W. Bush described a "situation becoming more precarious by the day," and Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke predicted "future budget deficits and debts rising indefinitely, and at increasing rates."[4] The popular media refrain, suggest Michael Corcoran and Stephen Maher of *Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR),* was that legislation "needed to be passed so urgently that a serious national debate was not even possible."[5] Dean Baker and Kris Warner of the Center for Economic and Policy Research warned that "a second Great Depression loomed just over the horizon" and President-elect Barack Obama inherited an "economic crisis of historic dimensions."[6]

As the economic crisis intensified, public anxiety traded in ominous inventories of escalating economic troubles, such as this one from *The New York Times*:

Together, Fannie and Freddie own or guarantee nearly half of the nation's $12 trillion worth of home mortgages. If they collapse, so *may* the whole system of finance for American housing, threatening a most unfortunate string of events: First, an already plummeting real estate market *might* crater. Then the banks that have sunk capital into American homes *would* slip deeper into trouble. And the virus *might* spread globally.[7]

Closer inspection of this representative prognosis illuminates the role played by the *conditional syntax* or mood in the inventories of financial collapse.[8] The first sentence, which quantifies the worth of home mortgages owned by the financial giants Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, takes the form of the "everyday indicative mood that all of us use all the time for making factual statements."[9] The second sentence shifts from the indicative mood to the conditional—from the factual to the hypothetical—when it asks readers to imagine "what if" Fannie and Freddie collapse. In turn, this hypothetical scenario enables the writer to unfold, in great detail, "a most unfortunate string of events" with potentially catastrophic global effect.[10] My critical wager in this chapter is that the conditional syntax holds the key to understanding the rhetorical workings of the post-crash national *ethos*.

As such, I argue that the state's conditional response to the financial crisis—"Band-Aid over a gaping chest wound" in the words of Neil Barofsky, former special investigator of the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP)[11]— re-constituted American national identity around a *rhetoric of habitual nationalism* with four distinguishing characteristics: one, modal auxiliaries such as "would" and "could" that habituated national volition to the status quo; two, an "if p, then q" clausal structure which made good argument of bad scenarios; three, a counter-counter factual form or negative conditional that measured the success of the present against a past that never happened; and four, a "too big to fail" imperative that radically threatened the constitutive state/market aporia of liberal democracy as it made common sense of the slurry of catastrophic predictions. Ultimately I set out in this chapter to re-theorize the "state of

exception" as the condition of possibility for rhetoric as such or our collective ability to think the future via the "as if." In sum, what Levine in the opening epigraph described as the "apparent resignation" of the American public in the face of "too big to fail" I re-think as the name of a political unconscious desperately attempting to reconcile, once again, the incommensurable logics of state and market or equality and liberty that have always given the lie to the American way of life.

Habituation and Modal Auxiliaries

Conditional utterances have always been indispensible to public deliberation because they are the primary verbal mode enabling human beings to deal in affairs of the probable. Conditionals are classified as *irrealis* because they deal with counterfactual, hypothetical, imagined or uncertain scenarios in contrast to indicative statements or descriptions, which are classified as *realis* because they are of reality. "'Iffy' thinking," writes Nicholas Rescher, "is one of the characteristic resources of the sorts of creatures we humans have become" and conditionals are what enable this "iffy thinking" to occur.[12] Thus, there is nothing especially remarkable about the use of conditional statements during moments of intense public deliberation. Like deliberative rhetoric, conditionals traffic in the probable and the hypothetical, allowing human beings to act under conditions of uncertainty. Without conditionals, most human activity—from daydreaming and scientific experimentation to novel writing and governance—would be impossible and humans would be limited to the domain of "mere description."[13]

One of the telltale characteristics of a conditional statement is the presence of modal auxiliaries or modals such as *may, might, could* and *would.* Like the classic forms of modal logic or "future contingents" for which they are named, modal auxiliaries are politically

indispensible because they help speakers to remain in the realm of the "probable" by hedging bets they must make under future oriented conditions of uncertainty.[14] Modals allow speakers, in the words of Jeanne Fahnestock, "to express their degree of certainty in an attribution or their commitment to its status as real or not…the modality of an overall claim is a critical dimension in rhetorical argumentation, since rhetorical claims, under Aristotle's distinctions, concern probabilities, not certainties."[15] To illustrate how modals work, consider the following assertion: *If*, as John Poulakos suggested long ago, "rhetoric is the art which seeks to capture in opportune moments that which is appropriate and attempts to suggest that which is possible," *then* in this chapter of the dissertation I suggest that rhetoric *may* be the art of the conditional.[16] The modal auxiliary "may" modifies the verb "be" in the dependent or conditional clause, classically called the *apodosis*. Adding "may" to the *apodosis* signals that my assertion about conditionals is probable and contingent, not certain, and therefore subject to less scrutiny than it might have been if the *apodosis* had been written as a non-modal assertion such as, "*then* rhetoric *is* the art of the conditional."

Overall the semantic force of the sentence—the definition of rhetoric—remains the same in both the modal and non-modal forms but the speaker's *commitment* to the utterance changes. Strong modals signal uncertainty, higher variability and/or more contingency because the temporal relationship is marked as less stable. In the words of Andreas Sebastian Hoffman, "'futurity' and 'volition'… are thus weakened to a considerable extent" in the case of strongly modal conditional utterances.[17] As illustrated in a CNBC commentary:

> The current plan to wind down Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac *would* result in lower housing prices for everyone. It *would* harm the United States economy by lowering growth. It *would* increase unemployment. Despite this *probability*, the president and Congress *seem to be* intent on killing these companies.[18]

The author confines his argument to the realm of speculation thematically by labeling his predictions as "probabilities" and syntactically through the extensive use of the modal auxiliary "would."

Modal auxiliaries have a hedging or equivocating force because they habituate the verb that they modify. Typically, verbs create temporality by placing the time of an utterance and the time of an action in a particular relationship, usually past, present or future. When we evaluate statements as true or likely we evaluate not only their semantic content but also the validity of their temporal structure.[19] The truth-value of an utterance depends on whether the temporal relationship of the utterance is accepted; whether or not the utterance's chronology or sense of time feels probable. Modals, however, assert that an action—the claim of the *apodosis*—holds true at any given time because they are *future* oriented and therefore atemporal.[20] The modal's dominant rhetorical effect, then, is *habituation*. "Would," especially, connotes a "volition" or decision born of habituation or "the sense of having gone through the action on many different occasions in the past."[21]

The constitutive paradox of modals is that as they enable us to engage the probable and the possible in the conditional form, they also ground that engagement in what has come before, restricting it to the terribly disappointing realm of the "appropriate." Conditionals function like those stretchy, fluorescent leashes that parents use to keep their children safe in public, allowing the national imagination to wander into unfamiliar territory while safely tethered to the familiar. Would connotes merely a *choice* not a decision in the Derridean sense.[22] A spinning-of-the-wheels stands in for decision-making, as illustrated by Former secretary of the treasury Hank Paulson during an interview with the *Dallas Business Journal:*

> Sometimes when I wake up in the middle of the night…I *would* think about [the financial crisis]. I really didn't want to envision it. The modern financial system, is so complex and

the institutions are so large, you saw what happened just with Lehman going down, Fannie and Freddie combined are nine times bigger than Lehman, just the thought of that and how we *would* ever put Humpty Dumpty back together again.[23]

Laden with modal auxiliaries and stripped of policy proposals and contingency plans, Paulson's performance during the interview typified the anxious and near-paralyzing effects of deliberation seeped in "habituality and recurrence."[24]

A slippery slope fallacy about "the worst that could happen" ascended to the level of a national logic and significant policy decisions were deferred for the sake of the status quo. As *Forbes* contributor Stan Collender put it, "even smart, well-meaning policymakers are just as often operating on instinct as information."[25] "One of the most striking things about the reaction to the current financial meltdown is that," in the words of Slavoj Žižek, "'No one really knows what to do.'"[26] Jesse Eisinger's polemic in the *New York Times* summarized the crisis response as "a congenital suspicion of vision, ambition, sweeping reform and change" characterized by "technocrats" that operated "within the system" and kept "profiles low."[27] "It's an elevation of consensus, rather than what's right, as a mode of governance," Eisinger concluded.[28] I've suggested above that the effects Eisinger laments are due to the extensive use of modal auxiliaries; next I will discuss the role played by the "if p, then q" clausal structure.

Getting from P→Q

Either in addition to or as substitution for the modal auxiliary, an "if p, then q" clausal structure is the essential feature of conditional statements. For example, writers for the *Washington Post* concluded that undersecretary Gary "Gensler and other Treasury officials feared the companies had grown so large that, *if* they stumbled, the damage to the U.S. economy *could* be staggering."[29] Other "if p, then q" constructs were less straightforward. Consider former U.S. Treasury undersecretary Tim Adams' response when asked by Adam

Davidson of NPR's "All Things Considered" to speculate "If Fannie And Freddie Had Failed."

Adams responded, "If you can't borrow, you can't run your business…You can't go to school.

You can't expand. And, therefore, the economy stops."[30] Although Adams' response contains

no modal auxiliaries, the structure of the response takes on a typical "if p, then q" clausal

structure indicative of conditional statements: *If* Fannie and Freddie had failed, *then* you can't

borrow. *If* you can't borrow, *then* you can't run your business. *If* you can't run your business,

then you can't expand. This causal structure is necessary for conditional statements to function

because the *apodosis* or conditional clause must have an independent clause on which to rest

its probability or contingency, classically called the *protasis*. That said, notes Rescher, a

conditional:

> [I]s not so much a grammatically taxonomic category as a functional category in the
> domain of information management. 'Had he but known they would abandon him, he
> would not have trusted them' is every bit as much of a conditional statement as 'If he
> had known they would abandon him, then he would not have trusted them.'[31]

Whether formally or informally constructed, conditionals allow speakers to create relationships

between "p" or known facts and indicative statements and "q" or potential, future outcomes or

conditional statements.

Conditional argumentation is said to depend on causal or inductive logic: evaluating

whether a conclusion holds true given its premise. An online college primer describes

conditional statements as "a promise. Truth for the whole compound sentence is decided on the

basis of whether you think the promise is kept."[32] For an example of this "promise" structure,

consider the following comment posted to a *Bloomberg* Market report: "If the U.S. government

gets out of the mortgage business I'd go broke."[33] "If" sets up the conditionality of the sentence

and the *protasis* lays out the premise or condition: the U.S. government severing their control

over Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac. Omitting but still implying a "then" conjunction, the

apodosis specifies the conclusion; the speaker would lose all of their money or no longer be able to make money. According to general wisdom, this statement should be evaluated inductively and holistically as a question of whether or not one believes that the speaker would indeed "go broke" should the government divorce itself from the management of major mortgage institutions.

To say that the validity of a causal statement is dependent on the fulfillment of the statement's promise is to admit to a fundamental rhetorical principle: *meaning is retroactive* or "logic realizes itself afterwards."[34] When Bush made his infamous plea to rally national support for the $700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), he did not simply make predictions; he *deferred* critical scrutiny of the logics and "habits" underwriting the controversial legislature through an excessive inventory of *potential,* future-oriented economic woes whose apocalyptic consequences appeared too imminent to be worth the risk of taking a deliberative breath:

> More banks *could* fail, including some in your community. The stock market *would* drop even more, which *would* reduce the value of your retirement account. The value of your home *could* plummet. Foreclosures *would* rise dramatically. And if you own a business or a farm, you *would* find it harder and more expensive to get credit. More businesses *would* close their doors, and millions of Americans *could* lose their jobs. *Even if* you have good credit history, it *would* be more difficult for you to get the loans you need to buy a car or send your children to college. And ultimately, our country *could* experience a long and painful recession.[35]

Consisting entirely of *apodosis* clauses that all depend on one *protasis*—passing TARP—the persuasive force of Bush's gloomy hypotheticals demonstrate the rhetorical trick of conditionals: what is important is that the *protasis* be confirmed, *not* that the conditional be accepted. In other words, whether or not one believes that Bush's dire prophesies are likely to follow his premise, in entertaining the conditional relationship the premise is retroactively validated as true. Classical rhetorical scholars understood this trick well. Giambattista Vico "recommended

composing [arguments] in two parts, the *apodosis* and the *protasis.* An opening *apodosis* should

contain a concessive or conditional clause and the *protasis* should follow with the point to be

maintained."[36] For Vico the goal of the conditional construction in argumentation is to

"maintain" or hold as true the *protasis* whereas the *apodosis* was the "concession" that slipped

persuasion in through the back door.

The more dire the *apodosis* or "concessions," the more the *protasis* is likely to be

accepted as true. If arguments depend on conditionals and catastrophes make for more believable

conditionals, then catastrophe is "good" argument. The bailout discourse was successful because

it extended its hypotheticals to the point at which they no longer *felt* hypothetical. The bottom

line was always the same: "Bail out the financial institutions, or America as we know it is

doomed."[37] And the more doomed America became rhetorically, the more the bailout made

sense in practice, as illustrated by this illogical but nonetheless convincing passage in an essay

from *The Atlantic:*

> How do we know something bad is going to happen? We don't…Based on what I'm
> hearing from Wall Street, I'm pretty sure that something bad will happen if we let a
> whole bunch of banks fail. But I can't promise that everything won't be fine without a
> bailout…My basic reasoning is this: given just how badly the Great Depression sucked,
> I'm willing to gamble on stopping it, even if that gamble fails, even if it is not
> necessary.[38]

Even the self-proclaimed voices of reason cautioning against "fear mongering," "doomsday

rhetoric" and "alarmist hyperbole" couldn't stem the cataclysmic rhetorical tide once their

caution trafficked in conditional statements.[39] As the following CNN commentary suggests,

conditional form and apocalyptic force are integrally connected and attempting to dissociate

them produces unconvincing placation:

> If the bailout does not occur, more bankruptcies are possible and credit conditions may
> worsen for a time…Talk of Armageddon, however, is ridiculous scare-mongering. If

financial institutions cannot make productive loans, a profit opportunity exists for someone else. This might not happen instantly, but it will happen.[40]

The "someone else" and the "someday" were no match for the "you" and the "any minute."

Conditionals are integral to catastrophe narratives, explains Mary Manjikian, because "the reader is asked to behave as though the events being described have actually come about."[41] Paul Alkon describes this "behaving as though" as "counterfeit verisimilitude"; the fantasy (the *apodosis*) is grounded "in some coherent assumption about variations in science or society" and therefore re-produces the fantasy as a new reality (the *protasis)* by way of the *assumptions.*[42] In the fourth section of the chapter I will turn attention specifically to the dominant "assumption" governing the enthymematic logic of the bailout's "if p, then q" structure: *too big to fail.* Before that, however, the next section will discuss how the negative conditional form—"if *not* p, then q" or "if p, then *not* q," exacerbated the acceptability of the "now" by way of contrast to what might happen if we do nothing.

Counter-counter Factuals

The discussion so far has been primarily limited to direct expressions of conditional statements that were identified by modal auxiliaries, an "if p, then q" clausal structure, or both. However, perhaps even more common in the post-crash narratives were *counter-counter factuals* or exercises in imagining "What will happen if the deal is *not* implemented?" such as this one from *The Telegraph:*

> If the US bail-out is *not* approved, the first individuals to feel the pain *would* be people with unsecured debts: interest rates on personal loans like credit-card debts *could* start to rise. Those customers considered to be at the highest risk of defaulting *might* even see lenders foreclosing, seizing goods bought on credit in order to maximise their returns. Next *would* be the millions mortgage-holders whose loans are not fixed and whose monthly payments would rise. And anyone looking to take out a new mortgage, or even remortgage, *would* struggle even more than they do today: the few home loans on offer *would* be available to only the richest and most reliable customers, and then only at

prohibitively high interest rates. The effect on the housing market is obvious: with almost no-one able to get finance to buy a house, prices *could* collapse dramatically.[43]

The excerpt should appear very familiar with one important difference: the *protasis* "If the US bail-out is not approved" is a counter-*counter* factual or a hypothetical counter factual. The *protasis* takes a double turn, first engaging the hypothetical outcome of passing the bailout then reversing to imagine what would happen were that bailout then *not* to be passed.

The hypothetical counter factual turned collective imagination toward a "hortatory negative" or "thou-shalt-not" that displaced volition with constraint and obligation.[44] President Bush warned in 2008 that, "given the situations we are facing, *not passing* a bill now *would* cost [responsible] Americans much more later."[45] That same year, Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke testified that, "*If* financial conditions fail to improve for a protracted period, the implications for the broader economy *could* be quite adverse."[46] "If we *do not act* swiftly and boldly," Obama advised in November of 2008, "most experts now believe that we *could* lose millions of jobs next year."[47] Obama expanded the hypothetical counter factual when he took office a few months later:

> *If nothing is done*, this recession *could* linger for years. The unemployment rate *could* reach double digits. Our economy *could* fall $1 trillion short of its full capacity, which translates into more than $12,000 in lost income for a family of four. We *could* lose a generation of potential and promise, as more young Americans are forced to forgo dreams of college or the chance to train for the jobs of the future. And our nation *could* lose the competitive edge that has served as a foundation for our strength and standing in the world…. In short, a bad situation *could* become dramatically worse.[48]

On the eve of the bailout vote, House Financial Services Committee Chairman Barney Frank announced, "If we don't pass this bill, serious harm will occur."[49] Senator Judd Gregg concurred, "If we don't pass it, we shouldn't be a Congress."[50] Respondents on *Debate.Org* argued, "I believe that the US government should bailout US automakers. It would further

negatively impact our country's financial problems if we don't" and "If no bailout is given to automakers, it would further devastate the financial condition of the country."[51]

As the worst of the 2007-2008 economic collapse fades from the political conscious, the hypothetical counter factual form continues to defer a national economic and political reckoning. "The sleep of any president," writes Robert Kaplan, "is haunted by *what ifs*…Counterfactuals haunt us all in the policy community."[52] Reflecting on "the Score Four Years Later," *USA Today* recalled these highlights from the throes of the TARP panic:

> Four years ago this week, the United States was on the brink of financial collapse: 'If we don't do this (bailout), we may not have an economy on Monday.' Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, not known for being an alarmist, warned participants in a crisis meeting on Sept. 18, 2008. Soon after, President Bush put the situation even more bluntly: 'If money isn't loosened up, this sucker could go down.'[53]

That this year-in-review chose *all* specifically conditional statements to re-present the moment of crisis not only illustrates the importance of conditionals to bailout rhetoric but also suggests that the conditional syntax *continues* to structure our national *ethos* after the crash.

Negative conditionals render our present reality one we cannot *not* want to accept by way of the contrast between the circumstances of the present and what *might* happen in the future or *may have* happened in the past. "The emphasis is not primarily on getting somebody to do something at some stage in the future," writes Hoffman of conditionals, "it is on describing a state that takes effect whenever a particular situation occurs."[54] Critical dismissal of the 2013 documentary *Hank: Five Years From the Brink* confirmed this ideological upshot of the negative conditional.[55] Contributing "little to the conversation," in the words of one reviewer, was precisely the point of the underwhelming biopic about the former secretary of the treasury. As Paulson dedicates his 85 minutes of screen time to extensive speculation on "why I bailed out the banks and what would have happened if I hadn't," he ensures that staying

the course was the best choice.[56] A policy that "was more unpopular than torture with much of the American public" thus becomes "ably assembled but frustratingly incomplete."[57] As we continue to remind ourselves that, in the words of billionaire hedge fund manager Charles Munger, "Bank rescues allowed the U.S. to avoid what *could have been* an 'awful' downturn,'" we become habituated to a status quo model of public policy.[58]

Talk about "what would have happened" allows the nation to keep drumming along, disavowing the very well-publicized reality that the bailout was always already a second best solution that "would not come close to halting the tidal wave of foreclosures" or save "millions of homeowners who are under water."[59] In Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner's *New York Times* Op Ed entitled "Welcome to the Recovery," a counterfactual past became a powerful benchmark of economic growth in the present:

> According to a report released last week by Alan Blinder and Mark Zandi, advisers to President Bill Clinton and Senator John McCain, respectively, the combined actions since the fall of 2007 of the Federal Reserve, the White House and Congress helped save 8.5 million jobs and increased gross domestic product by 6.5 percent relative to *what would have happened had we done nothing*.[60]

Speculation about the bailout's non-occurrence transforms the conditional from a vehicle of crisis rhetoric to one of national panacea. As Paul Krugman scoffed, "The only way you can consider this record a success story is by comparing it with the Great Depression. And that's a pretty low bar—after all, aren't we supposed to know more about economic management than our grandfathers did?" But Krugman misses the point: the lower the bar of "what could have happened" the more reassuring the present becomes by comparison.

Counter-counter factuals virtually erase the already tenuous distinction between *deliberative* arguments about suitable economic policy and *epideictic* rehearsals of national values.[61] Which is to say, contra Žižek's post-crash advice "to step back, think and *say* the right

thing," sometimes talking—especially about what could happen or could have happened—*is* doing something.[62] Both "if p, then q" and "if *not* p, then q" work to retroactively constitute the conditional's warrant—the link between if and then or p and q—as precisely *un*conditional. Rescher describes this as the "enthymematic basis" of conditionals:

> 'If p then q' is appropriate, there lies in the background some categorical (unconditional) facts in virtue of which this conditional obtains—facts that must obtain for the conditional to hold. This body of fact is not, however, something that the conditional explicitly asserts. It is the tacit, *enthymematic basis* on which the appropriateness of the conditional rests, although the conditional itself usually does no more than hint at what this basis of underlying fact actually is. When one asserts a conditional this enthymematical basis must belong to the manifold of one's beliefs: it must be accepted or at any rate supposed to be true.[63]

In other words, conditionals always need an *imperative,* a law or warrant that ensures the relationship between p and q. When, during the bailout crisis, Americans rehearsed the many possible effects of failing to pass the legislation, the one effect that became certain was that iconic American industries were "too big to fail." The point of the conditional syntax, in other words, was to affirm a new national imperative *not* to invite the public to mind its Ps and Qs. I will suggest next that this "too big to fail" imperative was radically threatening to the nation because it brought to crisis the "democratic paradox" of equality/liberty in the form of an incommensurability of state and market logics at a time when the United States had already lost important ethical ground in the war on terror.[64]

The Imperative Mood

Borrowing from Chantal Mouffe I describe the contemporary political rationality of the American nation-state as "liberal-democratic," which Mouffe defines as "a new political form of society whose specificity comes from the articulation between two different traditions":

> On the one side we have the liberal tradition constituted by the rule of law, the defence of human rights and the respect of individual liberty; on the other the democratic

tradition whose main ideas are those of equality, identity between governing and governed and popular sovereignty.[65]

Liberalism and democracy are "incompatible in the last instance" because the "liberal 'grammar' of equality, which postulates universality" will always come into conflict with "the practice of democratic equality, which requires the political moment of discrimination between 'us' and 'them.'"[66] Indeed, no matter how far the symbolic pendulum swings toward "liberalism"—from neoliberalism to libertarianism—the paradox is irreducible and, therefore, ineradicable.[67]

However, it is precisely because the American liberal-democratic tradition requires belief in the reconciliation of equality and liberty that these two imperatives are *paradoxical* and not just incompatible. Indeed, as Derrida reminds us, faith in the reconciliation or "infinite perfectibility" of freedom and equality is precisely what sustains contemporary democratic fantasy. "The idea of a promise," Derrida writes, "is inscribed in the idea of a democracy: equality, freedom, freedom of speech, freedom of the press – all these things are inscribed as promises within democracy."[68] However, because this "promise" is paradoxical it can never be fulfilled, only deferred indefinitely through the rhetorical production of new, provisional relationships between liberalism and democracy. Mouffe describes this rhetorical deferral as the "constant process of negotiation and renegotiation—through different hegemonic articulations—of this constitutive paradox" we call "liberal-democratic politics."[69]

One particularly significant moment of liberal-democratic renegotiation occurred in the late 1960s when the Federal National Mortgage Association (Fannie Mae) and the Federal Home Loan Mortgage Corporation (Freddie Mac) were "restructured" as GSE's or Government Sponsored Enterprises. As Megan Foley explains, these GSEs were thoroughly

paradoxical, requiring a simultaneous concern for "private interests" represented by the Market

and "public good" represented by the State:

> While its charter continued to require Fannie Mae to promote the public policy
> objective of supporting the American mortgage-lending industry it became a for-profit
> enterprise owned by private investors… these 'hybrid' government-sponsored
> enterprises were vexed by a structural conflict between serving the private interests of
> shareholders and the public good of citizens at the same time.[70]

That Fannie and Freddy's "structural conflict" did not appear as such for nearly 40 years is

both the effect of complex rhetorical "renegotiations" beyond the scope of this essay *and*

testament to power of American belief in a democratic promise that is utopian not paradoxical.

Indeed, not only did the paradox of GSEs *not* become problematic during the Reagan and

Clinton years but, in the words of Josh Hanan and Catherine Chaput, actually became a "new"

mechanism by which the "operative governing fantasy" of the contemporary US national

imaginary could function: "a market logic saturating both the state and civil society that

simultaneously critiques and embraces government interventionism."[71]

Once the "structural incompatibility" of the GSEs began to show in the early 2000s

America once again needed a strong rhetorical renegotiation. One such renegotiation, writes

Foley, was the shift from the metaphor of *partnership* that shored up the GSE to one of

conservatorship in the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. Foley describes

"conservatorship" as a metaphor of "family guardianship" that "both rhetorically and

materially positioned [GSEs] as the infantilized dependents of state supervisory guardians."[72]

What Foley describes as a "'time-out'' for the misbehaving institutions," Hanan and Chaput

describe as a "shared warrant of exceptionalism.[73] The singular accomplishment of the state's

discourse in support of the Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 (EESA), they explain, was to

put the market's irrationality into the service of "the smooth flows of neoliberal

governmentality."[74] By repeatedly insisting that the collapse of the financial markets was a remarkable hiccup in the infallible workings of supply-and-demand that demanded quick and extraordinary government intervention, the discourse surrounding the EESA once again shored up the public's belief in the liberal democratic promise that the market and the state could work together.

Attention to the bailout's syntax offers a different perspective on events than does Hanan and Chaput's thematic reading or Foley's metaphoric one. Having intimated in the preceding sections that something significant is at stake in the acceptance of "too big to fail" such that it had to be snuck into public discourse as the unconditional warrant for a slew of catastrophic conditionals, I would like to suggest here that "too big to fail" was—and continues to be—radically threatening to the always already fragile constitutive contradiction of state and market that shores up belief in the fantasy of a "truly" democratic America. "Too big to fail," in other words, emerged during the economic crisis as a trace in the Derridean sense: a mark of the incompatibility of the equality/liberty paradox that could only ever be rhetorically or imperfectly reconciled.

In stark contrast to the "cutthroat" governance of the post Reagan years, during the financial crisis it went without saying (and was also said often) that certain companies were so embedded in the US economy that "if they collapse, so may the whole system of finance."[75] Hidden in plain sight amongst the "hyperbole" and "dire scenarios" of the government's conditional rejoinder were "those words of justification now heard here: The companies were *too big to fail*."[76] Indeed, *Too Big to Fail* was selected as the title for HBO's well-received 2011 dramatization of the economic crisis.[77] "If there's such a thing as too big to fail," hypothesized a writer for *Bloomberg,* "no one qualifies more clearly than Fannie Mae and

Freddie Mac."[78] "Some institutions really are too big to fail, and that's the way it is,"

summarized a former Treasury and Federal Reserve Board economist, "there are no good

options."[79] And no options, rebuked *The Daily Star*, means no power: "the Western industrial

nations (including Russia) that previously dominated the world economy are no longer capable

of coming up with an effective response."[80]

When "too big to fail" emerged as a new national imperative, a contradiction that had

always existed at the heart of the national way of life was suddenly marked as such. Consider,

for example, this explanation of "the relationship between the state and the market" from

Spiked in 2009:

> On one hand, the state must restructure economic life and establish the basis for future
> growth, something that most governments recognize, at least rhetorically. On the other
> hand, the state also feels the pressure of political expediency and the need to maintain
> jobs and living standards. There is a contradiction between these two imperatives
> which, in the current period, most policymakers are reluctant to spell out.[81]

Of course, the *Spiked* author doesn't have it exactly right. Policymakers weren't "reluctant to

spell out" the "contradiction." The contradiction is constitutive; the necessary irreconcilability

of "future growth" and "living standards" is precisely what drives policy in the first place.

Rather, the sudden appearance of a fundamental incompatibility between State and Market

coined "too big to fail" *debilitated* policy by marking it as simply law and not Law.

The *imperative* mood is the mood "proper" to Law because it characterizes those

statements that express "commands or directives" and do not appear to require any external

warrant or ground (unlike a conditional that implicitly needs one).[82] As classically formulated

by Emmanuel Kant, an imperative is any utterance declaring a truth or *necessity* and not merely

a probability. Kant distinguished between hypothetical imperatives, in which an end is declared

to be the outcome of a mean, and the *categorical imperative,* infamously defined as, "act only

according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law." Kant elaborates in *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*:

> Because every practical law represents a possible action as good, and therefore as necessary for a subject practically determinable by reason, all imperatives are formulas of the determination of action, which is necessary in accordance with the principle of a will which is good in some way. Now if the action were good merely as a means to *something else,* then the imperative is *hypothetical;* if it is represented as good *in itself,* hence necessary, as the principle of the will, in a will that in itself accords with reason, then it is *categorical.*[83]

Notably, linguistics, which distinguishes primarily between conditional or hypothetical statements on the one hand (*irrealis*) and indicative or description statements on the other (*realis*), does not abide Kant's distinction between hypothetical and categorical. The imperative mood occupies both *irrealis* and *realis* terrains (and therefore contaminates both so as to render their difference in itself contingent); the imperative is thoroughly paradoxical because it enables the speaker to take a decisive stance on a future event only because of the certainty about the event that the imperative has itself produced.[84]

In the "Law of Genres," Derrida considers the law's ever receding locus of authority as a problem of syntax. Derrida begins his essay with two "utterances": "Genres are not to be mixed [ne pas meler les genres]. I will not mix genres."[85] Having released these "utterances" in "an open and essentially unpredictable series," Derrida suggests three interpretive possibilities for the series.[86] The first possible interpretation is that the utterances are merely descriptive or written in the *indicative* mode. "Without claiming to lay down the law or to make this an act of law," Derrida summarizes, "I merely would have summoned up, in a fragmentary utterance, the sense of a practice, an act or event."[87] The second possible interpretation is of "a foreshadowing description—I am not saying a prescription—the descriptive designation telling in advance what will transpire, predicting it in the constative mode or genre, i.e. it will happen thus." The third

possibility is of a "sharp order…the more authoritarian summons to a law of a 'do' or 'do not.'"[88] As is Derrida's way, the point of the idiomatic performance is to validate all and none of these interpretations. The law is precisely that which is always simultaneously descriptive, promissory *and* authoritarian and that which makes it possible for such distinctions to abide:

> What if there were, lodged within the heart of the law itself, a law of impurity or a principle of contamination? And suppose the condition for the possibility of the law were the *a priori* of a counter-law, an axiom of impossibility that would confound its sense, order, and reason? I have just proposed an alternative between two interpretations.[89]

Derrida is describing law's rhetorical structure. But he is also making a grammatical point about its syntactical structure. Contra Kant, the law is *not* a pure imperative but rather that which is simultaneously imperative *and* infinitive: *ne pas meler les genres* or "not to mix genres." Derrida's translator Derek Attridge explains that "the French phrase can be either a pure infinitive or an imperative and Derrida draws on this undecidability…An English equivalent would be 'No mixing of genres.'"[90]

Laws such as "not to mix genres" must take the infinitive *and* imperative form simultaneously; in doing so, they place the distinction between truth and command under erasure. The infinitive form is the linguistic mark of an imperative, which existed before and will continue to exist, like God, without regard for the particular. Unlike conditionals—which beg the question of the logic of relation between premise and conclusion—imperatives have sovereignty in the sense of Carl Schmitt's famous definition of a law capable of bringing about a suspension of law or a decision not grounded in a legal norm.[91] In the language of syntax, an imperative is *apodosis, protasis* and the warrant or logic connecting the two. Sovereignty, then, does not reside in the state or the ruling class but is a tropological effect through which particular relations of meaning come to function as irrefutable.

It is not, therefore, that "too big to fail" produced a new law—another factor to add to the existing laws of market and state—but, rather, that in operating as command, description, and promise simultaneously it marked the structure of Law as such. In doing so, "too big to fail" deconstructed the "law" of liberal democracy: liberty *and* justice for all. When we speak of "too big to fail" as an imperative or Law we are looking at something very different than an adjectival synonym for "systematically important financial institutions" or SIFIs, which emerged quickly during the bailout crisis as the preferred label for companies such as Frannie Mae and Freddie Mac. *Knowledge@Wharton* explains what it purports to be the non-difference between SIFI's and "too big to fail":

> SIFIs are financial institutions whose distress or disorderly failure, because of their size, complexity and systematic interconnectedness, would cause significant disruption to the wider financial system and economic activity.' Such banks thus are often called, unofficially, 'too big to fail.'[92]

According to this definition, "too big to fail" is the adjectival form of the SIFI noun: SIFIs are "too big to fail" and an institution that is "too big to fail" is a SIFI. Wharton, then, considers "too big to fail" only in its *adjectival* form. However, imperative or nounal forms do very different work from adjectival forms. Indeed, I would suggest that the growing insistence on "SIFI" as preferred terminology is testament to a collective desire to displace the nounal form with the adjectival form, which is nothing more than the "unofficial" colloquialism for a collection of things or objects to be managed as usual by the state/market dynamic.

"Too big to fail" doesn't simply describe *things*; it names a paradox of state and market that also goes by many other names including *democracy* as such.[93]

> [T]he undue risks that people are apt to take if they don't have to bear the consequences. In other words, if the money is free, why not spend it on a designer purse? If you know that you'll be bailed out, why not roll the dice on some tricky mortgage investments – or splurge on a home that you can't really afford?...The specter

of moral hazard haunts a basic tension in American life: to what extent are people responsible for their own problems?[94]

Also described frequently as the "free rider problem" or the "prisoner's dilemma," what this author describes aptly as the "specter of moral hazard" attempts to name the radical undecidability or spectrality we call *democracy:* that we never know who is properly democratic and who is not but democracy demands that it be this way.[95] As Jacques Ranciere points out, democracy is the one form of government that has no proper criteria for rule. Defined as rule by the *demos* or the people, which is "nothing more than the undifferentiated mass of those who have no positive qualification – no wealth, no virtue – but who are nonetheless acknowledged to enjoy the same freedom as those who do."[96] That we never know who belongs but must let them in anyway is the spectre of democracy as such that a particular iteration we call "liberal democracy" attempts to manage by promising two things simultaneously: a state, which *ensures* everyone's claim to belong, and a market, which *insures* those who claim to belong.

Conclusion: The "As If" of Law

Derrida reminds us in his reading of Kafka's parable "Before the Law" that deferral may indeed be the only choice when faced with the "*paradox* or *enigma* of being-before-the-law."[97] "The law is *interdit,*" writes Derrida, which is to say that the law is simultaneously prohibition and prohibited:

> It is prohibition: this does not mean that it prohibits, but that it is itself prohibited, a prohibited place. It forbids itself and contradicts itself by placing the man in its contradiction: one cannot reach the law, and in order to have a *rapport* of respect with it, *one must not* have a rapport with the law, *one must interrupt the relation.* One must *enter into relation* only with the law's representatives, its examples, its guardians. And these are interrupters as well as messengers.[98]

Because the law does not exist as such, subjects must relate to its "representatives." Here Derrida is considering these "representatives" *figurally* as guardians, just as they appear in Kafka's narrative, each "with his big sharp notes and long, thin, black Tartar beard."[99] " In the bailout discourse I read the Law's "representative" *syntactically*; the representatives are the conditional statements that both make the "law"—too big to fail—accessible and ensure that the Law is never accessed. The bailout's conditional statements are the law's "interrupters as well as messengers" and their ability to defer decision is as much a crisis of deliberative democracy as it is an act of symbolic mercy for a subject who both desperately desires and fears her own access to the Law.

A syntactic reading of the bailout invites us to extend to the financial crisis the same generous read that Derrida extends to the countryman standing before the gatekeepers of the Law. Facing what former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan described as "by far the greatest financial crisis, globally, ever," perhaps America chose the financial catastrophe yet to come precisely in order to defer the symbolic catastrophe underway.[100] Seemingly endless scenarios of what *could* happen or what *might have* happened became the willed alternative to the paralysis of a state/market paradox that could no longer hold itself together. Thus it makes sense that one could claim at the height of the financial panic simultaneously that the plan probably wouldn't work *and* should probably pass. John McCain described the bailout as "something that all of us will swallow hard and go forward with," and then-Democratic Presidential nominee Barack Obama said, "My inclination would be to vote for it, with the understanding that I'm not happy about it."[101] Such statements of "resignation"—to borrow Levine's words from the opening epigraph—mark the constitutive paradox of "the anonymous subject of the law" who, when given the possibility of access to the Law, "decides to prefer to

wait."[102] "He decides," writes Derrida, "to put off deciding, he decides not to decide, he delays and adjourns while he waits."[103]

Deferral, in short, is the gift and the curse of the "as if" or the subjunctive voice that is the subject's only access (and simultaneously non-access) to a Law that only ever appears retroactively from a "logical inference" between "what if" and "might happen." Derrida describes the "grammatical structure" of the subject before the Law:

> The sequence scans neatly. Even if it looks as though there is a simple narrative and chronological juxtaposition, the contiguity and selection of details lead to a logical inference. The grammatical structure of the sentence implies the following: as soon as (*als*, at the moment when) the man from the country sees the doorkeeper with his big, pointed nose and his abundant black hair, he decides to wait, he judges that it is better to wait…through a strange and at the same time a completely natural consequence (we might say uncanny, *unheimlich*), the man makes a resolution, a decision.[104]

The extensive inventory of what could or might happen that circulated during the financial crisis are isomorphic to Kafka's extensive inventory of the physical characteristics of the gatekeeper. Preoccupation with the potential consequences of accessing the Law retroactively justifies the subject's decision to defer, to continue doing the only thing that can be one, which is to wait or, put differently, to continue to act "as if." It is in this justification to wait that the Law is redelivered as that which we will get to, eventually.

Thus, bailout deliberations over "what if" may have been as much undemocratic cautionary tales about rocking the boat—more of the same "state of emergency" discourse—as they were merciful deferrals of the collapse of the American way of life or *subjunctive* imaginings that permit us a life together.[105] Subjunctive phrasing, writes Charles Scott, indicates or betokens indeterminate contingency, possibility, and mood." Scott continues:

> The subjunctive mood subjoins indeterminacy with a determinate state of affairs and expresses something by reference to an elision, a "gappiness," which is said to be in the way something happens. This grammatical trope integrates by signifying an elision of factual literalness and direction in factual events.[106]

Applying Scott to the realm of the visual, Barbie Zelizer suggests that the subjunctive voice of the photograph "creates a space of possibility, hope, and liminality through which spectators might relate to images."[107] Zelizer defines the subjunctive voice as the modal structure that,

> Qualifies the word of action by situating it within the hypothetical…Usually signified in verbal language by auxiliaries such as 'might,' 'could,' or 'should,' by the substitution of 'would have' for 'had' and by the use of 'if' clauses…the condition under focus is transformed from a reality to a future certainty into a probability made possible by someone else's desire, emotions or imagination.[108]

For Scott and Zelizer the subjunctive voice invites subjects to occupy an *irrealis* mood of alterity or "someone else's desire, emotions or imagination" that is not confined the realities of space or time—the moment or site of the speech or the photograph—and, in doing so, creates the condition of possibility for acting otherwise.

At stake in these subjunctive utterances is what Scott calls the "nonfactual dimension of what is public" or the "*appearing*" quality of public discourse—the "voice of eventuation that does justice to the incompletion of whatever is public that we wish to understand."[109] In other words, there is an ambiguous gap between the "what if" and the "could happen" where the possibility for acting otherwise emerges. For Zelizer and Scott the name of this gap is the subjunctive and it is the site of radical ethical possibility. However, as I've shown over the course of this essay, this "gap" always gets filled enthymematically by an imperative that moves the reader from the *protasis* to the *apodosis*.   And when the name of that gap is "too big to fail," the subjunctive is pushed into the service of the status quo.

Although "too big to fail" was an opportunity for the re-articulation of the relationship between the state and market that we call the American Dream it instead became the warrant-turned-imperative for what many described as "triage for the nation's hemorrhaging financial system."[110] However as I have suggested over the course of the essay, "more of the same" may

have been the best that the nation could muster.[111] Suspended in an impossible aporia between

the law of the market and the state and with no other law or "intelligible principle" by which to

ground new policy, the nation took refuge in catastrophic future narratives.[112] As described by

a writer for *Forbes* magazine:

> At the end of the day though, the test was: Is the cost of the action more or less than the cost of inaction? When the cost of inaction is potentially so damaging to our economy and to every American citizen, then it's an easy decision to make even if it's an unpleasant decision to make.[113]

In short, the bailout worked because Americans acted "as if" long enough that an impossible or

"unpleasant" decision in the *present* was made palatable by catastrophic convictions in the

future. The irony of the conditional mood, then, was that as it brought a hypothetical future

closer it deferred or put off until later a decision haunting the present. My suggestion as I bring

the essay to a close is that it is just as possible to read this "deferral" as a deeply ethical act as it

is to read it as more of the same in the neoliberal state of emergency because both readings are

authorized by the "as if" or *subjunctive voice* of the conditional mood.

Notes

[1] Bruce E. Levine, *Get Up, Stand Up: Uniting Populists, Energizing the Defeated, and Battling the Corporate Elite* (Chelsea Green Publishing, 2011), 26.

[2] For especially influential arguments about the relationship between crisis, neoliberalism, and the state of exception see Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (University of Chicago Press, 2008); Aihwa Ong, *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty* (Duke University Press, 2006); Clinton Rossiter, *Constitutional Dictatorship* (Transaction Publishers, 1948); Elaine Scarry, *Thinking in an Emergency (Norton Global Ethics Series)* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2012); Barbara Biesecker, "No Time for Mourning: The Rhetorical Production of the Melancholic Citizen-Subject in the War on Terror," *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, no. 1 (2007): 147–69, doi:10.2307/25655263; Joshua Gunn, "Father Trouble: Staging Sovereignty in Spielberg's War of the Worlds," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 25, no. 1 (March 2008): 1–27, doi:10.1080/15295030701849332; Joshua S. Hanan and Catherine Chaput, "Stating the Exception: Rhetoric and Neoliberal Governance During the Creation and Passage of the

Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008," *Argumentation & Advocacy* 50, no. 1 (Summer 2013): 18–33.

[3] On September 29, 2008, Congress rejected the $700 billion Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP) package designed to rescue Wall Street. After the Down Jones Industrial average fell 778 points in response—the largest point drop in history—Congress quickly passed TARP as part of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act (EESA), which President George W. Bush signed into law on October 3, 2008. In December of 2008, over $17 billion of TARP loans were authorized for General Motors and Chrysler. In February of 2008, President Obama signed into law the billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) or "stimulus package" estimated to have spent approximately $831 billion dollars to jumpstart the economy after the recession. While this is obviously a very reductive summary of the events of the financial crisis, it serves to illustrate the point that all of this was a very big, and very expensive, deal. For a detailed timeline of events consult "The Financial Crisis: A Timeline of Events and Policy Actions," *Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis*, n.d., http://timeline.stlouisfed.org/index.cfm?p=timeline.

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[5] Michael Corcoran and Stephen Maher, "Media Continue Bank Bailout Advocacy," *Extra!* 23, no. 10 (October 2010): 6–7.

[6] Dean Baker and Kris Warner, "Going All Out for Bank Bailout," *Fair.org*, January 1, 2009, http://fair.org/extra-online-articles/going-all-out-for-bank-bailout/; AP, "Obama: Country Facing 'Economic Crisis of Historic Proportions,'" *Fox News*, November 22, 2008, sec. Politics, http://www.foxnews.com/politics/2008/11/22/obama-country-facing-economic-crisis-historic-proportions/.

[7] Peter S. Goodman, "Too Big to Fail?," *The New York Times*, July 20, 2008, sec. Week in Review, http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/20/weekinreview/20goodman.html.

[8] Officially, "mood" is a grammatical category in the study of syntax specifically concerned with the way in which particular verb morphologies and word arrangements enable speakers to express attitudes or dispositions towards the subject at hand. In this essay I use the terms interchangeably.

[9] E. Foley and B. Coates, *Homework for Grown-Ups: Everything You Learned at School and Promptly Forgot* (Crown Publishing Group, 2009), 13.

[10] Foley and Coates, *Homework for Grown-Ups*, 13.

[11] Neil Barofsky, "'Band-Aid on a Gaping Chest Wound:' Former TARP Official Talks Crisis Politics with RT," *RT*, March 7, 2013, sec. Op-Edge.

[12] Nicholas Rescher, *Conditionals* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2007), 1.

[13] Rescher, *Conditionals*.

[14] Aristotle, *On Interpretation*, trans. E.M. Edghill, The Internet Classics Archive, 2009, http://classics.mit.edu//Aristotle/interpretation.html.

[15] Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style*, 158.

[16] John Poulakos, "Toward a Sophistic Definition of Rhetoric.," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 16, no. 1 (1983): 36.

[17] Andreas Sebastian Hoffmann, *Mandative sentences: a study of variation on the basis of the British National Corpus* (Universitat Zurich, 1999), 79.

[18] Richard Bove, "Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac Must Not Die," *CNBC*, March 25, 2014, http://www.cnbc.com/id/101522658.

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[20] Olga Vlasova, "The Mandative Subjunctive In American English: A Corpus-Based Study on the Use of Mandative Constructions" (The University of Oslo, 2010), 23, https://www.duo.uio.no/handle/10852/25257.

[21] Joan Bybee, Revere Perkins, and William Pagliuca, *The Evolution of Grammar: Tense, Aspect, and Modality in the Languages of the World*, 1 edition (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1994).

[22] Modals habituate the verb to what has already been, thereby anchoring the choice that the verb makes in the certainty that whatever already is, should be. This kind of guarantee is precisely what Derrida argues must be sacrificed for a decision worth the name to be made (Gift of Death, 70).

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[24] Hoffmann, *Mandative sentences*, 79.

[25] Stan Collender, "The Worst Thing About Tim Geithner's Book," *Forbes*, June 1, 2014, sec. Investing, http://www.forbes.com/sites/stancollender/2014/06/01/the-worst-thing-about-tim-geithners-book/.

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[27] Jesse Eisinger, "Geithner Book Reveals Consensus, Not Vision, During Financial Crisis," *The New York Times*, May 21, 2014, sec. DealBook, http://dealbook.nytimes.com/2014/05/21/geithner-book-reveals-consensus-not-vision-during-financial-crisis/.

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[29] "How Washington Failed to Rein In Fannie, Freddie," *The Washington Post*, September 14, 2008, sec. Business, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/13/AR2008091302638.html.

[30] Adam Davidson, "Global Nightmare: If Fannie And Freddie Had Failed," *National Public Radio*, September 9, 2008, sec. All Things Considered, http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=94424809.

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[32] Tom Ramsey, "If…, Then…," Department of Mathematics, *University of Hawaii at Manoa,* http://www.math.hawaii.edu/~ramsey/Logic/IfThen.html.

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[37] Reverend Eric Ivler Rubin and Cyril Mychalejko, "Bailing out Wall Street: The Ease of the Disease Is More Seductive Than the Cure," *OpEdNews*, September 28, 2008, http://www.opednews.com/articles/Bailing-out-Wall-Street-T-by-Reverend-Eric-Ivle-080928-783.html.

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[45] Goodman, "Too Big to Fail?"

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[47] AP, "Obama: Country Facing 'Economic Crisis of Historic Proportions.'"

[48] Barack Obama, "Text of Obama Speech on the Economy," *CNBC*, January 8, 2009, http://www.cnbc.com/id/28559492.

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[60] Timothy F. Geithner, "Welcome to the Recovery," *The New York Times*, August 2, 2010, sec. Opinion, http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/03/opinion/03geithner.html.

[61] Bradford Vivian, "Neoliberal Epideictic: Rhetorical Form and Commemorative Politics on September 11, 2002," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 1 (February 2006): 1–26.

[62] Žižek, "LRB · Slavoj Žižek · Don't Just Do Something, Talk."

[63] Rescher, *Conditionals*, 7.

[64] Chantal Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox* (London; New York: Verso, 2009).

[65] Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 3.

[66] Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 5.

[67] Even the purest of libertarian dogma is contaminated by the equality problem. "Some of the current threats to liberty…probably cannot be [managed] without significant state intervention of some kind or another" and "'advances in liberty bring bigger government,'" Tyler Cowen Response Essays March 11 and 2007, "The Paradox of Libertarianism," *Cato Unbound*, accessed January 26, 2015, http://www.cato-unbound.org/2007/03/11/tyler-cowen/paradox-libertarianism.

[68] Jacques Derrida, "Politics and Friendship: A Discussion with Jacques Derrida," *Center for Modern French Thought, University of Sussex*, December 1, 1997, 5, http://www.sussex.ac.uk/Units/frenchthought/derrida.htm.

[69] Mouffe, *The Democratic Paradox*, 45.

[70] Megan Foley, "From Infantile Citizens to Infantile Institutions: The Metaphoric Transformation of Political Economy in the 2008 Housing Market Crisis," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 98, no. 4 (November 2012): 398.

[71] Hanan and Chaput, "Stating the Exception," 20. I've purposefully misappropriated Hanan and Chaput's definition here to define *liberal democracy* not *neoliberalism* as Hanan and Chaput originally intended. The relationship between liberal democracy and neoliberalism is beyond the scope of this essay but suffice it to say that I consider "neoliberalism" a signifier that is selected when criticism has given up in advance the liberty/equality or state/market aporias. Although I conceded that this distinction is difficult to maintain when, as Mouffe has written, "neo-liberal dogmas about the inviolable rights of property, the all-encompassing virtues of the market and the dangers of interfering with its logics constitute nowadays the 'common sense' in liberal-democratic societies," *The Democratic Paradox*, 6.

[72] Foley, "From Infantile Citizens to Infantile Institutions," 397.

[73] Foley, "From Infantile Citizens to Infantile Institutions," 397; Hanan and Chaput, "Stating the Exception," 20.

[74] Hanan and Chaput, "Stating the Exception," 20.

[75] Goodman, "Too Big to Fail?"

[76] "The Doctors' Bill," *The Economist*, September 25, 2008, http://www.economist.com/node/12305746.

[77] Curtis Hanson, *Too Big to Fail*, Drama, (2011).

[78] Gimein and Atwater, "Fannie and Freddie."

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[81] Frank Furedi, "Why the State Cannot Save the Economy," *Spiked*, June 18, 2009, http://www.spiked-online.com/newsite/article/state_and_economy/7042.

[82] Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style*, 157.

[83] Immanuel Kant, *Groundwork for the Metaphysics of Morals*, ed. and trans. Allen W. Wood, Rethinking the Western Tradition (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2002), 31.

[84] Hidemitsu Takahashi, *A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of the English Imperative: With Special Reference to Japanese Imperatives* (John Benjamins Publishing, 2012).

[85] Jacques Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority," in *Acts of Religion*, ed. Gil Anidjar (New York: Routledge, 2002), 55.

[86] Derrida actually says there are "two" interpretive possibilities: that of a constative or indicative (which includes the promise or prediction) and an imperative. He eliminates the "promissory" mode by explaining that the future tense of 'I will not mix genres' "does not constitute a commitment. I am not making you a promise here, nor am I issuing myself an order or invoking the authority of some law to which I am resolved to submit myself. In this case, the future tense does not set the time of a performative speech act of a promising or ordering type." However, that does not invalidate that the third is a valid interpretive possibility because linguists regularly argue that the future tense is not actually a proper tense in English but rather a modal auxiliary because anything said to be occurring in the future is speculative and therefore conditional, "Force of Law," 55.

[87] Derrida, "Force of Law: The Mystical Foundation of Authority," 56.

[88] Derrida, "Force of Law," 56.

[89] Derrida, "Force of Law," 57.

[90] Jacques Derrida, "Law of Genres," in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), 223.

[91] Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (University of Chicago Press, 2006).

[92] "The Tension between 'Too Big to Fail' and Moral Hazard Continues," *Knowledge@Wharton*, January 11, 2012, http://knowledge.wharton.upenn.edu/article/the-tension-between-too-big-to-fail-and-moral-hazard-continues/.

[93] *Knowledge@Wharton* is mistaken to describe the bailout as a "tension between 'too big to fail' and moral hazard" because these proper names are isomorphic. Re-inscribing these synonyms into a dualism through the spatial metaphor of "tension" marks another attempt within the mass media to make sense of "too big to fail" within an existing political and economic framework, "The Tension between 'Too Big to Fail' and Moral Hazard Continues."

[94] Shaila Dewan, "Moral Hazard: A Tempest-Tossed Idea," Business Day, *New York Times,* February 25, 2012, http://www.nytimes.com/2012/02/26/business/moral-hazard-as-the-flip-side-of-self-reliance.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0.

[95] Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (Routledge, 2012).

[96] Jacques Ranciere, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy* (U of Minnesota Press, 2004), 8.

[97] Jacques Derrida, "Before the Law," in *Acts of Literature*, ed. Derek Attridge (London: Routledge, 1992), 187.

[98] Derrida, "Before the Law, 203 - 204."

[99] Derrida, "Before the Law," 197.

[100] David Lawder, "Greenspan: U.S. Recovery 'Extremely Unbalanced,'" *Reuters*, February 23, 2010, http://www.reuters.com/article/2010/02/23/us-usa-greenspan-idUSTRE61M4B120100223; Joshua Zumbrun, "Greenspan Says Crisis 'By Far' Worst, Recovery Uneven (Update1)," *Bloomberg*, February 23, 2010, http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?pid=newsarchive&sid=a1aLQ51QXlDA&pos=3.

[101] Kiely and Kirchhoff, "Leaders Back Historic Bailout; 'Now We Have to Get the Votes.'"

[102] Here Derrida notes that the translation of Kakfa from the German often mis-reads this statement as, "he decides that it is better to wait" but the literal translation is actually further delayed by the interjection of a "preference" to wait," Derrida, "Before the Law," 195.

[103] Derrida, "Before the Law," 195–196.

[104] Derrida, "Before the Law," 195.

[105] Formally, the subjunctive is a very specific and largely outmoded clause type that Olga Vlasova defines as "finite but tenseless containing the plain form of the verb" (80). Vlasova offers the following examples of the subjunctive: "Workers demand(ed) that the manager resigns" (19). The subjunctive is a unique form of conditional that does not necessarily make explicit use of modal auxiliaries or the "if p, then q" structure. However, Vlasova's example can easily be rewritten to meet those conditions: "*If* workers were the decision makers, *then* the workers *would* demand the manager's resignation." The crucial difference between the subjunctive and conditionals generally is that subjunctives express a "wishful notion or a proposition contrary to fact," Philip B. Corbett, "Save the Subjunctive!" After Deadline, *The New York Times,* September 11, 2012, http://afterdeadline.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/09/11/save-the-subjunctive-2/?_r=0. In other words, unlike conditionals generally, the subjunctive explicitly traffics in impossible matters. It is this aspect of wishfulness or unreality, improbability or doubt in the present that causes such a close relationship between the subjunctive and the "as if." As Corbett writes, "one cue to use the subjunctive is the phrase *as though* or (preferred) *as if.* Either phrase signifies that what follows is contrary to fact: *Secretary Kuzu acts as if she were (not was) in the White House. The actor looked as if he were sick.*"

[106] Charles E. Scott, *Living with Indifference* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007), 141.

[107] Barbara Zelizer, "The Voice of the Visual in Memory," in *Framing Public Memory*, ed. Kendall Phillips (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama, n.d.), 163, http://repository.upenn.edu/asc_papers/58.

[108] Zelizer, "The Voice of the Visual in Memory," 163.

[109] Scott, *Living with Indifference*, 141.

[110] Binyamin Appelbaum and David Cho, "Bank Rescue Would Entail Triage for Troubled Asset," *The Washington Post with Bloomberg*, February 2, 2009, sec. Business Policy, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/02/03/AR2009020303782.html.

[111] Jonathan Weil, "Obama's Bailout Bunch Brings us More of the Same: Jonathan Weil," News *Bloomberg,* November 11, 2008, http://www.bloomberg.com/apps/news?sid=aNCFKvAMUQ6w&pid=newsarchive.

[112] John Schwartz, "Some Ask If Bailout Is Unconstitutional," *The New York Times*, January 16, 2009, sec. U.S. / Politics, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/01/16/us/politics/16challenge.html.

[113] "Behind The Scenes Of The Bailout," *Forbes*, accessed January 26, 2015, http://www.forbes.com/2009/05/29/neel-kashkari-bailout-entrepreneurs-finance-wharton.html.

CHAPTER 3

TRAUMATIC NATIONALISM AND THE PAST IMPERFECTIVE IN THE GROUND ZERO

MOSQUE CONTROVERSY

> For the moment, in its atrocious suffering, the US has the moral
> advantage... Shortly, no doubt, it will squander even that.
>
> ~Terry Eagleton, *New York Review of Books*[1]

In May of 2010, the Lower Manhattan Development Board (LMDB) approved plans to transform

a Burlington Coat Factory that was severely damaged on 9/11 into Cordoba House, a 13-story

Islamic community center. Sponsored by the Cordoba Initiative, which worked to improve

relations between Muslim and Western countries, the project promised significant economic and

political benefits. Conservative political commentator Laura Ingraham even applauded its

"fantastic" and "moderate approach to Americanizing and assimilating Muslims."[2] After 9/11,

the U.S. State Department endorsed Cordoba Initiative co-founder Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf's

international speaking tours for similar reasons.[3] Aside from its political and economic benefits,

moreover, Cordoba House was well within its legal and Constitutional rights to develop private

property and pursue the free exercise of religion.

Yet suddenly, as the Board was poised to cast its vote on the first of May, Cordoba House

became widely controversial. As a reporter for *The Guardian* observed, "Millions are hopping

mad over the news that a bunch of triumphalist Muslim extremists are about to build a 'victory

mosque' slap bang in the middle of Ground Zero."[4] Accusations and calls for relocation

emanated from a vast array of public figures, including Democratic New York House

Representatives Michael Arcuri, Steve Israel, Tim Bishop, and John Hall along with former

Vermont Governor Howard Dean, Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, and Illinois Governor Pat Quinn.[5] Unexpectedly, over *70 percent* of Americans of all party affiliations agreed that, "the developers do have a Constitutional right to build"; however, given that the proposed renovation project was within two blocks of Ground Zero, "proceeding with the plan would be an insult to the victims of the attacks on the World Trade Center."[6] Again and again, U.S. public opinion censured Cordoba House for the sake of what Juan Williams described as a "thumb in the eye to so many people who lost their lives and went through the trauma there."[7] Surprisingly, the liberal-leaning *Council on Foreign Relations* concurred, entreating builders to consider "the trauma of 9/11" that "is still a raw and unhealed emotional wound in American society."[8] Even President Obama invoked the "deeply traumatic event" of 9/11 during a Ramadan speech defending Cordoba House's constitutional rights.[9]

Journalists, media personalities, political commentators, and state and local officials had not frequently used the word "trauma" when characterizing the national psyche in the immediate aftermath of the terrorist attacks. In fact, the word "trauma" was not uttered even once over the course of the many addresses that President George W. Bush delivered in the wake of 9/11.[10] On the contrary, only nine days after the attack, Bush described Americans as a people whose grief had already "turned to anger and anger to resolution." Whereas "grief recedes with time and grace," said Bush, "our resolve must not pass."[11] The American public quickly internalized the Bush administration's *cri de coeur:* anything but business-as-usual and the terrorists win.[12] Why, then, had trauma suddenly become the word of choice to describe the impact of 9/11?[13] What accounts for its emergence and staying power as shorthand for the national psyche after 9/11? How can we better understand the degree to which this rhetoric of trauma redefined common sense notions of economic development, private property, and religious freedom?

Serious contemplation of these questions offers rhetorical scholars much more than the argumentative mechanics of what has mistakenly been dismissed as a disingenuous controversy or, as *Salon* magazine put it, right-wing "fear mongering."[14] While members of the right-wing blogosphere and the *New York Post* were certainly the earliest and most vocal opponents of Cordoba House, even the most virulent conspiracy campaign cannot adequately account for the popular uptake of both *opposition* to Cordoba House and, more importantly, the *logic* by which such opposition approaches sense. To that end, I take the sudden and volatile eruption of controversy surrounding the so-called "Ground Zero mosque" as indicative of a dramatic and on-going shift in the rhetorical practices through which "the people" is being remade.[15]

Specifically, I suggest the controversy marked a point of emergence for an increasingly hegemonic *rhetoric of traumatic nationalism*[16] with three distinguishing characteristics: a temporal shift to the "has been" that speaks of 9/11, not in the past perfect *tense* as that which *happened,* but in the past imperfective *aspect* as that which *has happened* and, in doing so, ensures that the psychic experience of 9/11 continues to happen; a corporeal spatial logic of the remainder that measures space by connecting the *remains* of the victims of 9/11, thereby re-producing a nation in crisis; and a righteous moralism evident across the national political spectrum that collapses speech and action in a besieged economy of repetition. Contrary to Terry Eagleton's assertion in the opening epigraph, then, I argue that the United States has not squandered its moral advantage after the attacks but instead pressed it into the service of a national and bipartisan (anti)politics of victimage that allows America to defer, in the words of George W. Bush, its "special calling" as the "great republic that will lead the cause of freedom."[17] The implications of this deferral for rhetorical studies, I suggest in my conclusion,

are twofold. First, the field would benefit from more diverse and nuanced understandings of the tropological and figural constructions by which the temporality of place, and therefore space, is constructed as part of the production of "the people." Second, our tendency as scholars to take for granted trauma as a psychic cause rather than reading it as an *effect* of collective rhetorical practice warrants reconsideration, especially in the post-9/11 U.S. rhetorical situation. Such reconsideration will better position rhetorical theorists and critics to identify, evaluate, and suggest ways to counteract the logic of victimage that organizes the citizens' relationship to the nation.

The Consuming Syntax of the "Has Been"

The syntactical shift to the "has been" or the past imperfective allows traumatic nationalism to re-present a certain experience of 9/11—one ripe with suffering, loss, and trauma—in the present. Put differently, the past imperfective accomplishes by other means what foreign policy expert James Lindsay once said was the key to preserving post-9/11 patriotism: "If Americans waver as [war] casualties mount, all they would have to do is watch the video of men and women jumping from the 100th floor of the World Trade Center."[18] It is easier to understand what I mean by the syntax of the imperfective if we first consider linguist Bernard Comrie's account of the imperfective as an *aspect*. Unlike *tense*, which locates an event in time relative to another event, *aspect* allows speakers to communicate how a particular event is experienced or "the way in which the event occurs in time."[19] Comrie explains:

> [The past imperfective] looks at the situation from inside, and as such is crucially concerned with the internal structure of the situation, since it can both look backwards towards the start of the situation, and look forwards to the end of the situation, and indeed is equally appropriate if the situation is one that lasts through all time, without any beginning and without any end…[the] event is opened up, so that the speaker is now in the middle of the situation.[20]

Because the moment of utterance interrupts rather than follows the event, the imperfective communicates an incompleteness or lack of closure. More than the imperfective aspect proper, our concern here is an imperfective syntax, or rhetorical temporality, that structures and informs an entire way of making sense of 9/11, democracy, and U.S. citizenship at the turn of the decade. Plans for Cordoba House did not come after but rather *disturbed* 9/11 thereby effecting its perennial presence. "I am still trying to find the remains of my son," cried an interviewee in *The Ground Zero Mosque: Second Wave of the 9/11 Attacks*, a widely-circulated and exemplary protest film directed and produced by Pamela Geller in cooperation with "Stop Islamization of America" and the "American Freedom Defense Initiative."[21] While 9/11 may properly belong to the past tense as that which happened, the imperfective conjures an experience of a wound that exceeds the standard designations of past and present. 9/11 did not simply happen but rather has happened, is still happening, and continues to happen. Frequently describing themselves and the nation as "haunted," "consumed," and "possessed" by 9/11, protestors convey a temporality without futurity and position the controversy as a momentary disruption in the larger, on-going event of 9/11. Even project *supporters* gravitated toward the disturbed syntax in their accountings of the controversy. *Washington Post* columnist Susan Jacoby suggested that the center reopens "what remains a deep wound"[22] while Khan, in her apology for the unintended offenses the project caused, explained to the BBC that Cordoba House "has opened up a wound that we did not realize had not healed."[23] The syntax of the imperfective is easily put to use as testimony, the prized rhetorical mode of trauma,[24] because of its apparent ability to re-present an absent experience and, in doing so, to manufacture a new archival object. In turn, explains James Berger, this object "unavoidably enters and compels further texts—testimonies to events they cannot witness."[25]

When subjects testify to their experience they re-position themselves as citizen-survivors, expressing and, thus, constituting a certain truth about that attacks and knowledge about trauma in the present. As demonstrated in the following narration from the Christian Action Network's well-publicized protest film *Sacrificed Survivors: The Untold Story of the Ground Zero Mega-Mosque*, the imperfective works alongside the testimonial mode to produce not simply one message among others, but an unmediated accounting of visceral, enduring suffering:

> When I look at Ground Zero I think this was the last site of their life on earth that they had before they went to their death. And, it's just painful. I was lucky enough to see them a few days before [the terrorist attacks]… That was the last I saw of them. The pain of losing half your family just doesn't go away so when you come to this place and you think about it, it hurts.[26]

A number of small but significant rhetorical moves are at work to produce the authenticity characteristic of testimonial, including understatement ("just"), self-narration ("I look," "I think") and the rambling prose that characterizes of stream-of-consciousness utterances. Knitting each of these together is a mixed syntax of "was" and "is" that gives rise to the dominant motif of testimony's: enduring presence. Continually plagued by loss, the testifying couple is positioned as irrefutable evidence that the pain of 9/11 remains as strong as ever.

In turn, the audience is positioned by testimony to take the on-going suffering of 9/11 victims as the index of the state of collective life. To borrow Claire Cisco King's words, the imperfective "mark[s] and privilege[s] a particular kind of subject: the survivor of or witness to suffering…whose stories…are said to matter above all others."[27] "Let's give the families of 9/11 victims a voice about where this mosque should be placed," announced Representative Charlie Malancon (D-La.), "because putting one near Ground Zero isn't appropriate."[28] As *Newsweek* summarized, "Ground Zero may be valuable real estate in a crowded city; it may belong, theoretically, to all New Yorkers, or even all Americans…But in some important and

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incontrovertible way…the sprawling site belongs to [victims] and 'the families.'"[29] The 3,000

victims of the terrorist attack, along with the loved ones they left behind and who continue to live

the trauma of 9/11 in every moment, constitute the American citizen proper. A deep sense of

guilt and obligation to the dead and wounded they left behind became the measures of

patriotism; deference rather than identification is the social logic of traumatic nationalism.

"Common sense and respect for those who lost their lives and loves ones gives sensible reason to

build the mosque someplace else," declared Democratic Senate hopeful Jeff Greene.[30] Writing of

the Cordoba Initiative's dedication to pluralism and public empowerment, radical Leftist blogger

Jim Cook exclaimed, "The Cordoba House…must be sensitive to the feelings of the families of

victims of the attacks of September 11, 2001! What a lucky thing it is, then, that the Cordoba

House does appeal to those feelings."[31] Decent Americans of all political persuasions actively

avowed the traumatic impact of 9/11 and paid deference to the *bona fide* American: the 9/11

victim-citizen who insists upon perpetual suffering. The majority of U.S. citizens who lack such

credentials gain legitimacy only by deference and protection. This is the operating assumption of

a Cordoba House opponent who looked to the cameras during a rally and declared, "3,000 pairs

of eyes are looking down on us right now and they're saying 'will you be our voice'?" At the

same rally, a speaker who survived the crash of the South Tower stood before the crowds and

admitted, "it cause[es] me pain to know that I'm alive and many of my friends and comrades

died."[32]

　　　The most tremendous effect of the past imperfective over the course of the controversy is

the inscription of the private, ephemeral speech of 9/11 survivors into collective, semi-permanent

public place. Only then does collective consciousness have the material referent necessary for the

difficult work of reconstituting a national identity that recognizes itself as perpetually mired or

compulsively present in the founding moment of trauma. As one protestor said in *Sacrificed Survivors,* "If this mosque actually gets built it will be like 9/11 all over again for these families. The pain will be the same pain. We will feel this American experiment is failing."[33] Even the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), who worked vigilantly after 9/11 to protect the rights of Muslim-Americans, opposed the project on behalf of the continued presence of 9/11: "We are ever mindful of the tragedy which befell our nation there, the pain we all still feel – and especially the anguish of the families and friends of those who were killed on September 11, 2001."[34] "Feelings are still so raw on the issue," echoed a senior Democratic political operative in the *Washington Post,* "it's best to say nothing."[35] Rawness also drove Sarah Palin's Twitter plead: "Peaceful New Yorkers, pls refute the Ground Zero mosque plan if you believe catastrophic pain caused @ Twin Towers site is too raw, too real."[36] Other protestors put "too raw, too real" to other use, arguing the project comes "too soon" and is "too close to Ground Zero, and it doesn't take into account the sensitivities."[37] Too close, too soon; too raw, too real; these clichés repeatedly immerse the American historical present in the trauma of 9/11, collapsing time and space so that the past is present, and the particular geography of the terrorist attacks are brought near, here, and everywhere. The next section further investigates the past imperfective's shift from a temporality to a spatial logic as the controversy uses the figure to re-imagine the United States as a nation measured in the remainders and reminders of the attack on the World Trade Center. Specifically, I suggest that the Cordoba House controversy refueled the citizenry's sense of crisis through the motif of consecration and its corresponding traumatic spatial logic of the "remainder," a way of making sense of place that marks out boundaries in remnants and reminders of tragedy and remakes the nation in the perennially wounded image of Ground Zero.

The Corporeal Logic of Consecrated Space

All sides of the controversy operate from the same premise: Ground Zero is a sacred

place. Before President Obama sanctioned the Cordoba House on Ramadan, he first conceded,

"Ground Zero is, indeed, hallowed ground."[38] New York City Mayor and the project's most

vocal advocate, Michael Bloomberg, likewise admitted that the site demanded "special

sensitivity."[39] "Many people must have been out sick the day the teacher taught prepositions,"

quipped *New York Times* columnist Clyde Haberman, as "Nobody, regardless of political

leanings, would tolerate a mosque *at* Ground Zero. Near is not the same."[40] But Haberman's

sarcasm belies what his argument confirms: prepositions work differently under conditions of

traumatic nationalism. Proximity, closeness, distance; such concepts are no longer a matter of

inches and feet, but the effect of a taken-for-granted line of reasoning that drives Ground Zero's

consecration. As political commentator Charles Krauthammer argues in a *Washington Post* op-ed

entitled "Sacrilege at Ground Zero,"

> When we speak of Ground Zero as hallowed ground, what we mean is that it belongs to
> those who suffered and died there – and that such ownership obliges us, the living, to
> preserve the dignity and memory of the place, never allowing it to be forgotten, trivialized
> or misappropriated.[41]

Krauthammer posits the hallowedness of Ground Zero's as irrefutable. But what he presents as

given is, in fact, being made; the sacredness of Ground Zero is constituted rhetorically in the

writing. How? Three rhetorical operations—topification (or the manifestation of abstract

concepts in a geographic location), figures of parallelism, and analogy— work congruously to

evoke material referents of sacrifice, thereby producing what Krauthammer demands to be the

unique criteria governing consecrated places.

For religious historian Mircea Eliade, consecration requires "an irruption of the sacred

that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it

qualitatively different."[42] Therefore, the material manifestation of sacredness in place—the body parts and remnants from 9/11 that still litter Lower Manhattan—offer indubitable proof of the hallowedness of Ground Zero, or what Eliade might describe as communion with the divine. When Anderson Cooper asked Geller "what's the difference, two blocks, four blocks?" she replied, "it's not blocks, that building was part of the attack, a part of the plane crashed through the roof."[43] Ensuring that remainders are always reminders, Geller has declared what constitutes the raw material for the remaking of the post-9/11 nation. Across the controversy, remainders enact a spatial logic that re-distributes power and privilege to those who have suffered most. Therefore, when Kathleen Hall Jamieson told CBS that the Cordoba House controversy concerns our lack of "a clear sense of what's within the boundary" and "a symbol whose meaning is physically divorced from the actual space," she correctly identified the stakes, but missed the rhetorical point.[44] The Cordoba House controversy did not concern "actual space" or "a clear boundary" but demonstrated a shift in the very logics that make boundaries and space qualify as "actual" or "clear."

Topification, or "the translation of an abstraction into a geographical locus," ensures that Ground Zero keeps the remnants of what is absent and in so doing breaks new rhetorical ground.[45] If the imperfective makes it possible to re-present absence in time, topification preserves that absence in place. Sometimes, Ground Zero appears in the controversy as a character participating in the debate. Supporters and opponents of the project regard Ground Zero as a place that weeps, suffers, and feels; it both "*burns* as a *festering* wound of Islamic fanaticism"[46] and "*cries* out to us to reject the senseless hatred and radical religious fanaticism."[47] More often, however, the corporeal and rhetorical dimensions of the site are less obvious. In "Sacrilege at Ground Zero," Ground Zero neither acts nor speaks, but is instead acted

upon, spoken for, and "made sacred" by way of contact with a quality or presence—the miraculous, the transcendent, nobility, sacrifice, "the blood of the martyrs," and the "indescribable suffering of the innocent." As a catalogue or repository of collective trauma made comparable to Auschwitz or Gettysburg, Ground Zero works as what Joan Faber McAlister calls a "kairotope," "space-time" or "place-moment"—a rhetorical site of convergence between *kairos* and *topos* in which "timeliness, opportunity, material conditions, and the effects of place intersect to re-position the democratic citizen-subject in contemporary America."[48] Ground Zero is not simply ground—dirt or earth—but ground that justifies the privatized, uncritical, and conservative practices of traumatic citizenship.

Working within and alongside topification, figures of parallelism naturalize connections among objects and ideas with no necessary relationship such that ground zero can to be taken up as Ground Zero. As Geller demonstrates, prepositions placed in parallel patterns suggest that we intuitively know a sacred place when we see it: "This is 45 Park Place. This is Ground Zero… That building is Ground Zero. That building was hit and partially destroyed by the planes that went into those towers. There were human remains in that building. That building is Ground Zero."[49] Prepositional phrases supplant proper names, lending a kind of obviousness to a set of associations between the proposed Cordoba House site and Ground Zero that are anything but. The antithetical parallelism of the argument—the alternation between "this is" and "that building"—concretizes those associations: "this is that building." From this construction, Geller derives the warrant for her central argument: if remnants of the 9/11 tragedy (the human remains of victims and the pieces of the hijacked planes) have touched a place, then it is sacred. While parallelism allowed Geller to consecrate sixteen city blocks, it allowed Krauthammer to consecrate centuries:

> A place is made sacred by a widespread belief that it was visited by the miraculous or the transcendent (Lourdes, the Temple Mount), by the presence there once of great nobility and sacrifice (Gettysburg), or by the blood of martyrs and the indescribable suffering of the innocent (Auschwitz).[50]

A single phrase, "a place is made sacred," governs each element of the subsequent series while the passive phrase "by the" begins each successive clause. This one sentence systematizes consecration as the trans-historical consequence of any tragedy. In turn, a sense of guilt and obligation accompanies the rapid accrual of conjunctions, nouns, and verbs: nobility *and* sacrifice, the blood of martyrs *and* the suffering of the innocent, suffered *and* died, dignity *and* memory. Prepositional phrases and infinitive verbs also demand deference to the "hallowed site of Ground Zero" in a public statement from Democratic gubernatorial hopeful and Florida Chief Financial Officer Alex Sink:

> Like all Floridians, I'm grateful for our constitutional right to freedom of religion…when it comes to what to build close to the hallowed site of Ground Zero, I think it ought to be up to the people of New York to decide. It is my personal opinion that the wishes of the 9/11 families and friends must be respected. They are opposed to this project and I share their view.[51]

Parallel constructions performs the burden of sacred place, admonishing audiences across the political spectrum, whether left-wing, centrist, or right-wing, to take up that burden as their own.

Analogy, the last of the rhetorical maneuvers under consideration, re-produces that burden as a national injunction by linking distinct, historically specific sites of tragedy through a common, ahistorical traumatic tenor. When Newt Gingrich told *Fox & Friends*, "Nazis don't have the right to put up a sign next to the Holocaust Museum in Washington. We would never accept the Japanese putting up a site next to Pearl Harbor. There's no reason for us to accept a mosque next to the World Trade Center," the conservative spokesman inserted Ground Zero into a chain of equivalences that extends across national space and historical time.[52] Linking together events with no necessary relationship, Gingrich's analogy simplifies, condenses, and transfers

traumatic rhetorical resources from some of the most tragic events in collective memory to 9/11,

thereby protecting it from political scrutiny. Whereas Gingrich took these analogies for granted,

New York City Republican Representative Peter King made their analogical grounds explicit in

his comparison between the Cordoba House controversy and a conflict over a proposed Catholic

convent near Auschwitz: "I'm not saying the legal position is the same in Poland as it is in New

York but I'm saying the moral outrage that was shown over that…this feeling of outrage that you

would have something of another religion constructed on what was considered sacred ground."[53]

King notably avoided comparing the conflicts explicitly. Instead, he articulated the criteria for

their association: moral outrage and feelings. Democratic Governor of Illinois Pat Quinn

performed similar moral topography in a surprising public statement denouncing Cordoba

House: "I think we should be sensitive to people on Planet Earth in these special places whether

its [sic] Auschwitz, Pearl Harbor or Ground Zero, that they not be subject to political controversy

that could cause great harm."[54] Even fierce critics of the comparison, such as *Huffington Post*

contributor Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie, had trouble denying its validity:

> The Holocaust is analogous to nothing because it is utterly unique… I agree that Ground
> Zero is a sacred place… One can reasonably argue that anything that detracts from the
> memory and the message of the site is out of place there… But that is where the
> similarities end.[55]

While Yoffie would have liked the Holocaust to be a singular national tragedy, he nevertheless

re-articulated the chain of equivalence that connects it to 9/11: sensitivity, trauma, and moral

outrage—the rhetorical materials of traumatic nationalism.

The appearance of "remainders" seemingly everywhere transformed the meaning

of public space in ways that rendered religious freedom barbaric. As Nelson Warfield, a

Republican strategist told *Fox News*, "The concept of an Islamic community center in

close proximity to the scene of the greatest attack by Muslim extremists on this country is

hard to delineate in terms of lines on a map."[56] Of course, that depends on the map.

Shown in Figure 1, the New York City Fire Department (FDNY) map tracking the

discovery of 9/11 human remains strategically makes manifest the hierophany, or logic of

sacredness, sanctifying Ground Zero. As the *New York Post* put it, the map shows that

"the gruesome discovery of human remains stretched as far as 1,135 feet from the middle

of the trade center."[57]

Tragic map shows just how close human remains were found to the proposed site of an Islamic cultural center.

Red dots represent remains found

360 feet
403 feet
348 feet
1,032 feet
1,135 feet

Site of proposed mosque

■ Remains recovered: 21,812
■ Remains identified: 12,771
TOTAL VICTIMS: 2,752

1. Mosque to nearest remains: 348 feet, found atop post office on Barclay Street
2. Mosque to center of World Trade Center site: 1,032 feet
3. Mosque to 7 WTC, destroyed on 9/11: 403 feet
4. Remains found farthest

from center of WTC: 1,135 feet, at West and Carlisle streets
5. Remains found farthest north of the center of WTC: On Fiterman Hall, 360 feet from the proposed mosque site

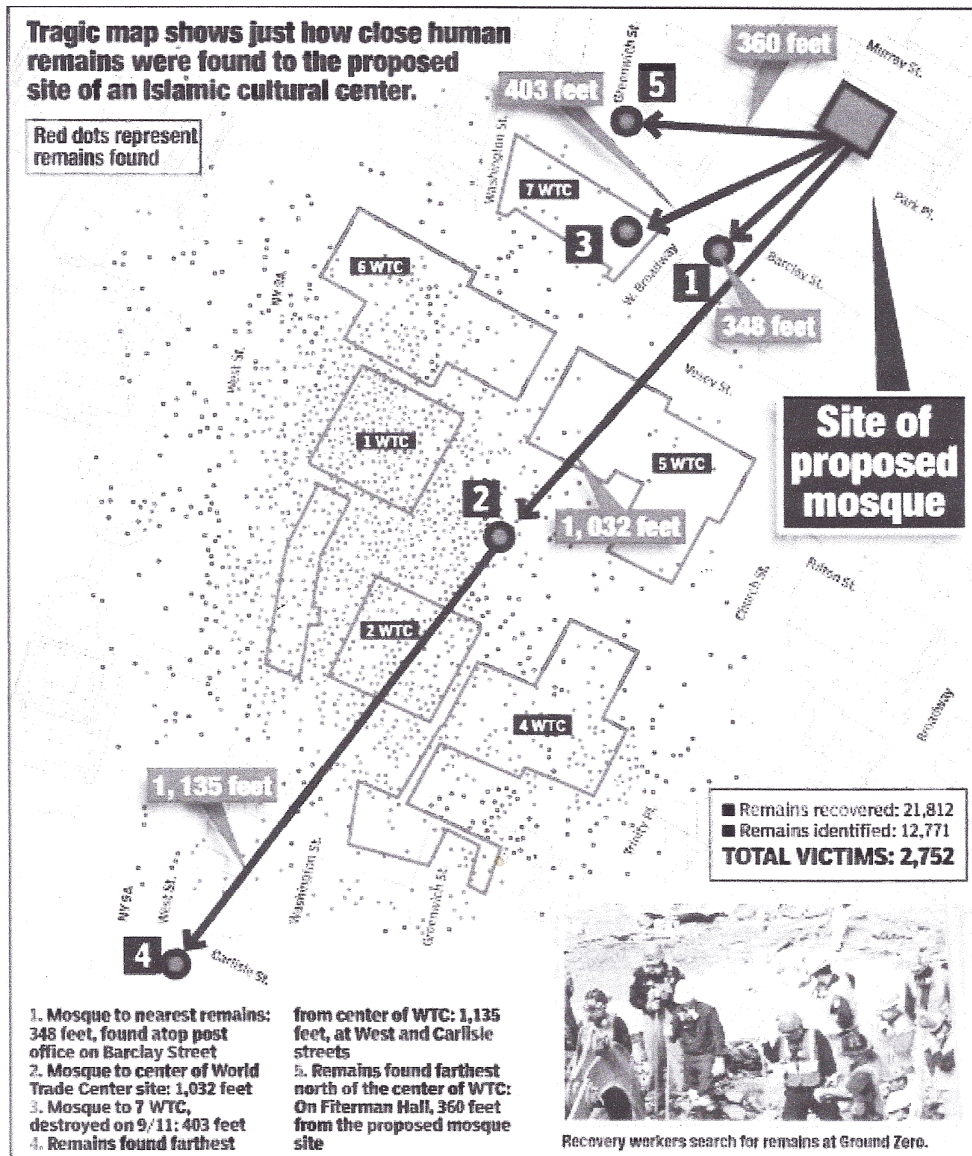Recovery workers search for remains at Ground Zero.

Fig. 3.1

The layout of the map visually orients the reader to a way of thinking about space—and subsequently country—that feels constricted, wounded, and fragile. As Tim Barney explains, "Maps are ideological blueprints. They spatialize the language of politics in a melding of signs and symbols."[58]

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The FDNY map does not neutrally report the physical state of Ground Zero but politically constructs the psychic state of the union. Its iconography accomplishes this synecdochal substitution of part (Ground Zero) for whole (America). Icons, according to Barney, are "rhetorical choices" with "immense political importance in defining the boundaries of power, as each is matched with the *entire* territory in which it is situated."[59] The most important rhetorical choices in this map are its two legends (as opposed to the single legend of a traditional map). The legend in the upper left hand corner purports to fulfill the usual purpose of a legend—to guide readers through a particular visual code—by stating directly that the red dots (shown in black on Figure 1) "represent human remains found." In contrast, the legend in the lower right hand corner has no identifiable referent; its effect is the arithmetical and geometrical enactment of the past imperfective. An apparently simple column subtraction problem, easily comprehendible by the reader, unwittingly performs a deft political calculus. First, the legend presents the stark contrast between the 21,812 remains recovered and the meager 12,771 identified. Second, the inclusion of the victim count in the traditional position of the "sum" makes clear that the math does not need to add up because trauma does not abide by traditional democratic accounting; wrongs inflicted on a minority, not majority rights, become the index for decision-making. The insert of the map works to similar effect, animating place with the enduring presence of 9/11 as it depicts workers actively searching for remains that could be anywhere. Moving from the keys of the map to its iconography, black boxes create a productively ambiguous relationship between the tallies specified in the legend. The small black rectangles denote each of the seven towers of the World Trade Center and the larger black squares, numbered 1 – 5, mark the locations with remains. Yet another accounting in the lower left hand corner highlights the far reaches of Lower Manhattan where remains have been found:

the Barclay Street post-office, CUNY's Fiterman Hall, the World Financial Center, and "the corner of West Street and Carlisle Street." Through the selection, combination, and positioning of icons, the map re-produces Ground Zero as a corporeal place literally sanctified by body parts, counted out piece-by-piece.

Because a constricted, still-suffering Ground Zero exemplifies American public space, the nation can no longer risk the offenses of dissent and deliberation. Transforming remainders, into reminders, into the hard evidence of a new way of life, each red dot on the FDNY map presents, according to the *Post,* "chilling proof that Ground Zero stretches well beyond the boundaries of the World Trade Center site."[60] Only a "partial glimpse," the map induces readers to move from specific place general space, suggesting that remains may spread far and wide.[61] The map ceases to be simply a representation of a place and becomes a particularly illustrative symptom of a new collective common sense about space; it conveys new rules about how power should and must be distributed in the post-9/11 nation. Sam Okoth Opondo & Michael J. Shapiro describe this as the cartographic production of a regulative ideal:

> To the extent that maps partition and distribute static social space, institutionalized or power-invested cartographic practices present regulative ideals predicated on notions of the "right" relationship between bodies, spaces, and times…and determine what bodies are recognizable and what they can and cannot do within the spaces and times they occupy.[62]

Deference to remains that could be anywhere demanded that good Americans insist upon, as Christopher Caldwell of the *Financial Times* put it, the distinction between "what is constitutional and what is appropriate."[63] Indeed, this displacement of a politics based on rights by a political moralism of what *is* right constitutes the most remarkable and dangerous accomplishment of traumatic nationalism. I suggest, in the final section, that while various sides of the controversy identified different threats to the American way of life, they used the same two

moralistic rhetorical strategies to do so: an economy of vehement repetition and a righteous insistence on the distinction between impartial speech that merely reports and hostile speech that wounds. The effect is a besieged present and already-lost future against which the past imperfective can continue to assert itself in service of an (anti)political moralism, which legal theorist Wendy Brown describes as "the tiresome tonality and uninspiring spirit of Right, Center, and Left."[64]

The Besieged Moralism of Repetition

In *Politics Out of History,* Brown investigates the "reproachful moralizing sensibility" that dominated U.S. political life in the late twentieth century.[65] Characterized by fetishizing powerlessness, personalizing and externalizing systemic oppression, and clinging desperately to long-discredited transcendental values such as progress or history, Brown reads moralism as a "symptom of political paralysis in the face of radical political disorientation and as a kind of hysterical mask for the despair that attends such paralysis."[66] Moralistic discourse, then, is: conservative, seeking always to protect what was; anti-political, choosing abstraction at the expense of careful contextualization; and righteous, denying its own constitution by the discourse against which it reacts. Often too easily dismissed as the domain of right-wing politics, Brown insists these impulses have come to dominate American political life generally, and that denying this state of affairs is its own kind of moralism. In this section of the chapter I suggest the controversy re-invigorated the national imaginary through the third characteristic of traumatic nationalism: a bipartisan moralism that finds its warrant in the givenness of America's besiegement at the hands of a hostile enemy discursively produced through an economy of vehement repetition and the insistence that the doing is in the saying. Moralism, then, is not

merely the name of a right-wing strategy of opposition but the political *logic* by which such opposition approaches sense and, in doing so, becomes part of the common sense.

America is under attack now and has been since 9/11. That is the basic premise or, more accurately, message of the protest film *The Ground Zero Mosque.* From the beginning, the film assaults viewers with warnings of impending attack, simulating urgency and imminence. In quick succession, different faces and voices sound the same alarm: "Wake up America! They are coming to build a mega mosque!" Visceral footage of the 9/11 attack—replete with crumbling towers, screaming victims, "raining bodies," and thick black smoke alongside bright orange flames—is spliced among clips of media coverage announcing the decision to build "a mosque near the former World Trade Center."[67] From the opening credits, the film acts as if the 9/11 attacks and the 'Ground Zero Mega Mosque' are two moments in the story of a hostile Islamic takeover of the United States, rather than discrete, historical events. As Geller explains elsewhere: "[Cordoba Initiative] said that they would be breaking ground on September 11, 2011 for the 15-story monster mosque… It was redundant. They had broken ground on September 11, 2001."[68] Reinforcing Geller's historical revisionism, protestors in the film continually warn: "This mosque is a continuation of the attack on all of us!" The retroactive effect of the film's narrative is that Cordoba House—Islam's "victory shrine"—becomes a sign of America's perpetual besiegement or, put more reproachfully by Newt Gingrich, "an anti-American act of triumphalism on the part of a radical Islamist who is going to go around the world saying 'see, the Americans are so dumb that after we destroyed two of their greatest buildings they allow us to build a mosque near there and that tells you how weak and how ignorant America is.'"[69]

Notably, Cordoba House supporters also adopted the basic premise that the country has been under attack since 9/11. They too argued that American principles are under siege

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everywhere, from Republicans and 9/11 families hijacking the tragedy for political gains to cowardly, "bed-wetter" Democrats and an ignorant, weak-minded public.[70] A liberal blogger for *Crooks and Liars* despaired, "Ugh. Why is it so difficult to find Democrats not eager to bow to the craven fear-mongering of Republican rivals?"[71] Ron Paul was more precise, blaming the false controversy on "neo-conservatives who…never miss a chance to use hatred toward Muslims to rally support for the ill conceived preventative wars."[72] Amy Sullivan of *TIME* Magazine's blog, "Swampland," indicted Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid specifically for yielding to the "you have the right; you just shouldn't do it" position, which Sullivan complained is "perfectly in line with public opinion on the mosque issue…shaped by round-the-clock arguments on Fox News."[73] An unidentified blogger for *The Economist* also held the public responsible, citing with approval a Canadian article that criticized the "shame of American skittishness" surrounding the controversy.[74] "One would think," the blogger concluded, "that the proud denizens of the home of the brave world would behave more bravely, and would not need Canadian columnists to tell them to grow spines."[75]

In supporting different policy arguments, these representative texts turn away from struggles against systematic and institutional injustice and toward a more politically feeble blame-game; this is the characteristic displacement of moralism. Name-calling, sweeping generalizations, and martyrdom stand in for productive argument, entrenching rather than challenging existing relations of power. As Brown explains, the moralistic retreat from the political realm both invites and depends upon a certain kind of reification: "the contemporary tendency to personify oppression in the figure of individuals and to reify it in particular acts and utterances, the tendency to render individuals and acts intensely culpable—indeed prosecutable—for history and for social relations."[76] In the Cordoba House controversy

specifically, this moralistic reification depends on what Kenneth Burke calls "the power of endless repetition."[77]

For Cordoba House opponents, repetition helped to ensure that "there is always some sort of connection between mosque and terrorism."[78] Robert Spencer, Director of *Jihad Watch*, has built a career naturalizing the relationship of Islam to religious conquest and mosques:

> The placement of mosques throughout Islamic history has been an expression of conquest and superiority over non-Muslims. Muslims built the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock on the site of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem in order to proclaim Islam's superiority to Judaism. The Umayyad Mosque in Damascus was built over the Church of St. John the Baptist, and the Hagia Sophia Cathedral in Constantinople was converted into a mosque, to express the superiority of Islam over Christianity.[79]

Spencer's reoccurring parallel construction (verb, predicate, infinitive) emphasized that Muslims build over Judeo-Christian sites to proclaim the superiority of Islam. The relationship between Islam and intolerance, the Quran and radicalism, and the mosque and terrorism, appear as necessary rather than contingent, essential rather than rhetorical. In a more direct use of repetition, Geller's protest film strategically displays passages from the Quran alongside ominous music to posit the hostility and single-mindedness of Islam: "Slay the idolaters wherever you find them…And slay them wherever you find them…Then take them and kill them wherever you find them." Synecdoche is at work alongside repetition because a particular idea dispersed across the Quran—assassinating non-believers—is made to stand in for Muslim ideology generally. The verbatim repetition of the single phrase "wherever you find them" at the end of each sentence both adds vehemence to the message and formally constructs total annihilation as the end-goal of Islamic doctrine. A speaker at an anti-Cordoba House rally operationalizes the same combination of repetition and substitution:

> On September 11th *it wasn't New York City that was attacked, it was America that was attacked, it was freedom that was attacked.* And *we can't forget,* not only what happened, not only the murderous intent that killed 3,000 Americans, *we can't forget for a moment* that they wanted to kill 50,000 Americans. So *we can't ever forget* that murderous intent.[80]

Repeating the passive phrase "was attacked" links together New York City, America, and freedom as the speaker gains ascension to a debatable assertion (freedom was attacked) by building upon a relatively indisputable premise (New York City was attacked) and changing the target in ways conducive with besiegement. If the first part of the message shores up consecration through repetition, the second part puts repetition to use in a corresponding motif of besiegement. Twice the message attributes blame for 9/11 to a "murderous intent" and, through the familiar *topos* of "never forget," ensures that this enduring Muslim hostility continues to loom over the country.[81] The slight temporal modifications of "we can't forget"—not ever, not for a moment—emphasize the interminable temporality of 9/11 and the importance of the vigilant, persistent re-living of trauma in the besieged imaginary. In the midst of such rhetorical common sense, building Cordoba House is tantamount to renouncing the American way of life.

For Cordoba House supporters, repetition reinforced the belief that virtuous citizens, always and everywhere under attack, will suffer. Elevating the Cordoba House controversy to an issue of national security, Jack d'Annibale of the *Huff Post Blog* advised progressives to use repetition to "protect America":

> Say, with numbing repetition, the following truths: that progressive policies have the Taliban on the run, al-Qaida crippled, Iran isolated, nukes secured, terrorist plots squashed and pirates crushed. Compare that to the recklessness of conservatives who got us into the wrong war against the wrong enemy at a high cost.[82]

The Agenda Project, a pro-Cordoba House non-profit, unknowingly demonstrated the effectiveness of d'Annibale's advice, aiming its ire at opponents that succeed by "creating, perpetuating, or condoning a national atmosphere of hatred and fear."[83] Supporters of The

Agenda Project's YouTube campaign agreed with both its repetitive premises and moralistic conclusions. "With this debate," commented one supporter, "we see the true enemies of our Constitution. The very people attacking this mosque are the true enemies of our Constitution."[84] In the same thread, the use of repetition allowed even an uplifting comment to read as besieged and desperate: "Be an example for anyone who thinks they are better than you because of who they pray to. Be a better person, be more tolerant, be more self-fulfilled, don't let a person's faith bury you. Rise above those who wish to sink you or convert you."[85] Whereas comments on YouTube enacted a state of virtuous besiegement and virtuosity through near-verbatim repetition of nouns, adjectives, and infinitive verbs, Ron Paul did so through rhetorical questions: "Is the controversy over building a mosque near ground zero a grand distraction or a grand opportunity? Or is it, once again, grandiose demagoguery…Are we not overly preoccupied with this controversy, now being used in various ways by grandstanding politicians?"[86] Paul's use of repetition reified "politicians" as the villainous figures almost solely responsible for all manner of political ailments. Amateur political blogger David Dayen concurred, explaining dejectedly that, "Democrats control the White House, both houses of Congress, and are nonetheless directed by events, completely reactive, and unable to cut through the media clutter."[87]

In a moralistic retreat from politics, Cordoba House supporters appeared surrounded by enemies on all sides, whether they were cowardly Democrats, grandstanding politicians, or underhanded Republicans. This excerpt from left-wing Daily Kos, which simultaneously abandons and resuscitates, through martyrdom, the abstract principle of tolerance, illustrates such effects of repetition: "The national brouhaha over the $100 million Muslim Park51/Cordoba House proposal is not an anomaly but rather the culmination of an alarming downturn in America's mood, its discourse, and even our former ambitions as a beacon of religious and

political tolerance."[88] Put more directly by a supporter of The Agenda Project: "From Jews, Slavs and Communists to Muslims, immigrants and gays, history will repeat itself.[89] By using repetition to enumerate the seemingly endless sources of anguish, Cordoba House supporters shored up the state of emergency by retreating to a deterministic moralism in which all progress is always already defeated.

In addition to repetition, a second rhetorical move worked to associate the Cordoba House controversy with a besieged state of emergency: the deployment of what Judith Butler describes as "the performative, a figure of sovereign power that governs how a speech is said to act— as efficacious, unilateral, transitive, generative."[90] The opposition insisted that speech acts supporting Cordoba House quite literally enacted the hostile assault on U.S. soil that Americans have feared since 9/11. Opponents of Cordoba House insisted time and time again that the speech of project supporters was more than speech: it was, instead, physical action with real effects. Cordoba House is not merely a building, but also a "slap in the face" that "dances on the graves of the dead." More often, it is "a supremacist act,"[91] an "inflammatory gesture,"[92] and "an anti-American act of triumphalism."[93] The mosque "provokes"[94] and "creates."[95] It is a "sharia recruiting center"[96] whose "creeping annexation"[97] would "serve as local branch office of the pan-Islamic terrorist offensive against the west."[98] The center had "every intention of undermining and taking over the American constitutional system"[99] and stood "as a 'bold affirmation' of the same Quran cited by the Muslim extremists who brought down the World Trade Center and killed thousands of American civilians in 2001."[100] For conservative political commentator Diana West, "if Ground Zero, a focal point of Dar al-Harb (House of War) since 9/11, is reconstructed with a 'world class' Islamic center, the transformation to Dar al-Islam

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(House of Islam) becomes symbolically clear."[101] "The terrorists have won, ladies and gentleman," announced Rush Limbaugh when he learned of plans to build Cordoba House.[102]

Unlike the injurious speech of supporters, Cordoba House protestors vowed to simply tell the truth, insisting that they merely describe what was immediately apparent to "everybody with a grain of sense and eyes in our head."[103] As the narrator of *Second Wave* declared, protestors are "people of truth," whose speech is constative in the simplest sense, and therefore stands in stark contrast with Cordoba House supporters, whose speech is both a provocation and a violation. Opponents refuted accusations that their own speech performed injury against Muslims, 9/11 victims, or American constitutional principles. Writing for *The Washington Post,* visiting columnists Morton A. Klein and Daniel Mandel explained, "'Islamaphobia' is a misleading term…Those who have knowledge of [Islam]—or, in the case of New Yorkers, direct experience—do not suffer from an irrational fear of an imaginary threat, which is what the word 'phobia' denotes… Islamism is a standing scourge and threat."[104] Or, put more directly on the blog *Bare Naked Islam*: "It isn't Islamaphobia when they really ARE trying to kill you."[105] Geller regularly distinguished between the harmful speech of supporters and the unadulterated truth spoken by opponents:

> It's not Islamaphobia. It's Islamarealism…what we've witnessed is this constant clubbing of the American psyche, sort of clubbing them on the head with this nonsense. Because what we are really witnessing is candoraphobia. You know truth is the new hate speech. And just telling the truth is a radical act.[106]

Replacing "speech" with another verb, "clubbing," Geller attributed action and injury to the speech of project supporters. In contrast, the phrase "we are really witnessing" mimics truth telling because in trauma discourse "witnessing" privileges the victim as one who speaks the truth. Finally, Geller's neologisms— "Islamarealism" and "candoraphobia"— draw attention to Islamaphobia as a pathology that naïve critics out of touch with reality habitually deploy.

The sovereign performative enabled supporters to insist that the "hate" speech spewed by Cordoba House opposition enacts a hostile assault on constitutional principles as well as minds, spirits, and bodies. After a Muslim cab driver was stabbed at the height of the controversy, The Agenda Project released a "public service video" entitled "Hate Begets Hate," which held "politicians of both parties…directly responsible for the attack on this man and for the increasing violence against Muslims across the country."[107] The verb "begets" in the title of this video personifies hate speech, endowing it with a fecundity or generative ability "to call into being" other speech acts and, more importantly, to have material effects in the world.[108] The result is not political speech, but legal and moralistic "speech codes," which, in Brown's words, "preempt argument with a legislated and enforced truth. And the realization of that patently undemocratic desire can only and always convert emancipatory aspirations into reactionary ones."[109] Cordoba House supporters vowed to simply tell the truth, insisting that they merely reported on offenses rather than constituted a moralistic retreat from political life. Ron Paul, for instance, dismissed the controversy as "political demagoguery [that] rules when truth and liberty are ignored."[110] d'Annibale relied on both the sovereign performative and repetition when he suggested that the controversy was a "[c]hance for Democrats to connect with the American people on the most vital truth of all…it's President Barack Obama who has a strong, smart, principled plan to protect every American man, woman and child today, tomorrow and in the years to come. It's time to shout this truth from the rooftops."[111] By articulating the Cordoba House cause to the radically depoliticized and decontextualized transcendentals of "truth," "security," and "future," d'Annibale occupied the position of the moralizer par excellence: one who "refuses the loss of the teleological and becomes reactionary: clinging without logical ground to the last comforting frame in the unraveling narrative."[112] Whether the United States is under siege from the political

right or left, home or abroad, the desire to restrict speech—either through the collapse of speech and action or an apolitical embrace of anything that (provisionally) guarantees "the status of the true, the status of the good"—betrays moralistic, conservative longings for protection from power, politics, and the radical contingency of making a life together.[113]

The paradoxical and self-defeating structure of moralism allows "non-opponents" of the controversy—those wishing to find a depoliticized middle ground with no repercussions—to cultivate a strategic political impotence more effective that is more effective than any particular signifier or carefully plotted argument. A distinction must be made "between those who are urging a compromise location…and those who would be outraged if the project proceeded as planned."[114] Following his rousing and supportive speech on Ramadan, President Obama relied on this very distinction between the "wisdom" of the project on which he "was not commenting" and "will not comment" and his explicit acknowledgement of "the right people have."[115] "Politics," explained a spokesperson for the White House, "was not a factor" in Obama's statement.[116] Once relegated to the moral, apolitical domain of "wisdom," Cordoba House no longer demands what Brown considers the benchmark of ethical and political life: "measured, difficult, and deliberate action that implicates rather than simply enacts the self."[117] The primary public exigence is no longer decision-making—which is now a private affair—but rather to "diffuse the heat of the debate."[118] As a spokesperson for Representative Joe Sestak (D-PA), a nominee for Pennsylvania U.S. Senate seat, acknowledged, the role of public officials is to lay out the rules, not "to say what is best."[119]

Conclusion

Under conditions of traumatic nationalism, the "bridge building" mission of Cordoba House is rendered dangerous to the (newly reconstituted) American way of life. As Martin Peretz

of the liberal magazine *The New Republic* wrote: "This is not the occasion to be 'building bridges' which cannot be built or which cannot be built at least right now. In any case, 'building bridges' is the kind of cant which right now means weakening the American core."[120] Of course, the American core is given shape and content by the discourses that constitute it and over the course of the controversy, the American core was carefully refashioned by way of traumatic nationalism. National space and national character were reorganized around a politics of victimage that distributes power along an axis of suffering. As the appearance of several anti-mosque protests in 2010 demonstrated, that orientation had little to do with principles of constitutional democracy.[121] Instead, to borrow Theresa Ann Donofrio's words, traumatic nationalism serves to "privilege a narrative of American innocence and dismiss entreaties to engage in a larger conversation about the US's role in international politics."[122]

More than a right-wing media conspiracy or naïve public opinion, the preceding pages suggest that traumatic nationalism's defeat of Cordoba House re-packaged and returned to "the people" the patriotic fantasy enjoyed during the early years of the war on terror. Specifically, I suggested that the constituent characteristics of traumatic nationalism—the syntax of the "has been," the consecration of place and space, and repeated performances of besieged moralism— offer the United States a new kind of patriotic fervor in the wake of the failed war on terror. As such, traumatic nationalism is an exemplary rhetorical configuration through which victimage has emerged as the dominant political logic of post-9/11 U.S. national identity. The implications of traumatic nationalism's hegemonic rise holds two important implications for rhetorical scholars.

First, the essay has plotted the construction of a unique syntax—the past imperfect—that offers a productive supplement to the recent interest among rhetorical scholars in embodied or

material place.[123] Rhetorical investigations of place have made significant inroads in understanding place as a "social production"[124] or, in Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook's words, "a rhetorical phenomenon…imbued with meaning and consequences."[125] A complex syntax of space and time, the past imperfective demonstrates how a particular rhetorical figure might re-construct the experience of a particular place and articulate it to an entire way of thinking about space and the nation that demands deference and obligation to the victims of 9/11 even at the expense of upholding the most foundational Constitutional principles.

The second implication of this analysis is that rhetoricians can benefit by analyzing the rhetorical dimensions of trauma, especially in post-9/11 U.S. culture. When trauma appears as the apparent reason for the existence of a particular discourse, then critics should investigate the role of trauma as a rhetorical *strategy* rather than assuming that it is merely a rhetorical exigence. The intersection of rhetorical studies with historical and cultural traumas has produced excellent research in the field and I do not recommend that one should regard trauma as merely rhetorical.[126] Rather, like McGee's "people," traumas "exist in objective reality and as social fantasies at the same time" and should be read as such.[127] Such an approach neither denies the tragedy of actually existing trauma nor suggests that 9/11 was not traumatic. Instead, it calls for suspending the taken-for-granted status of what we intuitively understand as collective traumas, holding them up to rhetorical and political scrutiny. In this way we approach historical trauma and their effects more respect, not less. As Jacques Derrida reminds us, "what remains 'infinite' in this wound, is that we do not know what it is.[128]

For a few months in the summer of 2010 America enjoyed a coherent national identity mired in 9/11's traumatic pervasiveness. By the fall, however, the Cordoba House controversy disappeared from the 24-hour news cycle as quickly as it had appeared. Traumatic nationalism

and the past imperfective syntax on which it depends had done its rhetorical job, halting plans for

Cordoba House's development in the name of sensitivity to the victims of 9/11. Although *an*

Islamic community center at 45 Park Place announced its grand opening in 2011, Geller was

right to declare triumphantly on her blog, "We have successfully halted the project."[129] Cordoba

House had been renamed the thoroughly de-politicized "Park51" and did not include anything

like a mosque or place of worship in its design. Rauf and Khan stepped down as the project's

organizers and Park51 has since been unable to raise the funds necessary to accomplish its

original vision, remaining modest and unobtrusive. But the "has been" could not secure

American national identity forever.

The final chapter of the dissertation tracks the ascendance of a different national *ethos,*

one that returned the nation, with an important difference, to the rule of procedure and politeness

that had in many ways been suspended during the vitriolic controversy over Cordoba House. By

September of 2010, the public perception of the controversy had changed from a polarizing

litmus test of friend and enemy to what a writer for the *Christian Science Monitor* described as

"an uncivil war between sense and sensibility" in which passionate convictions had undermined

the basic requirement of American democracy: *reasonableness*.[130] The next chapter asks after the

implications of this new national imperative of "reasonableness" as it emerged in the two most

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430 – 454; A. Susan Owen and Peter Ehrenhaus, "Communities of Memory, Entanglements, and Claims of the Past on the Present: Reading Race Trauma through *The Green Mile," Critical Studies in Media Communication* 27, no. 2 (2010): 131 – 154; Jay P. Childers, "The Democratic Balance: President McKinley's Assassination as Domestic Trauma," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* (2013): 1 – 24. McAlister, "Domesticating Citizenship."

[127] McGee, 242.

[128] Jacques Derrida, "Autoimmunity: Real and Symbolic Suicides." In Jurgen Habermas, Jacques Derrida, and Giovanna Borradori, *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jurgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, (Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 94.

[129] Geller, "Big Government."

[130] Hamza Yusuf Hanson, "Amid Mosque Dispute, Muslims Can Look to Irish-Catholics for Hope," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 16, 2010, http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2010/0916/Amid-mosque-dispute-Muslims-can-look-to-Irish-Catholics-for-hope.

CHAPTER 4

BUREAUCRATIC NATIONALISM AND THE HISTORIC PRESENT IN THE RALLIES TO

RESTORE SANITY AND HONOR

> Facing the fact that no *form* of being in the political or politics—including withdrawing from them—will solve the problem of shaping the impasse of the historical present, what alternatives remain for remaking the fantastmatic/material infrastructure of collective life? Is the best one can hope for realistically a stubborn collective refusal to give out, wear out, or admit defeat?
>
> ~Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*[1]

At the same time that plans for Cordoba House began to circulate at the end of 2009 conservative media personality Glenn Beck announced plans of his own for a "100-year plan for America" that would kick off at "the feet of Abraham Lincoln on August 28th" of 2010.[2] The plan would take a century to unfold, Beck explained, because that's how long it took for progressives to destroy America. "We weren't destroyed overnight," Beck elaborated, "We were destroyed piece by piece."[3] Unlike Cordoba House, however, the "historic" inaugural event that would unveil Beck's plan was decidedly political.[4] The media personality promised a plan of action against do-nothing politicians who take advantage of average Americans "because we don't have teeth. Well it's time to find our teeth and sharpen our teeth, and we're going to do it."[5] Several weeks later Beck told a gathering in Florida that the plan would also be politically empowering, helping "to register new voters and educate people on issues touching on energy, health care, foreign policy and social issues." Attendees, Beck promised,

would, "learn about history, finance, communication organizing…if you want to be a politician, we're going to teach you how to be a politician."[6]

Whereas Cordoba House became *more* politically charged in the ensuing months, however, Beck's rally became *less*.[7] Shortly after the Florida gathering Beck announced a change in tone for the Lincoln Memorial Rally, from "politics" to "honor and honesty and integrity" and "fix[ing] ourselves as individuals."[8] Co-hosted with Sarah Palin and the Special Operations Warrior Foundation, Glenn Beck's purportedly non-political, non-partisan "Restoring Honor Rally" occurred on August 28, 2010 at the Lincoln Memorial in pursuit of traditional American values, a return to God, and honoring the troops.[9]

Several weeks later the anti-political sentiments of the "Restoring Honor Rally" received an unlikely mimetic endorsement when *Daily Show* host and comedian Jon Stewart announced a "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear" at the National Mall on October 30, 2010. Co-hosted with conservative satirist Stephen Colbert's "March to Keep Fear Alive," the "million moderate march" would "spread the timeless message, 'Take it down a notch for America," announced Stewart.[10] Stewart insisted that Beck's event was *not* a foil[11] but an inspiration to spread his own "clarion call for rationality" as attendees "take to the streets to send a message to our leaders and our national media that says, 'We are here! We…are only here until 6 though, because we have a sitter.'"[12] Indeed, many commentators noted the similarities between Beck and Stewart's messages: "Americans are truly good and care for one another, and that the only way to get through these difficult times is working together."[13] What accounts for this uncharacteristic synergy between Beck and Stewart? Why did these two polarizing political figures coalesce around explicitly *anti*-political sentiments? What is the rhetorical significance of the rallies for the contemporary national imaginary?

In the final chapter of the dissertation I suggest that as the Cordoba House controversy's traumatic national syntax lost its luster, the rallies instantiated a different provisional national suture; an insular imperative to "keep calm and carry on."[14] Specifically, I read the rallies of Honor and Sanity and the discourses that circulated about them in order to suggest that they effected a *rhetoric of bureaucratic nationalism* with three distinguishing characteristics: one, an anxiety inducing syntax of the *historical present* dependent on an anachronistic mix of past and present tenses; two, figures of *enumeration* or extended lists that re-order a concessional rather than convicted American *ethos*; and, finally, as enumeration ceased to be one figure among many in the rally texts but a way of life, logistical *copia* or inexhaustible gestures and details turned the daily administration of micro-tasks from a means to "the good life" into its ends. In the conclusion I will revisit these latter two strategies in order to encourage rhetorical scholars to think and then re-think the relationship between *enumeration* and *copia* as strategies of amplification and the way in which conceiving of that relationship presents a deeply critical judgment.

The Anxious Simultaneity of the Historical Present

In essence, the historical present (hereafter HP) is stylistically sanctioned violence against syntax, or the rules of ordering that enable language to produce meaning. By most accounts, meaning is best served by following the conventions of syntax, especially *consistency of tense*. As the Purdue Online Writing Lab reminds students:

> Even an essay that does not explicitly tell a story involves implied time frames for the actions discussed and states described. Changes in verb tense help readers understand the temporal relationships among various narrated events. But unnecessary or inconsistent shifts in tense can cause confusion. Generally, writers maintain one tense for the main discourse and indicate changes in time frame by changing tense relative to the primary tense, which is usually either simple past or simple present. Even apparently non-narrative writing should employ verb tenses consistently and clearly.[15]

The HP, however, violates this advice strategically and it is the purpose of this violation I wish to explicate over the next few paragraphs because a rhetorical perspective on the HP illustrates something different than does the literary canon.

The historical present has a long history in literary studies as the syntax of choice for drama, narrative, news, and politics because of it's purported ability to make present what is absent or to foreground—make salient—one element of particular importance within a much longer narrative. The *Rhetorica ad Herennium,* for example, highlighted the HP as a preferable strategy for calling forth "vivid narrative." The HP's vivid effect is attributed to its unique syntactic form, which combines the simple present or "is happening" with the past perfective (preterit) or "happened." However, as Jeanne Fahnestock explains, the HP's making vivid is more than a literary flourish; the HP is also "rhetorically important" because it bridges the past, which is always potentially disappearing into obscurity, with the "[present] tense of shared truths…of presumptions about human behavior."[16] Therefore, the HP is more than vivifying; it is thoroughly politicizing because as it makes vivid or present it also makes *persuasive*: the HP's temporal confusion highlights particular truths that, as truths, endure in the shift from past to present and present to past.

The HP's temporal past/present ambiguity permits speakers a doubled orientation to the world around them. On the one hand, aspects of past events can be highlighted and re-purposed for the present. Consider, for example, the opening line of Stewart's keynote address at the Rally to Restore Sanity: "I *can't* [present] control what people think this *was* [past]. I *can* [present] only tell you my intentions." By dissociating the rally's "present" from its "past," Stewart is able to re-open the interpretive dialogue surrounding the rally even though, as he acknowledges, those conclusions were likely already drawn during the *past* events of the rally. The historic present

permits Stewart to have his cake and eat it to by allowing him to re-interpret his own speech acts after all is said and done.

Not only can past events gain renewed relevance in the present, the HP also permits speakers to give events in the present almost immediate historic status. Beck announced the monumental significance of the Restoring Honor Rally at the very beginning of his keynote address: "Something that is beyond man is happening. America today begins to turn back to God."[17] The temporal and spatial metaphor "beyond" marks the rally as something that transcends the particular audience and occasion while the juxtaposition of the verb/preposition pairings "begins to" and "back to" suggests that the present moment is historic for restoring man to its journey toward God. Beck's opening line accomplishes syntactically what was also achieved simply by naming the rallies "historic." Several weeks *before* Beck's rally occurred, he described the event as "historic" on *The Glenn Beck Program,* declaring, "This will be a thing that your children will remember."[18] Two days after the rally, a blogger declared: "Glenn Beck makes history."[19] The *USA Today* described attendees at Stewart's rally as "choked up" and "moved to tears" by what some described as a "historic" event.[20]

When a present moment is made historic—either syntactically or by naming—the provisional hierarchy of past, present and future that humans construct to make sense of the world around them collapses into what Kenneth Burke describes as a disorienting "scheme of equality." "Simultaneity" is philologist Gerard Boter's term for this pervasive anxiety. Because the HP appears to foreground all things past, making them once again "present," Boter explains, its rhetorical force "falls within the semantics of the present tense, the primary meaning of which is simultaneity."[21] Simultaneity—or the experience of everything happening all at once—is the

temporal effect of a HP in which the present is always *already* historical and history is never simply history.

References to the accomplishments of the "founding fathers" are especially useful resources for Beck and Stewart's rapid historicization. Like invocations of God, the allusory power of the founding fathers is a potent strategy of temporal confusion because it places under erasure the time that has elapsed between events and makes all of history present again.[22] Among Beck's many references to the founders, his most significant is a narrative about his trips to Mt. Vernon prior to the rally. Beck tells his audience, "I went to the National Archives and I *held* the first inaugural address written in his own hand by George Washington." Although the official transcript of the speech submitted to the press reads, "I *read* the first draft written in his own hand by George Washington," Beck uses the word "held" in the public performance, which collapses the time between present and past through tangible contact with the document. As *Mother Jones* points out, Beck would never have been allowed to actually touch the document by the National Archives staff but whether or not what Beck said was *true* it's rhetorical force is to foreground what is past, present, in a similar way that Stewart purports to "embody" the spirits of his founders by practicing tolerance, civility and reasonableness. The effect of this particular instantiation of the HP is, as Beck says, to make clear that "not much has changed" or, put differently, that what has changed needs a course correction guided by history.

The HP's pervasive foregrounding debilitates evaluative action.[23] Stewart's past/present orientation, for instance, takes aim at the incendiary mainstream media without offering up any possibility for change:

> But we live now in hard times, not end times. And we can have animus and not be enemies. But, unfortunately, one of our tools in delineating the two broke. The country's 24-hour politico-pundit-perpetual-panic-conflictinator did not cause our problems, but its existence makes solving them that much harder.

Stewart's temporally inconsistent timeline of watchdog journalism's demise makes it difficult to know where subjects stand in the contemporary media age. The first two present-tense sentences disrupt the crisis narrative Stewart perpetuates/resists by dissociating "hard times" from "end times" and "animus" from "enemies." The third past-tense sentence, however, marks a departure; Stewart re-animates crisis in the form of a *broken* the media (past perfective) as opposed to a media that "is broken" (present) or "has broken" (past imperfective) either of which preserve the possibility of repair unlike the permanent condition that "broke" entails. Lest the audience draw any kind of politically animating conclusion from Stewart's timeline, namely, that fixing the media machine might offer a solution to the ills of the present, the last sentence eradicates any potential cause-and-effect relationship. Without clear distinction between past and present, it is impossible to temporally organize events so that one can prioritize decisions in the present.[24] The HP represents events non-causally, in Christian Casparis' words, as "unlinked occurrences without historical or logical development."[25] The HP (dis)organizes "an absolute or universal or indeterminate relationship of time," writes David M. Bellos, in which a sequence of events is removed "from any particular temporal relation with the narrative."[26]

Events narrated in the historic present are presented as personal revelations; narrators appear to have a practically prophetic transcendent awareness of the interconnectedness of things, hence Beck at the memorial. Speakers become witnesses, explains John R. Frey: "the narrator's having personally experienced or witnessed the happenings he relates constitutes undoubtedly one of the most basic and stimulating factors in the use of the HP."[27] The HP's prophetic effect is evident in Sarah Palin's usage of the popular "crossroads" metaphor during her address at the Restoring Honor Rally:

> We stand today at the symbolic crossroads of our nation's history. All around us are
> monuments to those who have sustained us in word or deed. There in the distance stands

the monument to the father of our country. And behind me, the towering presence of the Great Emancipator …And over these grounds where we are so honored to stand today, we feel the spirit of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Typically, "crossroads" marks a moment of decision in which one must choose one path or another. Palin, however, describes the triangulation of three particular "monuments," which might be more correctly called an intersection. Palin's metaphoric choice is especially strange given that there was no King monument; the spatial logic of Palin's "crossroads" is "spirit" not structure. Palin's omniscient perspective—as the grand interpreter of events past and present—exemplifies the effects of the historic present as it turns speakers into witnesses.

When, at the conclusion of her address, Palin returns to the "crossroads" metaphor she articulates the HP's dominant political effect: a deeply enervated public will. Palin announces, "But, here, together, at the crossroads of our history, may this day be the change point!" But what "change point" has Palin offered her audience? Among what options are they asked to deliberate and decide? The crossroads Palin delineated earlier in the speech offered no choice; rather, it named a "spiritual" intersection of three famous men said to exemplify a vaguely defined American way of life. Therefore, when the audience was confronted again with a "crossroads" at the end of the speech it was an anxious experience: a choice without options or a decision that could not be decided. Clearly, the decisions that matter have been made. Palin's challenge to the audience wasn't about making changes in the strong sense but in the quotidian sense of adopting a simply, daily *disposition* toward the present moment.

The audience is left with no other option that simply the administrative daily task of arranging themselves amongst existing icons and established choices, an affective mode that Berlant calls the "historical present" and describes as "crisis lived within ordinariness."[28] The crisis of the historical present is not simply that something is threatened or lost but that suddenly

everything and therefore nothing is possible. Great figures of history are observed in their humility, people just like us who thought, "oh crap I gotta cross the mountains," as Beck put it, and continued to put one foot in front of the other. Indeed, what do Beck and Stewart's closing statements offer but variations on a theme. Beck offers his audience little more than minute personal action and hyperbolic urgency: "Go to your churches, synagogues, and mosques… Yesterday is gone, tomorrow may never come, but we have today to make a difference!" Indeed, yesterday is *not* gone; rather it has been transposed into a past of tremendous significance that disorients an overdetermined present. Stewart's closing line is even more quotidian: "If you want to know why I'm here and *what I want* from you, I can only assure you this: you have already given it to me. Your presence was *what I wanted*." As quickly as Stewart options the possibility of politics by articulating a demand—an "I want" born of a present-in-progress—he closes it, putting the demand in the past tense and re-defining political action as little more than a showing up, a being in attendance or being "present."[29]

However, Beck and Stewart did not simply leave their audiences paralyzed amidst the temporal anxiety of the historical present. As I will suggest in the next section of this chapter, figures of *enumeration* funneled the HP's temporal anxiety, in which orienting rhetorical practices are nearly impossible, into a spatially reassuring micro anti-politics of order and habit. If the dominant rhetorical effect of the HP is a dis-ordering of the syntactic rules of linguistic governance then enumeration is the corrective. Together, these two rhetorical features of bureaucratic nationalism make possible anxiety without paralysis, a paradoxical mood that Stewart describes as, "I feel good—strangely, calmly good."

The Reassuring Prioritization of Enumeration

Enumeration or *enumeratio* is a "list of particulars" that offer "emphatic proof" of an argument usually through repetition, extension or accretion.[30] Figures of enumeration function synecdochally as the particulars of the list come to not only stand in for a whole but also to exclude from that whole particulars that do not fit the enthymematic or analogous logic by which the list was assembled.[31] Think, for example, of the popular enumeration of the modern nuclear family, "milk, bread, eggs" The nuclear family would be a very different rhetorical object if that list were, say, "tampons, tofu, and turnips" or "mayonnaise, Twinkies, and coffee." The particulars "milk, bread, eggs" work constitutively alongside other figures and tropes of "family" to produce a set of affective connections among the items—such as "wholesome," "simple," and "white"—that is shared by the whole, "family." In turn, objects that do not share the "wholesome" or "simple" tenor such as, say, "tofu" or "Twinkies," are excluded. By virtue of this infinite exclusion that does not appear as such enumeration produces the collective fantasy of "family." Enumerations, Fahnestock summarizes:

> Trigger the default assumptions that readers invoke when they encounter a series: that the items have been selected according to some consistent principle, that they are in some deliberate order, and that they represent a complete set."[32]

The most popular enumeration at the Restoring Honor Rally was Beck's "faith, hope, charity" thematic. "If we want our country to survive," Beck told his audience, "we must begin to look at our own selves. We must be individuals of faith, and individuals of hope, and individuals of charity."

Beck's series of manageable tasks-at-hand displaced the temporal anxiety of the HIP but only after Beck first re-animated that anxiety during a narrative describing the acute panic he experienced prior to his reassuring "faith, hope, charity" epiphany: "Immediately I broke

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into a cold sweat and… I grabbed my assistant by the lapels and pulled him in close and I said, '*I do not know how, but we are wrong*. He pushed me back and said, 'what?!'" Except for the three italicized sentences, Beck uses the past perfect (broke, pulled, said, etc.) to narrate those events that took place prior to the moment of the keynote address and no longer have particular relevance to the audience. However, he switches to the *present* tense for those events that continue to have relevance at the moment of utterance and beyond, which include, not incidentally, his awareness of being on an incorrect path and subsequent turn to prayer. Lest this passage be dismissed as little more than bad writing, note that the reaction of Beck's producer to his declaration, which happened nearly simultaneously to Beck's own comment, remains in the *past* tense. The shift to the present tense marks *only* Beck's awareness that a course correction is needed, The reaction from his producer—the immediate practical effect that Beck's statement had on another person in the world—does *not* hold the same relevance for rally audiences as Beck's own shortcomings.

HP and enumeration enable Beck to persuade of us fundamental truths that transcend time and tense and belong properly to "faith, hope, charity." The first of those truths is the shamefulness of politics. Beck's moment of panic was precipitated, he explains, by a sudden awareness that his original, *political,* designs for the rally had been terribly misguided. Beck explains that he thought the rally "was supposed to be political" but that when he arrived to announce the plans to a gathering in Florida he "immediately" knew, upon looking an audience of 25,000 "in the eye" that he had made the wrong decision. The second of those truths is the goodness of God, prayer and faith. After his politically motivated moral and ethical failure, the repentant activist, in his words, "went back to the drawing board" and emerged with "those three icons" that would guide the Restoring Honor Rally:

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> Over the holidays I focused on faith, hope and charity. Those three icons, and brought them back to the television studio and I said, this is our direction next year. And they looked at me and said, 'what?!' And I said, I cannot explain it, but this is where we *are* going. It was about four months ago that we were still kind of lost. And we did not know what we were going to do when we got *here*. I was down on my knees in the office and I said, *Lord, I think I'm one of your dumber children. Speak slowly.*

Like the first part of the narrative maligning politics, Beck primarily narrates in the past perfect with the exception of the last two present-tense sentences in which he turns to prayer. Furthermore, his repetition of the skeptical prosopopoeic "what?!" establishes a refrain of practical or results-oriented non-believers against which the righteous battle for faith can be rhetorically strengthened. In contrast to the perplexed and panicked voice of politics, God answers Beck's prayers with reassurance and composure in the present tense: "And the answer was, you *have* all of the pieces. *Put* them together. The faith, hope and charity." Unwavering adherence to a simple series enabled one of God's "dumber children" to stumble upon the truth of national belonging, just like Berlant's Forrest Gump: "Because he is mentally incapable of making plans or thinking conceptually, he follows rules and orders literally…He takes risks but experiences nothing of their riskiness… this is his genius and it is meant to be his virtue."[33]

Whereas Beck's "faith, hope, charity" demonstrates the rhetorical force of even the briefest three-item list the much-discussed "cars" demonstration delivered during Stewart's closing monologue or "Moment of Sincerity" illustrates the importance of extension or accretion to the emphatic proof that figures of enumeration offer. By organizing a series of items—citizen-subjects driving during rush hour— Stewart encourages audiences to re-organize America as a collection of reasonable and *civil* people who, in the words of one critic, have too much "shit to do" to be political.[34] Delivered in front of two gigantic projector screens showing footage of rush hour traffic entering the Jersey turnpike tunnel, Stewart closes the Rally to Restore Sanity with this national vision:

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Look on the screen. This is where we are. This is who we are… These cars—that's the schoolteacher who probably thinks his taxes are too high. He's going to work. There's another car-a woman with two small kids who can't really think about anything else right now. There's another car…the lady's in the NRA and she loves Oprah…Another car is a Latino carpenter. Another car, a fundamentalist vacuum salesman. Atheist obstetrician. Mormon Jay-Z fan. But this is us. Every one of the cars that you see is filled with individuals of strong belief and principles they hold dear—often principles and beliefs in direct opposition to their fellow travelers. And yet these millions of cars must somehow find a way to squeeze one by one into a mile long 30-foot wide tunnel carved underneath a mighty river.

"This is where we are. This is who we are" shifts Stewart from the rally's HP tense to the myopic simple present that will shore up his lackluster rallying call-to-presence.[35] The weak convictions of the schoolteacher who "probably thinks his taxes are too high" and the mother "who can't really think about anything else right now" exemplify the "go along to get along" *ethos* of the ideal U.S. citizen-subject, joined in rapid succession by a diverse array of citizen-automobiles who put their superficial beliefs and principles on hold to successfully meld with the highway melting-pot that is the Jersey tunnel. As the particulars accrue, Stewart eliminates action (verbs) in favor of existence (predicates). By contrast, Stewart reserves his most passionate verbs for the perilous journal in which the predicate-filled citizen-automobiles must "squeeze" into a "tunnel carved underneath a mighty river."

Stewart's vision is effective both for what it includes in the administrative American way of life and what it does *not*, namely, the political. Stewart warns, "And sure, at some point there will be a selfish jerk who zips up the shoulder and cuts in the last minute, but that individual is rare and he is scorned and not hired as an analyst." The "selfish jerk" is excluded both physically, placed on the outside or "shoulder" of the otherwise orderly processional, and ethically because the jerk does not share in the logic of the series: duty above dogma. Cutting in last minute disrupts the otherwise organized flow of traffic because a car that did not have a place in the established order demanded a place by circumventing the rules of the processional. It

does not matter whether the jerk is a billionaire seeking a tax shelter or a domestic violence

victim wronged in a court of law, Stewart's demand for traffic without cutting or citizenship

without disruption is an anti-democratic desire void of politics. Politics, writes Jacques Ranciere,

is precisely the *absence* of order; "the ultimate ground on which rules govern is that there is no

good reason as to why some men should rule others. Ultimately the practice of ruling rests on its

own absence of reason." Politics, in other words, means that the jerk's claim to the tunnel is as

legitimate as those in line and, more importantly, that the cars claim to the tunnel is *no more*

legitimate because they followed the traffic pattern. Democracy, concludes Ranciere, relies on

the irreducible ambiguity of the "jerk" and the "proper citizen" and the de-stabilization of the

rules that guarantee a safe distinction between the two that is the condition of possibility of

politics.[36]

Stewart's enumeration suggests that, when faced with limited opportunities for

representation and inclusion—*politics* par excellence—one does best when they prioritize the

little things, like getting home in one piece. For Stewart the American way of life is first of all

administrative characterized by "reasonable compromises" and "getting things done":

> Where we live our values and principles form the foundations that sustain us while we
> get things done… Americans live their lives more as people that are just a little bit late
> for something they have to do—often something that they do not want to do—but they do
> it—impossible things every day that are only made possible by the little reasonable
> compromises that we all make.

As if taking a cue from Beck, Stewart reinforces his re-constructed American *ethos* with a

convenient refrain that guides the audience in their relations to others during rush hour and other

times of duress: "Concession by concession. You go. Then I'll go. You go. Then I'll go. You go

then I'll go. Oh my god, is that an NRA sticker on your car? Is that an Obama sticker on your

car? Well, that's okay – you go then I'll go." As Stewart lists new particulars those particulars

simultaneously cease to matter. Instead, what matters is the *whole* and the concessional logic by which the particulars are put under erasure so that a whole can exist as such. *Real* questions of political association became irrelevant rhetorical questions subsumed by the need to make it through the day. Whereas enumeration often functions to "overwhelm us with evidence" in order to make a proof formally rather than logically, Stewart's refrain is reassuring, an insipid mantra that ensured through repetition that as long as everyone *goes* along everyone will *get* along.

In the next section of the essay I explore the way that audiences transposed the anti-political force of Beck and Stewart's enumerations into logistical *copia.* Specifically I will suggest that an obsession with the inexhaustible minutiae of daily tasks—arranging transportation, getting cell phone service, and taking attendance—turned the ordering of self and space that Beck and Stewart valorized as the means to a civil society into ends unto themselves. That is not to say that audiences distorted Beck and Stewart's message but rather that *copia* took enumeration to its excess, inverting its analogic force such that the whole disappeared amongst the particulars.

The Micro Anesthetics of Copia

Attendees quickly embodied Stewart's administrative aesthetic as they obsessively detailed the "reasonable compromises" they made in order to attend the event. *Yelp* reviewers for the "Rally to Restore Sanity" were more preoccupied with finding parking and cell phone service than inspiration. One review describes quickly passes over the "unfailingly polite" crowd to complain abstractly about "logistics." The reviewer did, however, highlight his "phenomenal parking spot on 15th street just past Lafayette Square" as the most "special" moment of the day.[37] Another reviewer devotes a paragraph to the "mobbed" D.C. metro; "If I did not have claustrophobia before I got on a sardine can of a Metro train," he writes, "I had it by the time I

got off at Federal Center."[38] Poor cell phone service prevented another reviewer from participating in the rally's collectivizing sentiments: "I got to the Rally a little before 11 and it was packed to the gills. And oddly, I couldn't send any texts or calls as soon as I got down there – so much for trying to meet up with people."[39] Although the *Yelp* reviewers share Stewart's frequent use of extensive lists, on my view these logistical accountings—what I refer to here as *copia*—are distinct from enumeration because they do not have the same part/whole relationship.

Copia and enumeration are both rhetorical strategies of amplification or "making an element important stylistically" but whereas enumeration aims for both presence *and* salience, *copia* aims for presence to the point of disinterest. Creating salience, Fahnestock explains, is "like placing something in the center of a visual frame and highlighting it with the maximum in illumination, color saturation, and clarity of focus." *Copia,* "on the other hand, is like filling the visual frame with one important element to the exclusion of everything else. Nothing else can be seen because the thing emphasized completely fills the visual field."[40] I would extend this visual analogy to suggest that it is possible for *copia* to amplify to the point that even the boundaries of the visual field—the whole—become buried underneath the particulars. *Copia* is rhetorical enumeration taken to excess, the exemplary figure of "a computational and procedural approach to rhetoric and writing."[41] In classical training, explains James J. Brown, those "interested in developing an abundant style must exaggerate the rules, must become a robot. But," Brown cautions, "these exaggerations should be focused on the classroom; taking them outside of such spaces would likely result in awkward or harsh prose."[42] Bureaucratic nationalism turns this advice on its head such that the "algorithmic, machinic, and computational" become eloquent. Enumeration in pursuit of a whole becomes enumeration for the sake of enumeration, what Barbara Johnson following Paul De Man calls *sheer enumeration*.[43]

Whereas enumeration is an analogous series standing in for a whole, *copia* is order standing in for meaning or syntax ascending to the level of rhetoric. De Man explicates this distinction in his reading of Baudelaire's sonnet, *Correspondences*: "The tension, in this poem, occurs indeed between number as trope (the infinitesimal as the underlying principles of totalization) and number as tautology (the stutter of an endless, but not infinitesimal, enumeration that never goes anywhere."[44] I take "number as trope" to describe enumeration as outlined in the previous section of this essay and "number as tautology" to describe *copia* or an "enumeration that never goes anywhere." De Man casts this distinction in mathematical terms as the difference between "calculus and arithmetic, with tropes of infinitude [enumeration] reduced to the literal, disfigured status of sheer finite numbers [*copia*].[45] This distinction is ambiguous, a cautious explication of an internal difference within one word, the French "comme," best translated as "like." Johnson explains:

> *Correspondences* sets up a series of analogies between nature, man, symbols, and metaphysical unity, and among manifestations of the different physical senses, all through the word "comme" ("like"). A traditional reading of the poem would say that the lateral analogies among the senses (perfumes fresh as a baby's skin, mellow as oboes, green as prairies) are signs that there exists an analogy between man and nature and between man and the spiritual realm.[46]

"This analogy-making word, 'comme,'" is the condition of possibility for particulars or items in a series to produce a whole; enumeration is not simply the accumulation of parts but the name of a constitutive analogical relationship established between elements that make a set cohere or, "equate different things into likeness."[47]

However, De Man notes a usage of "comme" in *Correspondences* that does not follow the synecdochal logic of enumeration. Rather than drawing relationships among the scents or perfumes of nature and human experiences, Baudelaire becomes momentarily preoccupied with listing those scents for the sake of cataloguing them: "With all the expansiveness of infinite

things, Like ambergris, musk, benjamin, incense, That sing the transports of spirit and sense."[48]

This second use of "comme" is significant because it establishes a *tautology*, not a translation or

analogy; it "just introduces a list of examples—there are perfumes that are rich and corrupt, like

musk, ambergris, and frankincense. This is thus a tautology—there are perfumes

like…perfumes."[49] Thus De Man dissociates a*nalogical* enumeration or the construction of sets

from *tautological* enumeration or mere listing, explains Johnson:

> Listing examples would seem to be quite different from proposing analogies. If the
> burden of analogies in *Correspondences* is to convince us that the metaphorical
> similarities among the senses point to a higher spiritual unity, then sheer enumeration
> would disrupt that claim.[50]

It is this second sense of enumeration as tautological or metonymic that I have termed *copia* in

order to draw attention to its distinct aesthetic and anesthetic effect in bureaucratic nationalism.

Tautological enumeration concerns De Man ethically as well as stylistically because it

threatens to undermine metaphoric condensation, the condition of possibility for literature.

Rhetoricians should share De Man's concern because metaphors are also the condition of

possibility for publics and therefore collective life. As Christian Lundberg cautiously suggests,

"a public *is* a metaphor…an organized site of investment that produces practices of affinity."[51]

Copia is a "temporal pattern of obsessive thought," in De Man's words, "which disrupt[s] the

totalizing claim of metaphor."[52] Because *copia* "never moves beyond the confines of a set of

particulars" it remains an "obsession rather than a metamorphosis, let alone a rebirth…what

could be more perverse or corruptive for a metaphor aspiring to a transcendental totality than

remaining stuck in an enumeration that never goes anywhere?"[53]

As would-be rally attendees lived out in real time Stewart's Jersey Tunnel scenario, the

provincial and mundane details of *copia* emerged as matters of national concern. The

blogosphere exploded with urgent logistical warnings in preparation for the Beck rally. Advice

on safe Metro travel from a rally supporter sparked a firestorm described by a Huffington Post

contributor as "the whole 'STAY OFF THE GREEN LINE' matter."[54] Several days prior to the

rally a Tea Party blogger from Maine and former Washington D.C. native posted an extensive

"DC visitors guide" for rally attendees that included restaurant recommendations and sight-

seeing agendas. The guide also included controversial advice for using the Metro:

> If you are on the subway stay on the Red line between Union Station and Shady Grove,
> Maryland. If you are on the Blue or Orange line do not go past Eastern Market (Capitol
> Hill) toward the Potomac Avenue stop and beyond; stay in NW DC and points in
> Virginia. Do not use the Green line or the Yellow line. These rules are even more
> important at night.[55]

The list of particulars extends to include specific spots to visit and avoid for visitors "on foot or

in a cab or bus." Some received the guide's obsessive logistical advice as helpful means to the

safe and orderly attendance of the rally and even extended it to include more details.[56] Others

immediately picked up on a racist logic organizing the particulars of the "Cliché-Ridden Guide

to Avoiding The Black People On The Subway in Washington."[57] From these responses we

would describe the guide as an *enumeration* because particulars have a relationship that produces

a whole, "safety," on the one hand, and "racism," on the other hand.

The vast majority of responses to the DC guide poke fun at its *copia* or detail to excess.

As one commentator put it, "We really can't fault the blogger though. So, he overshot. Who

cares? His intentions were good."[58] Indeed, mocking the guide became a convenient point of

entry for providing *more* travel advice:

> In all seriousness though," reads a forum post," there are sections in all major cities
> where it is best to avoid. I was mostly joking about avoiding the Green line (it does take
> you to Nats Park and parts of downtown), but if anyone is looking to visit D.C., I would
> absolutely advise them to avoid Anacostia. There is simply no reason to go there…That's
> it for my sightseeing tips. Now back to crazy Beck.[59]

In response, another user laughs, "haha," then continues: "When people ask me where they

should get a hotel, I always tell them to stay away from NE and SE DC, Atlas District being the lone exception."[60] And again later, "As you cross 16th and go East it gets sketchy real fast in some parts."[61] Even those commentators attempting to demystify the racial implications of the original guide wind up losing sight of their purpose in their own logistical myopia: "Georgetown is okay and a few places between K and M st NW and 20th & 17th Streets, NW. Everything else is pretty much a crap shoot."[62] Ridiculing the guide becomes an exercise in replicating its absurdity; slipping from enumeration to *copia* speakers fall prey, in De Man's words, to "the stutter, the *pietinement* [standing about] of aimless enumeration."[63] The Green Line phenomenon illustrates the ambiguous play of enumeration as rhetorical proof, on the one hand, and *copia* as de-totalizing gesture, on the other.

A life worth living is measured in the details, the seemingly insignificant gestures that make up the day and, in their specificity and abundance, gain significance, cluttering the visual field through which is made visible belief and conviction. In *The Castle,* a hyper realistic quest narrative about the cycle of disappointment and hope in a bureaucratic dystopia, Franz Kafka explores the vicissitudes of gestic citizens and their anxious investments in the mundane. Daily gestures become fortification against the affective disappointments of a politically impotent life under bureaucracy. In his epideictic essay to *The Castle,* Walter Benjamin describes bureaucratic agency as deconstruction in the simplest sense: "to dissolve happenings into their gestic components."[64] In the bureaucratic drama, writes Benjamin, "the gesture remains the decisive thing, the center of the event."[65] According to Robert Hariman, gesture is the "specific technique" through which the ambivalence of "bureaucratic consciousness" is made intelligible, as "disorientation" on the one hand and "ordinary, artful practices" on the other.[66] The first person play-by-play of a Back rally attendee illustrates the way in which the specificity of

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gesture turns the mundane into insulation against incomprehension. 2:35 p.m. is the "sweetest

moment of the day" because the citizen-ethnographer saw a former Congressional candidate pick

up trash from the lawn. Five minutes earlier, however, was the "saddest moment of the day"

because of an accumulation of woes: "Me, in a fanny pack, dehydrated, needing to pee,

crouching alone in a clearing, finishing off a day-old chicken cutlet sandwich, sweating,

attempting to pick up service on my iPhone."

In bureaucratic nationalism the ideal American is a collector who delights in the

accumulation of things in their *copiousness*, not exchange value. A collector's relationship to

things, reflects Benjamin, lies in the "collecting rather than a collection."[67] "For what else is this

collection," he asks,

> But a disorder to which habit has accommodated itself to such an extent that it can appear
> as order?…The locking of individual items within a magic circle in which they are fixed
> as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition passes over them. Everything becomes
> remembered and thought, everything conscious, becomes the pedestal, the frame, the
> base, the lock of his property.[68]

Lest one protest that the value of the collection lies in the *reading*—the acquisition of knowledge,

which can be exchanged for other things, or the vicarious experience of other worlds—Benjamin

reminds us of "the oldest [truth] in the worlds," that "the non-reading of books" is "characteristic

of collectors."[69] Reflecting on her experience at the "Restoring Honor Rally," blogger Diane

Rufino devotes much of her 9,000 words to contextual summary and verbatim reproduction,

reserving the rest for her own "worm's-eye-view" contributions:

> On Saturday morning we got up at 6:30 am and looked out the window of our hotel room.
> We could already see crowds walking past the hotel and towards the area of the mall. We
> knew then we would have to get moving ourselves. Quickly we showered and had a
> quick bite to eat, and were out of the hotel by 8:00.[70]

Rufino's low-angle or third perspective on events enables her to see and catalogue the minutiae

at the expense of a well-defined frame or "horizon" for the events.[71] This perspective is "typical

for oppositional populist rhetoric," writes Martin Reisigl, for its ability to contrast the concerns of real people or those on the ground with "those up there."[72]

Rufino exemplifies the American citizen-collector whose catalogue of gestures hides trite national truths in plain sight.[73] Overwhelmed by quantity, the citizen-collector re-takes comfort in existing belief structures because a search for alternatives would be, frankly, too exhausting.[74] Politics has to wait until the practicalities of the day are dealt with or, as a reporter Beth Fertig put it, "many attendees said they had no excuse not to attend [the "Rally to Restore Sanity"] after Huffington Post founder Arianna Huffington paid for 200 buses to carry 10,000 people from New York to Washington." "With only an hour left to go" until the start of the rally, Fertig continues, "people were still arriving…but most seemed not to care. There was no urgency."[75]What little urgency is available is devoted to contemplation and complaining about "why a city so used to rallies didn't have a better transport system."[76]At best, the citizen-collector is an "ethnomethodologist…responsible for the "anxious interpretation of a gestic theater," in the words of Hariman,[77] and an "embedded insider" in the words of a Beck rally attendee.[78] But their observations rarely yield conclusions, deferring interpretation in favor of cataloguing "those conventions of speech and conduct that make bureaucratic practices intelligible and appealing."[79] If enumeration is a strategically limited collection for the purpose of persuasion that risks threat of difference or disruption, then *copia* is its exhausted doppelganger figure, the last tactic standing of a citizen-collector surrounded by an "indigenous and largely uninterpreted behavioral field surrounding, and perhaps limiting, all of his actions."[80]

If the citizen-collector works diligently they can glean from the *copiae* those rituals or procedural norms that will give them order.[81] Indeed, what do the rallies offer if not the clichés of national administration? The first guest speaker at Beck's rally—a mother of a soldier killed

on duty—illustrates the way in which procedural norms have come to displace something like "great acts" in the epic narrative of the hero. In third grade, she recalls, her son sat on her lap and dutifully recited his newly discovered definition of honor: "it is your promise. It is your word. You must never break your promise." Recitation stands in for invention here and the audience re-discovers what they *already knew* only by adopting the perspective of a child. The audience learns their next important lesson in national belonging when the soon-to-be soldier writes his sixth grade essay about honoring the flag. The speaker emphasizes her son's enumerative thesis: "while the stars are separated on the flag, they all come together on the blue background in the eyes of God." Eventually the soldier entered the military, met his wife, and had his son until finally, one day, "his plane went down." Later, the speaker says tearfully, when her grandson learned her father would never come home, he got out his tool kit and "insisted that he fix the plane." The son honors his father's memory and assumes his role as citizen-collector when he takes up without critical intervention the administration of tasks left undone.

Despite protests to the contrary, the dominance of procedural narratives from wounded soldiers to confirm Beck and Stewart's anti-political agenda.[82] On the contrary, the rallies shared a decidedly disciplinary goal: counting or accumulation displaced "giving an account" as the ethical obligation of the day.[83] In Ranciere's terms, both the "Restoring Honor Rally" and the "Rally to Restore Sanity" were *policing*, not political. In stark contrast to politics, he explains, the police:

> Symbolises the community as an ensemble of well-defined parts, places and functions, and of the properties and capabilities linked to them, all of which presupposes a fixed distribution of things into common and private – a distinction which itself depends on an ordered distribution of the visible and the invisible, noise and speech, etc…This way of counting [parts, places and functions] simultaneously defines the ways of being, doing, and saying appropriate to these places.[84]

Newspaper headlines took up this policing function as they obsessed over attendance, methods of calculation, and motivations for over or underreporting the numbers. The *Wikipedia* entry for the "Rally to Restore Sanity" dedicates an entire section to "Crowd size and television broadcast" with direct comparisons via aerial photograph data to the "Restoring Honor" rally.[85] The estimated attendance at Beck's rally ranged from CBS News' 87,000 to "more than 100,000 people" reported by ABC News.[86] Major media outlets dedicated page after page to the logistics of estimating the crowd size of the rallies using advanced calculations of "the area of available space, the proportion of the space that's occupied, and the crowd's density."[87] After the rally Beck estimated attendance at "'a minimum of 500,000' people and complained that news outlets…badly underestimated the number of people who showed up."[88]

The accounting phenomenon circulated so widely that both rallies made light of its absurdity. At the very start of his keynote Beck greets his audience with an enumeration of proposed attendance figures: "Well I heard the media estimates on the crowd size. The first one was there's tens of thousands of people here. I think the latest I hear were two. I heard over three hundred thousand and I heard over five hundred thousand. And if that's coming from the media, God only knows how many." Beck's *a fortiori* to the greater accomplishes two tasks simultaneously: takes a cue from Stewart's book to denigrate the frenzied sensationalism of the mainstream media and shores up the event's "historic" proportions through body count. Beck later takes another stab at the media using understatement, announcing to the delight of the crowd that the media has reported "1,000" people in attendance. Colbert then puts these same strategies to comedic use in the "Rally to Restore Sanity." However, it is Stewart's tacit refusal to engage in such accounting that belies the transcendent *ethos* of both rallies as the calculating disavowal central to bureaucratic nationalism: acting as if the messages of honor and sanity are

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above the very frenzy of administrative ethical accounting that rhetorical strategies of the rally reproduced in excess.

Conclusion

Thus there was no difference that mattered between honoring the troops with Glenn Beck or sane driving with Jon Stewart. Either way, in the fall of 2010 accounting became the new civics during a significant disciplinary shift of national identification, which I call *a rhetoric of bureaucratic nationalism* activated by a historical present syntax and the amplification or listing devices of enumeration and *copia*. Over the course of the essay I have articulated these rhetorical strategies to particular habits—impotent omniscience, concession for the sake of convenience and the fetishization of collection—that are the coping mechanisms-cum-citizenship practices of bureaucratic nationalism that turn minding manners into the American way of life.

Minding manners is the end game of a bureaucratic politics. Bureaucratic citizens do *not*, as Stewart puts it, "ridicule people of faith or people of activism or…look down our noses at the heartland or passionate argument" but they certainly don't partake in such barbarism. Rather, they are a civilized and sanitized people who, according to Beck, "defend those that we disagree with" only if they "are honest and have integrity. There's a lot we can disagree on but our values and principles can unite us." Civil people don't let the little things disrupt the bigger picture or the bigger picture disrupt the little things. "We can have animus," Stewart tells his audience, "and not be enemies." Politics is, at best, the exchange of basic pleasantries for a citizen who abides but certainly does not love her neighbor…after all, who has the time?![89] As Kid Rock sang during the rally: "I can't stop the war, shelter the homeless, feed the poor… I can't change the world and make things fair. The least that I can do is care."[90] The *very* least, to say the most.

If this critique feels somewhat polemical that may be less of an indication that it is off the mark than a testament to the ideological force of bureaucratic nationalism, which teaches that ideologies are uncivilized. A world in which there is enough to go around—indeed, in which there is almost *too* much to go around—has strong appeal, like Baudelaire's aimless inventory of scents. One of purposes of rhetorical criticism is to make sense of the way that listing devices function in public discourse and that sense making is a deeply ethical responsibility that begins with how we define and apply our terms. As De Man made clear, the difference between enumeration with a purpose and "sheer enumeration" is not given; it turns on the ambiguity of the "comme" or the "like" that slips in the gaps between circulation and uptake.[91] Between a "transcendence upward" and a "transcendence downward," writes Burke, is a *je ne sai quoi*: "the 'all-important ingredient…that makes all the difference between a true transcendence and the empty acquisition of the verbal paraphernalia."[92] The same gesture is "true transcendence" (enumeration) for one critic but "verbal paraphernalia" (*copia*) for another and that decision is *critical* in the strongest sense.

Or one can follow Giorgio Agamben's lead and seek a third way not considered in the analysis above. For Agamben the difference between gestures that "mean" and gestures that simply gesticulate—between the political and the administrative—is artificial. The gesture is *neither;* rather it is that which displaces the distinction and "opens the sphere of *ethos* as the more proper sphere of that which is human":

> What characterizes gesture is that in it nothing is being produced or acted, but rather something is being endured and supported…if producing is a means in view of an end and praxis is an end without means, the gesture then breaks with the false alternative between ends and means that paralyzes morality and presents instead means that, *as such,* evade the orbit of mediality without becoming, for this reason, ends.[93]

A gesture is not a thing with exchange value but "the exhibition of a mediality: it is the process

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of making a means visible as such."[94] Although Agamben is scarce on examples of a gesture worth the name, we might borrow one possible illustration from historian John MacAloon who describes the scene on the victory stand during the 1968 Olympics, on which stood two black American gold medalists. At the start of the National Anthem, writes MacAloon, the athletes raised their fists and lowered "their heads in a gesture of bondage" so that for the full duration of the anthem:

> The audience was imprisoned, forced to read the anthem's message and theirs simultaneously: 'Oh, say can you see'…'No, we refuse to look': 'What so proudly we hailed'…'We do not hail racist America and refuse to accept her hailing for us for we know what we will be returning to'…and so on.[95]

If MacAloon is correct that the gestures of defiance by the athletes laid bare the codes of national transmission ritually embedded in the Olympic games, then such gestures satisfy Agamben's classification of gesture as "the communication of communicability."

How does one decide whether the fist is merely one of a long list of trivialities (*copia),* or one of a carefully selected few articles of protest—including African beads and shoeless feet— that add up to a powerful "fuck you" to the man (enumeration)? Furthermore, what distinguishes the third type of gesture, the pure disruption of the code that Agamben realm of "pure means" that is the political? The pages above offer one possible set of strategies, reading lists in conjunction with other features of discourse to gauge the difference between the "comme" of analogy and one that just stutters or stands about. MacAloon's reading offers another set… Agamben and De Man still another. And as the interpretive options expand we come close to understanding the frustration embedded in bureaucratic nationalism, ironically best expressed by Stewart early in his keynote: "If we amplify everything we hear nothing…If we overreact to everything we actually get sicker—and perhaps eczema."

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The decision between lists that mean and lists that, well, list might seem an isolated problem. After all, very few rhetorical critics engage enumeration directly, let alone as something more than the logical procession of examples.[96] However, even if one chooses to focus their energies elsewhere the enumerative aporia of the *e pluribus unum* still haunts every critical decision. As Jacques Derrida explains in his reading of Kafka's parable "Before the Law," enumeration is the very structure of the law, which is forever deferred. At the gates of the law, summarizes Derrida, there is a guardian and "after the first guardian there are an undefined number of others, perhaps they are innumerable, and progressively more powerful and therefore more prohibitive, endowed with greater power of delay."[97] Enumeration is thus the condition of possibility both for the bureaucratic frustrations of legal delay *and* for its mercy. Without that delay subjects would no longer be able to believe in something like the law as such. For the countrymen at the gates of the law, the guards in their innumerability are what do not deny permission to prefer to wait, to defer. "Thus," concludes Derrida, "runs the account of an event which arrives *at* not arriving, which manages not to happen."[98]

Perhaps this is the appeal of bureaucratic nationalism: a standing about, a rallying, that prefers to wait, that accounts rather than demands, that wants nothing more, as Stuart said, than "presence." From this perspective, it appears that the answer to Lauren Berlant's inquiry in the opening epigraph is, *yes*: the best one can hope for realistically *is* a stubborn collective refusal to give out, wear out, or admit defeat. If one accepts Berlant's assertion that the "historical present" is not *just* syntax many but *the* affective mode of the present as such, then perhaps bureaucratic nationalism *is* radically political. In the conclusion that follows, however, I wish to re-think Berlant's ontologizing of the historical present and politicization of aesthetics that often follows. Put differently, my concern in the conclusion is the way in which an aesthetic politics both

stabilizes the historical present as *the* syntax of something called "postmodern experience" and then draws upon that same stabilization as the condition of possibility for politicizing aesthetic practices. I wish to push back against the common sense within the academy as well as the rallies that *aesthetics*, an appreciation of the "ordinary, artful practices" of the everyday, to borrow a phrase from Robert Hariman, is the closest we are going to get to politics, today.[99]

Notes

[1] Lauren Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 259.

[2] T. Jefferson and Glenn Beck, "Glenn Beck: The Plan," *Glenn Beck*, November 23, 2009, www.glennbeck.com/content/articles/article/198/33466.

[3] Jefferson and Beck, "Glenn Beck: The Plan."

[4] Jefferson and Beck, "Glenn Beck: The Plan."

[5] Jefferson and Beck, "Glenn Beck: The Plan."

[6] Suevon Lee, "Beck Visits The Villages, Announces Conventions," *Ocala Star Banner*, November 22, 2009, http://www.ocala.com/article/20091122/ARTICLES/911221012.

[7] While Beck changed the tone of the rally it still met wit controversy regarding its relationship to the civil rights movement, Beck's recent book publication, and the use of funds, see "Did Glenn Beck's D.C. Rally Strike the Right Tone?," *US News & World Report*, August 31, 2010, http://www.usnews.com/opinion/articles/2010/08/31/did-glenn-becks-dc-rally-strike-the-right-tone.

[8] T. Jefferson and Glenn Beck, "Glenn Beck: Restoring Honor," *Glenn Beck*, January 25, 2010, http://www.glennbeck.com/content/articles/article/198/35494/.

[9] Brian Montopoli, "Glenn Beck, Sarah Palin to Hold 'Restoring Honor Rally,'" *CBS Bews*, July 28, 2010, http://www.cbsnews.com/news/glenn-beck-sarah-palin-to-hold-restoring-honor-rally/.

[10] Catherine E. Shoichet, "Stewart, Colbert Announce Washington Rallies," *CNN News*, September 17, 2010, http://www.cnn.com/2010/SHOWBIZ/TV/09/17/stewart.colbert.rallies/.

[11] Daniel Kreps, "Jon Stewart: Rallies Not a Response to Glenn Beck," *Rolling Stone*, September 30, 2010, http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/jon-stewart-rallies-not-a-response-to-glenn-beck-20100930.

[12] Shoichet, "Stewart, Colbert Announce Washington Rallies."

[13] Frances Martel, "Jon Stewart Explains the Purpose of The Rally to Restore Sanity," *Mediaite*, October 30, 2010, http://www.mediaite.com/tv/jon-stewart-explains-the-purpose-of-the-rally-to-restore-sanity/.

[14] Not coincidentally, the "keep calm and carry on" meme, originally popularized as World War II propaganda by the British Ministry of Information, made a popular comeback in the wake of the financial crisis, most notably when Keep Calm and Carry On Ltd. trademarked the slogan in 2011 for a successful slew of mass merchandising. The meme had become so popular by 2013 that the British newspaper *The Independent* pleaded for the trend to end, Rhodri Marsden, "How Long Can the "Keep Calm' Trend Carry On?," *The Independent*, May 25, 2013, http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/this-britain/how-long-can-the-keep-calm-trend-carry-on-8627557.html.

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[16] Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style*, 155.

[17] Glenn Beck and Sarah Palin, "Restoring Honor Rally," *C-SPAN.org*, August 28, 2010, http://www.c-span.org/video/?295231-1/restoring-honor-rally.

[18] "Beck Calls His 8-28 Rally 'Historic,' Says: 'This Will Be a Thing That Your Children Will Remember,'" *Media Matters for America*, August 9, 2010, http://mediamatters.org/video/2010/08/09/beck-calls-his-8-28-rally-historic-says-this-wi/168943.

[19] "Glenn Beck Makes History: Washington Rally Shows Power of Conservativism in America," *Thoughts From a Conservative Mom*, August 30, 2010, http://www.thoughtsfromaconservativemom.com/2010/08/glenn-beck-makes-.

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[22] Vivian, "Neoliberal Epideictic," 10.

[23] Suzanne Fleischman, *Tense and Narrativity: From Medieval Performance to Modern Fiction* (University of Texas Press, 1990), 144–148.

[24] Laurel J. Brinton, "The Historical Present in Charlotte Bronte's Novels: Some Discourse Functions," *Style* 26, no. 2 (Summer 1992): 221.

[25] Christian Paul Casparis, *Tense Without Time: The Present Tense in Narration* (Bern: Franke, 1975), 23.

[26] David M. Bellos, "The Narrative Absolute Tense," *Language and Style* 11 (1978): 233.

[27] John R. Frey, "The HP in Narrative Literature, Particularly in MOdern German Fiction," *Journal of English and Germanic Philology* 45 (n.d.): 63.

[28] Lauren Gail Berlant, "Thinking About Feeling Historical," *Emotion, Space and Society* 1, no. 1 (2008): 5.

[29] Whereas claims and requests are addressed to institutions for the primary purpose of achieving satisfaction, Ernesto Laclau defines *demands* as the constitutive element of any politics because as they remain *unsatisfied* they gain force, finding commonality or establishing a chain of equivalence with other demands. Political movements gain traction as the chain extends and finds a point of articulation in an empty signifier or a particular demand that comes to provisionally represent the chain's impossible totality. On the contrary, when the institution of redress (or in this case Stewart's own speech act) *satisfies* the claims they are individuated and the chain of equivalence severed, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005).

[30] Susan Huxman and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, *The Rhetorical Act: Thinking, Speaking and Writing Critically*, 3rd ed. (Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2003).

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[32] Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style*, 140.

[33] Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*, 183.

[34] Eric Stoner, "Jon Stewart's Misguided Rally to Restore Sanity," *Waging Nonviolence*, October 29, 2010, http://wagingnonviolence.org/2010/10/jon-stewarts-misguided-rally-to-restore-sanity/.

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[36] Jacques Rancière and Steve Corcoran, *Dissensus on Politics and Aesthetics* (London; New York: Continuum, 2010), 52.

[37] Paul M., "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear," *Yelp,* November 1, 2010, http://www.yelp.com/biz/rally-to-restore-sanity-and-or-fear-washington-2.

[38] Tom M., "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear," *Yelp,* November 2, 2010, http://www.yelp.com/biz/rally-to-restore-sanity-and-or-fear-washington-2.

[39] Jee D. "Rally to Restore Sanity and/or Fear," *Yelp,* November 1, 2010, http://www.yelp.com/biz/rally-to-restore-sanity-and-or-fear-washington-2.

[40] Fahnestock, *Rhetorical Style*, 395.

[41] James J. Brown Jr., "The Machine That Therefore I Am.," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 47, no. 4 (November 2014): 494–514.

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[43] Barbara Johnson, "Anthropomorphism in Lyric and Law," *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 10, no. 2 (1998): Article 15.

[44] Paul de de Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984), 266.

[45] Man, *The Rhetoric of Romanticism*, 266.

[46] Johnson, "Anthropomorphism in Lyric and Law," 555.

[47] Johnson, "Anthropomorphism in Lyric and Law," 555.

[48] Johnson, "Anthropomorphism in Lyric and Law," 553.

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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Over the course of the dissertation I have offered a reading of "the national conversation" that

takes syntax—the hegemonic articulation of a particular verb phrase—as its point of departure.

I have suggested that a shared syntax is the condition of possibility for the circulation and

uptake of a national *ethos* and that shared temporality offers an understanding of how the

national imaginary can cohere without "agreement" in the usual sense. In the first chapter I

suggested that the conditional "if, then" syntax of the financial crisis sustained a collective

imaginary struggling to reconcile the state and market rationalities necessary to the liberal

democratic fantasy. In the second chapter I suggested that the "has been" or past imperfective

syntax of the Ground Zero Mosque controversy re-turned the nation to the strong collective

identification it experienced during 9/11, which was much needed after the symbolic and

material failures of both the war on terror and the financial crash. Finally, in the third chapter, I

suggested that the historical present syntax of the "Restore America" rallies between Glenn

Beck and Jon Stewart re-constructed a national imperative to mind our manners. While the

particular syntaxes explored in each chapter produced different modes of national belonging,

my overall argument has been that each demonstrates the same rhetorical principle: syntaxes

civilize without necessarily being "civil."

All syntaxes, I've suggested, serve as a provisional suture of the constitutive

anachronism that makes both possible and impossible the *e pluribus unum* of national

identification. A common national syntax, then, is both the condition of possibility for a *civilis*

as such *and* that which marks the *civilis* as a necessary impossibility haunted by the

morphology or contingency of the verb phrase. As I conclude the dissertation, I reflect briefly

upon three productive implications this syntactic-rhetorical reading strategy of national

controversy has for rhetorical theory, criticism and political practice. One, rhetorical scholars

should take seriously the radical contingency of particular syntaxes and interrogate the desire

to ontologize any given syntax. Two, a strong theory of syntax puts into question the field's

recent turn toward "the local" or "the immanent," which on my view resettles the problematic

of simultaneity under new cover. Three, to bridge the current divide between a strong theory of

syntax and a desire for new routes to political change, I suggest that political activism might

benefit from strategic syntactic deployment and offer an example to conclude.

Thinking Syntax Rhetorically

I want to insist on a distinction between an "ontological" syntactic perspective—in

which syntaxes are assumed to *always* behave in a particular way—and a rhetorical

perspective, which considers the "action tendencies" of particular syntaxes or the way in which

a given syntax *tends* toward a particular effect without assuming that effect is necessary.[1]

Syntaxes, in other words, never simply appear as such in the discourse that they organize. In

each of the preceding case studies I engaged a particular syntax—the conditional mood, the

past imperfective, and the historic present—as a way to re-consider the rhetorical and

ideological make-up of the contemporary US national imaginary. Though each syntax's

dominant was shown to be particular to the discourse that the given syntax organized, I have

maintained throughout that while every discourse requires syntax to cohere, *which* syntax

might gain traction in any given discourse is a matter of complex articulations that necessitates

the close reading strategy engaged throughout this project. That said, each chapter has also

been informed by what I call an "ontological" approach to reading syntax, or a theoretical approach to syntax as an extrarhetorical phenomenon. For example, in chapter one I drew from a wide swath of scholarship on the conditional mood as *the* syntax of deliberative discourse for its ability to allow subjects to think the future in the present. However, that is not to say that the conditional mood always works as it did during the bailout discourse. In the next few paragraphs I further explicate the issue of syntactic "action tendencies" by discussing, first, the relationship between the past imperfective and trauma and, second, between the historical present and alienation.

Reflecting back on the discussion of the past imperfective and trauma in the context of the Ground Zero mosque controversy discussed in chapter two, I acknowledge the tendency for the past imperfective to articulate to trauma discourse of some kind.[2] Following Freud, for example, Michael Roth in the essay "Past Imperfect" defines trauma as "an unassimilated element of the past" that necessitates "subjects always re-narrate the past in the present."[3] Roth explains that, "It is the 'unfinished' quality of the relationship to the event that reveals it as traumatic; that is, that reveals the presence of an unhealed wound, a piercing of the psyche."[4] Roth's definition of trauma shares the temporal structure of the "past imperfective" aspect offered by linguist Bernard Comrie in chapter two: "without any beginning and without any end…[the] event is opened up, so that the speaker is now in the middle of the situation.[5].

That said, there is no necessary relationship between trauma and the past imperfective or, put differently, trauma is not trauma is not trauma. Which is to say, precisely because the originary trauma of subjectivization cannot be *closed* but only more or less successfully re-narrated, the "working out" of originary trauma—whether it be the national trauma of 9/11 or something else—can take any number of syntactical forms, *which may or not include the past*

imperfective. (Indeed, one could argue that the mark of trauma is not the past imperfective but rather the inability to syntactically "make sense" at all). Though the past imperfective may signal a kind of trauma discourse, the particular shape of that "trauma" and the ideological and national uses to which it is put still require close critical scrutiny. Indeed, as Jenny Edkins suggests, "the disruptive, back-to-front-time" of trauma is radically undecidable. It simultaneously threatens to disrupt "the smooth time" of state politics, returning the political back to its proper role in the nation-state *and* can be put to service on behalf of the state-sanctioned violence.[6] Writing just after 9/11 as plans for the war on terror began to take shape, Edkins observed:

> States moved rapidly to reinstate their control over time. But the time they set in place was a curious, unknown time, a time with no end in sight…the state, or whatever form of power is replacing it, has taken charge of trauma time.[7]

For Edkins, the events of September 11 did not result in *collision* between the "trauma time" of the victims and the "smooth time" of the state, but rather, in *collusion* such that "trauma time" became state time. It is this very "collusion" that introduces the possibility of radical contingency into the theory of trauma-as-resistance that Edkins and many others have taken to be *structurally* given rather than rhetorically constructed. My reading of the Cordoba House controversy both reaffirms the correlation between the past imperfective and trauma while simultaneously illustrating trauma's specificity in the Cordoba House controversy: repetitive xenophobia in which Constitutional rights are sacrificed for the sake of a newly-reconstructed ideal national subject—the sacrificed survivor.

Chapter three was a little more complicated because the historical present syntax that organized the Rally to Restore Sanity and the Restoring Honor Rally is currently undergoing a conceptual shift in the humanities from a device of salience to one of disorientation or

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alienation. Traditionally, the HP was regarded as "a device for foregrounding or evaluation" whose dominant purpose was "to dramatize narration and render it more vivid."[8] However, as Suzanne Fleischmann explains, the dominant assumption guiding this reading has started to falter. She writes:

> Less compelling is the second component of the traditional HP argument—that the effect of vividness produced by the HP derives from its ability to draw events out of the past and bring them into the present, since, other things being equal, what is present is more salient than what is not present. Yet representation need not entail 'presentification.' [This is] the fallacy of linking the HP…to the minusinterpretation (presenteness) rather than the zero-interpretation (timelessness).[9]

In other words, there is no necessary link between a shift from the past to the present tense and a "making present" or more salient. Indeed, it could just as often be the case that rather than reinscribing a hierarchy of tense—in which the present tense is somehow inherently marked as more important—the historical present *de*hierarchizes tense or scrambles chronology so that one cannot choose which elements to prioritize in narrative interpretation.

This second "zero-interpretation" perspective on the HP has begun to take hold within the humanities such that the HP or something like it becomes the affective mode of contemporary or postmodern life itself. Linguist Hidemitsu Takahashi describes this "zero-interpretation" of the HP:

> The speaker's temporal viewing position is removed from circumstances and anchored at the time of *those days* or *yesterday*, from which perspective the supposed action…may be viewed as if it were existent in the future. To put it differently, it is non-past with respect to the speaker's particular viewing position.[10]

When considered from the zero-interpretation perspective, then, the HP is radically *disorganizing* because it muddles that which is the condition of possibility for a viewing or subject position: time or, more accurately, temporal sequence. It is this understanding of the HP that underlies Lauren Berlant's deployment of the concept, which she describes as the "disturbed

time" of the "ongoing present."[11] The HP is a time without a clear sense of history or futurity, where events are experienced simultaneously and without order. Deprived of any recourse for temporal sense making, Berlant's outlook for life together in the HP is bleak:

> Facing the fact that no *form* of being in the political or politics—including withdrawing from them—will solve the problem of shaping the impasse of the historical present, what alternatives remain for remaking the fantastmatic/material infrastructure of collective life? Is the best one can hope for realistically a stubborn collective refusal to give out, wear out, or admit defeat?[12]

To arrive at this conclusion Berlant makes two moves. First, she fixes the constitutive order/disorder ambiguity of the HP such that it necessarily disorders or alienates and, second, she essentializes the HP as *the* syntax of the contemporary moment. The political effect of this doubled move is a world in which the *macro* structures must be abandoned for the *micro* processes of everyday life or what Berlant describes as the aesthetic. As I discuss below, on my view rhetorical scholars have taken up—if implicitly—a similar anxiety about the macro political dependent on the essentialization of the disorderliness of the HP. In other words, I'll suggest that the turn toward "the local" or "the imminent" within rhetorical studies engages an ironic reversal: as the decay of *macro* political structures are said to necessitate a turn toward the *micro* political, rhetorical scholars displace the imminent critique of syntax espoused in this dissertation with a transcendental perspective in which every discourse takes as its point of departure the HP as an alienating way of life.

Dia[u]retic Publics

The dismal trappings of the HP that Berlant documents in her recent work *Cruel Optimism* have been operative in rhetorical studies for well over a decade. Notably, in 2002 Robert Hariman lamented the alienating effects of a world without syntactic hierarchy or what he describes as "postmodern enculturation":

The pervasive retelling of the past, the displacement of ritual and institutional contexts for public memory, the translation of historical narrative into visual images that can be shown publicly, the continuous appropriation of all images without regard to original reference, genre, or occasion, the continuous interposition of images from the history of the media and its popular culture into the historical record, the syntax of an omnipresent present in media representation, and other such characteristics of modern media production work together to disable any stable sense of historical context and succession. The consciousness of the mass media is one in which all ages are contemporaneous within the natural attitude of the present, which makes any sign of the past but a fragment of a lost totality.[13]

For Hariman, the postmodern moment is marked by a temporal experience of "contemporaneity" or an "omnipresent present" in which "all history lies in ruins."[14] Without a clear sense of history and "succession," Hariman suggests, subjects are unable to anchor themselves in the world.

From "locality"[15] and "place-based arguments"[16] to "counter regions"[17] and the "counterpublic"[18] the search for a "politics of difference"[19] has turned away from the national toward the regional."[20] As *the* American nation is increasingly described as *a* "factional America," factions are becoming the object du jour.[21] Rhetorical theorists and critics are denouncing the national civic contract in favor of what Barbara Biesecker has described as "the unmistakable creep of the immanent": the local, the multiple, the body, the place, the dissensual, the micro, the sensory, and the aesthetic.[22] In the words of Brouwer and Asen:

A move to multiplicity has been motivated by the recognition that modeling the public sphere as a singular arena devalues or excludes the contributions of less powerful members of society…A networked or webbed public sphere challenges claims to singularity and centrality, rejecting the position that only one group may express public opinion or provide a privileged public perspective.[23]

Although not entirely detached from their broader cultural, economic, and political milieus, fragments—or *"discourses that emanate from bodies, places, and topics"*—offer rhetorical scholars a comforting and pragmatic worm's eye view of the political landscape.[24]

Whereas the unified public sphere metaphor was taken to task for its *lack* of fault lines, the proliferation of publics or regional turn enables the production of more gaps, antagonisms,

and dissensus on the way to political change or what Thomas West describes as "the heuristic value of conflict."[25] Kendall Phillips describes this as "dissensus" and advocates a critical perspective in which "resistance can be thought of as a kind of friction against which the relations of power must operate to achieve governance."[26] Friction, and the proliferation of publics it accompanies, offers more rewarding critical endeavors because it is underwritten by a suffering-equals-virtue or dissensus-equals-change equation.[27] Nancy Fraser sums up this perspective well when she writes, "In general, the proliferation of subaltern counterpublics means a widening of discursive contestation, and that is a good thing in stratified societies."[28] It is with a similar set of commitments that John Sloop and Kent Ono encourage rhetorical critics to find and re-distribute "out-law discourses…as provocateurs for the social imagination, a way to disrupt existing systems and logics of judgment."[29] Sloop and Ono's presumption is that, by virtue of being oppressed, marginalized voices would productively disrupt dominant institutions of discourse *if only they could be heard*.

Localism operates according to a rhetorical logic of *diaresis* that demands critical correction. Victor J. Vitanza describes operations of *diaresis* as "species-genus analytics" that produces definitions by dividing a genus into its species, or a whole into its parts.[30] Hermogenes believed that *diaresis* was the most important part of rhetoric because it made it possible to continually divide political questions into constituent parts and, by virtue of isolating the right part, offered definitions and solutions necessary for adequate judgments.[31] As an instantiation of *diaresis,* localism operates by dividing a genus such as "the social" or "the public" into its species (neighborhoods, housing developments, national parks, town halls, micro publics, etc.) in order to address important political problems that could not be addressed at the level of genus.

The rhetorical trick is that the genus-species relationship is not simply *divisionary* in the sense of splitting apart but rather *replicatory.* A type of *metaplasm*—remodeling or reproduction—*diaresis* produces the many from the one and, in doing so, simultaneously destroys and resurrects the original by creating copies of the original in its place and ensuring its survival. *Diaresis'* logic is that of the virus, which Jacques Derrida describes (by way of a biological metaphor worthy of investigation on its own right): "neither living nor dead, which carries delayed death in its self-multiplication."[32] Like any moment of reproduction *diaresis* creates in its own image when it creates anew. As Lisa Block de Behar describes:

> Strangely enough, the same contradictory principle—that is, multiplication of a figure in a mirror or in species—gives birth to something that already exists; something which has begun before its own beginning, involving imagination and species, or the imagination of the species…Through reproduction—textual as well as sexual reproduction—the existent species is saved from extinction.[33]

The logic of *diaresis,* as Block de Behar notes, is paradoxical; it is simultaneously destructive and creative; original and copy; identification and difference. Put differently by Harvey Ronald Scodel: "*Diaresis* is a dianoetic procedure [way of reasoning] which imposes unity upon disparate phenomena…it synthesizes even as it divides. The mind must be *made* to work in this way."[34]

On my view, the dia[u]retic replication of localism is a re-turn to *simultaneity* as the un-interrogated essence of collective belonging. Whether subjects watch live coverage of the JFK assassination or attend a cloistered meeting of the local assembly they feel connected to one another because they experience that event *at the same time.*[35] Localism falls prey not only to the trick of simultaneity, but also of *proximity*, which is to say that the smaller the scale or the closer the space, the more real or immediate the connection or experience of simultaneity. Therefore, localism has more in common with nationalism than it lets on; its difference is *nounal* which is

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to say that localism sets itself apart only by changing proper names. However, as Foucault reminds us, what enables "common names" to stand "next to *and also opposite* one another" is syntax.[36] A different name, then, may be no difference at all.

Localism yields a politics evacuated of rhetoric. The hegemonic or the "whole" is aligned with the status quo, the ruling class, and dominant interests. The "parts" are split off, imbued with the virtue of the oppressed and a "vernacular" that stands apart from the dominant common sense.[37] From Aaron Hess's perspective, "looking toward vernacular rhetorical discourses, rhetorical scholars examine locally situated discourses as they articulate against oppressive macrocontexts."[38] Nowhere is this micro-fetishization clearer than in McKerrow's germinal 1989 essay, which draws explicit boundaries between the "domination" of the hegemonic ruling class and the potential "freedom" that resides in "a nominalist rhetoric…directed against the universalizing tendencies of a Habermasian communicative ethics or a Perelmanesque philosophical rhetoric."[39] Ostensibly under Foucault's influence, McKerrow eschews the universal in favor of the particular, placing under erasure the hegemonic logic that contaminates the division from the start. Writing as though rhetorical scholars already "know" the identity proper to the hegemonic, which McKerrow describes as the "primary reading," critical rhetoric encourages "polysemic critique…which uncovers a subordinate or secondary reading which contains the seeds of subversion or rejection or authority."[40]

In place of rhetoric and politics, localism has substituted ontologies of difference. Taking their cue from Lyotard, for example, Kent Ono and John Sloop "encourage critics to look for cases of 'the differend' or 'incommensurability' (which requires that one take into account various logics and their power relations)…in order to provide a radical rethinking of the possibilities for any given discourse."[41] In an odd ethical fellowship with Foucault, Kendall

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Phillips argues that, "antagonisms reveal the limitations of existing formations of discourse and create a space where alternative discursive and material systems may be proposed."[42] And Gerald Hauser dedicates *Vernacular Voices* to the recuperation of Otherness that is the pivot point of the "inclusive solidarity" necessary to "multicultural republics." In Hauser's words, "A rhetorical model would require openness to those conditions that produce a plurality."[43]

These projects not only sacrifice a strong theory of rhetoric for a politics of the quotidian, they also misread the ethical imperative of post-structuralism that underlies their motivation: *openness to Otherness*.[44] Indeed, the doctrine of Otherness has become so taken-for-granted that it is practically heretical to suggest it's an illegitimate conclusion, which is precisely what Laclau argues:

> The illegitimate transition is to think that from the impossibility of a presence closed in itself, from an 'ontological' condition in which the openness to the event, to the heterogeneous, to the radically other is constitutive, some kind of ethical injunction to be responsible and to keep oneself open to the heterogeneity of the other necessarily follows… from the fact that there is the impossibility of ultimate closure and presence, it does not follow that there is an ethical imperative to 'cultivate' that openness or even less to be necessarily committed to a democratic society.[45]

Put simply, the fact that a constitutive antagonism structures every identity is not grounds to foster more antagonism. Indeed, there is nothing to suggest that more antagonisms will do what any constitutive antagonism has not: make the signifier slide. As Barbara Biesecker has noted, friction offers a "mapping of social space [that] makes it easier to know who one is for and who one is against" but "[i]t is precisely in the process of fusion that a surplus or excess is produced, one which interrupts from within the totalizing gesture."[46]

If the ethical project isn't one of unrestricted openness, then, what is it? Again, Laclau: "It is because of this constitutive incompletion that decisions have to be taken."[47] The decision, or the necessary and difficult work of drawing boundaries around the social, is precisely what we

avoid when we take critical shelter in the local and the particular. Brouwer and Asen's introduction to *Public Modalities* performs such a sheltering under the guise of openness. "Modalities" is introduced both as an exemplary metaphor for the public *and* simply one among many ways as the authors pursue "a more complex understanding of public life" or "metaphoric collaboration."[48] Brouwer and Asen continue: "[M]etaphoric complementarity underscores our desire to offer modality as a displacement, not replacement of…other metaphors."[49] But this politics of inclusion doesn't work. Returning briefly to Burke, metaphors don't collaborate—they substitute. And one does not desire displacement—to be put out of place—because desire is always the desire for recognition, the desire to be put in place.

Placement is at the very core of the hegemonic logic because a particular finds its place only by assuming the content of heterogeneous demands and constructing "a people." As Michael Warner explains, "the way *the* public functions in the public sphere—as *the people*—is only possible because it is really *a* public of discourse."[50] However, by turning struggle into its own kind of virtue, public sphere theory denies the hegemonic impulse of *any* particular. Every particular, counterpublic, locality, or minority has totalitarian aspirations—its logical impulse is ascendance to the position of the hegemon. As Biesecker suggests, "we must be vigilant against the desire to interpret all gestures toward inclusion as inherently revolutionary or *necessarily* disruptive of the status quo."[51]

To think politically is to regard hegemony as an identity or thing-in-the-world and to either adopt one of two positions or vacillate awkwardly between: a neo-Habermasian desire for reconciliation and consensus or a moralizing valorization of any identity or thing that stands in opposition to the hegemonic. Thinking rhetorically, on the other hand, takes all identities in the world as aspiring hegemons and asks after the relations of signification that make possible the

existing configuration.[52] In other words, rhetoric requires that we think all *nouns* as *verbal*

effects. On this view, every public, no matter how micro, is a hegemon in wait and every force or

effect no matter how immanent—aspires to the level of logic. That is not to deny that there are

serious political and socio-economic disadvantages to many disempowered groups; but the

rhetorical perspective aims at a different kind of intervention and does not mistake structural

disadvantage for virtue, articulation for identity, or antagonism for class struggle. As Dana Cloud

and Joshua Gunn put it, "the critical act need not assume victimage or essentialism."[53]

Antagonism, like hegemony, is not an identity proper. Antagonism is a provisional

placeholder, a name for that which makes the totality a necessary impossibility and ensures that

things could be otherwise than they are. There is an antagonism that is constitutive of the

national but that antagonism is not reducible to any specific class interest or identity proper.

Indeed, it's a *verbal* antagonism; a "constitutive anachronism" that necessitates that national

subjects must always construct a belief in a shared national time on which the national imaginary

depends. Put differently, the constitutive anachronism of any identity or noun is always in-

closure through the *verb phrase*, or a particular discourse's *syntax* or rules of temporalization. In

the third section of this conclusion, then, I suggest that while something like a vernacular

"public" forecloses the possibility of rhetoric, something like a theory of "vernacular syntax"

might re-open it. Although I consider each of the preceding chapters to take aim at something

like a vernacular syntax—a syntax that whose effects are imminent in their discursive

deployment—in the next section I return to the Ground Zero Mosque controversy from chapter

two to suggest how syntaxes can be radically *disruptive* as in the case of the *infinitive* verb

morphology of the Cordoba House founders.

Syntax and Politics: The Infinitive

In his September 20, 2001 Address to the Nation, Bush made clear the rhetorical end-game of the war on terror: "this country will define our times, not be defined by them."[54] More so than terrorists, weapons of mass destruction, or the hearts and minds of Iraqis and Afghanis, the war on terror sought to apprehend time—to make it faster. By defining a certain kind of public time, the Bush administration ensured the war on terror would proceed without delay or deliberation. As Roger Stahl states, "tropes of 'time' work[ed] to construct an authoritarian politics" that operated both at the level of argument and "under the surface of public discourse as the very grounds for discussion."[55] However, to "define our times," the war on terror needed more than authoritarian politics: it needed a national imaginary—a dominant collective consciousness that would resonate personally with each American.[56]

Barbara Biesecker detects both authoritarian politics and a corresponding, albeit bereft, national imaginary in the Bush administration's "ubiquitous deployment of the future anterior" or the "will have been."[57] Biesecker argues that the speeches Bush delivered during the formative years of the war on terror simultaneously refigured America as the nation it had always imagined itself to be and placed that new figuration under imminent threat. In her words, the Bush administration "miraculously delivered the American people back to itself," by "persuad[ing] us to act *as if* a certain loss had occurred even though it [had] in fact *not yet* been lost."[58] In turn, "for the sake of protecting what *will have been* lost: namely, the democratic way of life," the war on terror's melancholic citizen-subject of the war on terror relinquished authority entirely "to the remilitarized state."[59] The results were astounding. In a 2003 article entitled "Rally Round the Flag," the *Brookings Institute* concluded that, "The Iraq war validated a basic rule of American politics: the American public closes ranks in times of national

crisis…The surge of patriotism …extended beyond the White House to raise optimism about the country's institutions and American society as a whole."[60]

By the time of the Cordoba House controversy in 2010, however, the disappointing realities of the war on terror had seriously undermined its patriotic gains. In 2008, a BBC World Service Poll declared the war on terror a "failure" with both U.S. and international audiences;[61] international courts even convicted Bush and U.S. allies of "war crimes for their 2003 aggressive attack on Iraq, as well as fabricating pretexts used to justify the attack."[62] Especially damaging, argues Marita Gronnvoll, were the "grievous abuses of power [that] perhaps forever knocked the United States from the moral high ground it claimed as justification for the invasion of Iraq."[63]

Amidst the rapid deterioration of the democratic mythos of the war on terror, the founders of the Cordoba House Daisy Khan and Imam Feisal Abdul Rauf issued a new democratic vision for America and it came in the form of a decisive syntactic shift from the future anterior to the infinitive. As Rauf wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*, "it's time *to build* a Global Coalition of the Moderates…I ask my brothers and sisters of all faiths, especially members of the media, *to join* hands with me *in building* that future."[64] As Rauf repeatedly suggested during his speaking tours and in his writing, West-Muslim relations required a new relationship to the past and future that placed *current* difficulties—not tradition or promise—at the center of policy. Rauf writes in *What's Right With Islam*: "*Healing* the relationship between the Muslim world and the West in an urgent time frame requires *implementing* a quick-acting, multi-track process *to address* a broad spectrum of issues that have fueled the conflict."[65]

Rauf's challenge to America came in the form of the *infinitive* morphology, which is commonly understood in English to be a tenseless verb form or default morphology before conjugation. However, as linguist Susi Wurmbrand explains, infinitives are not tenseless but, like

any other morphology, imply a specific relationship between the speaker and events being narrated. Rauf's statements take the form of "propositional attitude infinitives," which in Wurmbrand's words, "impose the NOW of the propositional attitude holder as the reference time of the infinitive."[66] Unlike the Bush administrations' future anterior, in which the present is already pressed into the service of a future that shall come to pass, the infinitive opens up space for a "now" as the moment of evaluation unmoored from a past or present. Khan deployed the infinitive in this way when she emphasized the "need *to mourn*" in an interview withn *Newsweek.*[67]

In addition to a "to" bare verb constructive, progressive or dynamic verbs—which show qualities capable of change—are also characteristic of the infinitive form. Progressive verbs such as "means" and "shaping" suggest events that are currently underway, and take their dominant meaning from neither past realities nor future expectations but are open to interpretation in the present. As Rauf illustrates, progressive forms extend or radically open the "now" of the infinitive: "The U.S. military victory over Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq *means* that America is *now* responsible *for shaping* a new Iraq."[68]

This discussion of the infinitive has been cursory because the point is not to discuss yet another syntax but rather to illustrate the way in which syntaxes can be politically disruptive. Indeed, that the public converged so vehemently around the past imperfective—even Rauf and Khan would eventually adopt the traumatic syntax—suggests the threatening or political potential of the infinitive. That is not to say that the imperfective is "the" syntax of deliberation or political change—though further exploration might suggest this is the infinitive's "action tendency"—but rather to suggest that within the Cordoba House controversy's specific rhetorical situation it functioned as such.

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In returning to the Cordoba House controversy discussed in chapter two I hope to have illustrated the distinction between reading syntax rhetorically—as the provisional suture of a constitutive anachronism that makes possible something like the national imaginary—and an ontological approach to syntax in which rhetoric becomes a secondary response to a way of life that is alternatively traumatic, alienating, etc. This, of course, describes the hegemonic arc or "life cycle" of any syntax ascending to the level of national *ethos*, re-starting as a radically *political* disruption to the existing syntactical order that sheds its force as it grows increasingly commonsensical or "civilizing" until another syntax usurps it. I hope to have offered a strongly rhetorical theory of syntax as another critical strategy for interrogating the impossible "now" of national belonging.

Notes

[1] Following Celeste M. Condit, "Pathos in Criticism: Edwin Black's Communism-as-Cancer Metaphor," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 99, no. 1 (January 2013): 1–26.

[2] See, for example, the collection of essays in Antze, Paul and Lambek, Michael, eds., *Tense Past: Cultural Essays in Trauma and Memory* (New York: Routledge, 1998), http://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/tense-past-paul-antze/1120727259.

[3] Michael S. Roth, "Past Imperfect," *Tikkun*, September 1995.

[4] Roth, "Past Imperfect."

[5] Comrie, *Aspect,* 5.

[6] Edkins, 229 - 30

[7] Edkins, 233

[8] Fleischman, *Tense and Narrativity*, 285.

[9] Fleischman, *Tense and Narrativity*, 286.

[10] Takahashi, *A Cognitive Linguistic Analysis of the English Imperative*, 72.

[11] In the beginnings of her affective turn, Berlant actually included "the history of the present" as an essay keyword. See Berlant, "Thinking About Feeling Historical," 5.

[12] Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*, 259.

[13] Robert Hariman, "Allegory and Democratic Public Culture in the Postmodern Era," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 34, no. 4 (October 2002): 267–96.

[14] Hariman, "Allegory and Democratic Public Culture in the Postmodern Era," 269.

[15] Greg Dickinson Jessie Stewart, "Enunciating Locality in the Postmodern Suburb: FlatIron Crossing and the Colorado Lifestyle," *Western Journal of Communication* 72 (2008): 282, doi:10.1080/10570310802210148.

[16] Danielle Endres and Samantha Senda-Cook, "Location Matters: The Rhetoric of Place in Protest," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 97, no. 3 (January 2011): 258.

[17] Dave Tell, "The Meanings of Kansas: Rhetoric, Regions, and Counter Regions," *RSQ: Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (May 2012): 214–32, doi:10.1080/02773945.2012.682843.

[18] Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Resisting 'National Breast Cancer Awareness Month': The Rhetoric of Counterpublics and Their Cultural Performances," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 4 (November 2003): 347.

[19] Iris Marion Young, "The Ideal of Community and the Politics of Difference," in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. Linda J Nicholson, Thinking Gender (New York: Routledge, 1990), 300–323.

[20] The name given to this shift is "critical regionalism." See Hal W. Fulmer and Carl L. Kell, "A Sense of Place, a Spirit of Adventure: Implications for the Study of Regional Rhetoric," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 20, no. 3 (July 1, 1990): 225–32; Ronald Walter Greene and Kevin Douglas Kuswa, "'From the Arab Spring to Athens, From Occupy Wall Street to Moscow': Regional Accents and the Rhetorical Cartography of Power," *RSQ: Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (May 2012): 271–88, doi:10.1080/02773945.2012.682846; Douglas Reichert Powell, *Critical Regionalism: Connecting Politics and Culture in the American Landscape* (UNC Press Books, 2007); Jenny Rice, "From Architectonic to Tectonics: Introducing Regional Rhetorics," *RSQ: Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (May 2012): 201–13, doi:10.1080/02773945.2012.682831; Tell, "The Meanings of Kansas."

[21] Brian Mark Weber, "Progressives Seek to Divide Americans along Racial and Ethnic Lines," *Examiner.com*, August 26, 2013, http://www.examiner.com/article/progressives-seek-to-divide-americans-along-racial-and-ethnic-lines.

[22] Barbara A. Biesecker, "The Obligation to Theorize, Today," *Western Journal of Communication* 77, no. 5 (October 2013): 519, doi:10.1080/10570314.2013.805240.

[23] Daniel C. Brouwer and Robert Asen, "Public Modalities, or the Metaphors We Theorize By," in *Public Modalities*, ed. Daniel C. Brouwer and Robert Asen (University of Alabama Press, 2010), 6.

[24] David Kaufer and Amal Mohammed Al-Malki, "The War on Terror through Arab-American Eyes: The Arab-American Press as a Rhetorical Counterpublic," *Rhetoric Review* 28, no. 1 (January 2009): 47–65, doi:10.1080/07350190802540724.

[25] West, "Beyond Dissensus."

[26] Phillips, "Spaces of Invention," 335.

[27] Kathryn Thomas Flannery, "The Passion of Conviction: Reclaiming Polemic for a Reading of Second-Wave Feminism," *Rhetoric Review* 20, no. 1/2 (May 2001): 113–29, doi:10.1080/07350198.2001.9683377.

[28] Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere," 67.

[29] John M. Sloop and Kent A. Ono, "Out-Law Discourse: The Critical Politics of Material Judgment," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 30, no. 1 (1997): 63.

[30] Victor J. Vitanza, *Negation, Subjectivity, and The History of Rhetoric* (SUNY Press, 1997).

[31] Harvey Ronald Scodel, *Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987).

[32] Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida, *Veils* (Stanford University Press, 2001).

[33] Lisa Block de Behar, *A Rhetoric of Silence and Other Selected Writings* (Walter de Gruyter, 1995), 22.

[34] Harvey Ronald Scodel, *Diaeresis and Myth in Plato's Statesman* (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1987), 27.

[35] Samuel McCormick, "Neighbors and Citizens: Local Speakers in the Now of Heir Recognizability," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 44, no. 4 (November 2011): 424–45.

[36] Foucault, *The Order of Things*.

[37] Gerard A. Hauser, *Vernacular Voices : The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Spheres*, Studies in Rhetoric/communication (Columbia : University of South Carolina, 1999).

[38] Aaron Hess, "Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography: Rethinking the Place and Process of Rhetoric," *Communication Studies* 62, no. 2 (April 2011): 127, doi:10.1080/10510974.2011.529750.

[39] Raymie E. Mckerrow, "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis," *Communication Monographs* 56, no. 2 (June 1989): 105.

[40] Mckerrow, "Critical Rhetoric," 108.

[41] Sloop and Ono, "Out-Law Discourse," 528–9 .

[42] Phillips, "A Rhetoric of Controversy," 494.

[43] Hauser, *Vernacular Voices*, pg?. Palciewski's book review of Hauser: "A call to expand our study of the public sphere to include vernacular rhetoric is one with which I agree. In many ways, public discourse is more alive and well in the coffee shops and bars of small towns than it is on the floor of Congress. However, if one is to study this vernacular exchange, then the critic should look to those contingent, fluid, and hard-to-track exchanges," ; Palczewski, "Vernacular Voices." 683.

[44] This phrase is shorthand for a vast body of post-structuralist thought that has wrestled with the constitutive openness, alterity, antagonism, and heterogeneity that is the condition of impossibility for any identity being self-same and which in turn animates the ethical relationship among subjects. In the words of Emmanuel Lévinas, "[t]he conjuncture in which a man is responsible for other men, the ethical relationship, which is habitually considered as belonging to a derivative or founded order [is] irreducible. It is structured as the-one-for-the-other,"

Emmanuel Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being, Or, Beyond Essence* (Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 135.

[45] Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, 77–78.

[46] Barbara Biesecker, "Recalculating the Relation of the Public and Technical Spheres," *Conference Proceedings -- National Communication Association/American Forensic Association (Alta Conference on Argumentation)*, October 1989, 70 and 68, respectively.

[47] Laclau, *Emancipation(s)*, pg#?

[48] Brouwer and Asen, "Public Modalities, or the Metaphors We Theorize By."

[49] Brouwer and Asen, "Public Modalities, or the Metaphors We Theorize By," 17.

[50] Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 2002, pg #?

[51] Barbara Biesecker, "Coming to Terms with Recent Attempts to Write Women into the History of Rhetoric," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 25, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 144.

[52] Scott Welsh, "Coming to Terms with the Antagonism between Rhetorical Reflection and Political Agency," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 45, no. 1 (February 2012): 1–23.

[53] Dana L. Cloud and Joshua Gunn, "Introduction: W(h)ither Ideology?," *Western Journal of Communication* 75, no. 4 (July 2011): 414, doi:10.1080/10570314.2011.588897.

[54] Bush, "Address," September 20, 2001.

[55] Roger Stahl, "A Clockwork War: Rhetorics of Time in a Time of Terror," *The Quarterly Journal of Speech* 94, no. 1 (2008): 74 – 5.

[56] For a definition of the social imaginary, see Lauren Berlant, *The Anatomy of National Fantasy: Hawthorne, Utopia and Everyday Life. (*Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1991): 5.

[57] Barbara Biesecker, "No Time for Mourning: The Rhetorical Production of the Melancholic Citizen-Subject in the War on Terror," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 40, no. 1 (2007): 152.

[58] Biesecker, 147 and 153.

[59] Ibid, 152.

[60] Caroline Smith and James M. Lindsay, "Rally 'Round the Flag: Opinion in the United States before and after the Iraq War," *Brookings Institute,* Summer 2003, http://www.brookings.edu/research/articles/2003/06/summer-iraq-lindsay.

[61] BBC World Service Poll, "US 'War on Terror' Has Not Weakened al Quaeda, Says Global Poll," September 28, 2008, http://www.worldpublicopinion.org/pipa/pdf/sep08/BBCAlQaeda_Sep08_rpt.pdf.

[62] Glenn Greenwald, "Bush and Blair Found Guilty of War Crimes for Iraq Attack," *Salon*, November 23, 2011, http://www.salon.com/2011/11/23/bush_and_blair_found_guilty_of_war_crimes_for_iraq_attack /.

[63] Marita Gronnvoll, "Gender (In)Visibility at Abu Ghraib," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 10, no. 3 (2007): 372.

[64] Feisal Abdul Rauf, "A Call to All Religious Moderates," *Wall Street Journal*, September 9, 2011, sec. Opinion, http://online.wsj.com/news/articles/SB10001424053111903596904576514602732108870.

[65] Ibid, 252.

[66] Susi Wurmbrand, "Tense and Aspect in English Infinitives," *Linguistic Inquiry* 45, no. 3 (July 1, 2014): 404, doi:10.1162/LING_a_00161.

[67] Lisa Miller, "War Over Ground Zero: A Proposed Mosque Tests the Limits of American Tolerance," *Newsweek,* August 16, 2010, 27, http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2010/08/08/war-over-ground-zero.html.

[68] Feisal Abdul Rauf, *What's Right with Islam: A New Vision for Muslims and the West* (New York: HarperCollins, 2005), xiii.