Bush's S20 and the Re-routing of American Order

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We know perfectly well that we are not free to say just anything, that we cannot simply speak of anything, when we like or where we like; not just anyone, finally, may speak of just anything.1

 . . . it's a terrible thing to say, and it's unfortunate. And that's why . . . all Americans . . . need to watch what they say, watch what they do. This is not a time for remarks like that; there never is.2

Introduction

   This essay outlines constitutive relationships between George W. Bush's September 20, 2001 national address and concrete changes within post-9/11 America. Many progressives, including me, believe that Bush's response to 9/11 helped usher in a less favorable America. Review of progressive authorship reveals two dominant concerns: bureaucratic expansion and hyper-defensiveness.3 The Patriot Act, TIPS hotlines, the Department of Homeland Security, mandatory interviewing, France-boycotts, Dixie Chick-bashing, thirty-foot flags, pre-emptive military doctrine, and invasion and occupation only scratch the surface. These concerns and corresponding analyses are important. But too few analyses examine the links between what Bush *says* and what institutions and people *do*. This essay fills that need by shedding light on the relationship

between the Bush's Administration's rhetoric and the mobilization of the American social order.

My analysis centers on George W. Bush's September 20, 2001 national address (S20). The speech is officially titled "Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People." Bush had addressed the nation the evening of September 11th, but S20 was his official response. And by default, then, it served as the response of the nation.

I argue that S20 helps to re-route two modes of social order: institutional order and personal order. The first concerns bureaucratic chains of command that dictate public policy, etc. The second concerns the communication of our everyday lives. Together, these two modes of order provide an analytical lens for understanding the protein of social life. My analysis begins with the institutional and then proceeds to the personal. I then conclude the essay by inviting all concerned citizens to expose further the constitutive relationships between political rhetoric and social conditions.

I want to make two methodological clarifications before beginning my analysis. First, all references to the S20 speech are from the speech transcript downloaded from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html>. I have assigned a number to each paragraph of the speech, ranging from 1 to 57. This makes for a more accurate analysis of S20. The numbering begins with "The PRESIDENT," and ends with "Thank you. (Applause)." All citations of S20 refer to the paragraph, not the page number. Also, when referring to S20, I use in-text parenthetical citations, making for an easier read.

Second, I am a critical communication scholar sympathetic to, but also skeptical of, post-structural analysis. Human reality is not an anything goes process. That's wrong. Some perspectives are better than others. Making such an evaluation comes by way of, and must be grounded in, the material conditions of everyday living. What perspectives give us the best chance to live more fulfilling lives and create a more egalitarian society? Post-structuralists traditionally shy from this question. I do not. But I do advocate for the continual questioning of all perspectives, even the ones that I endorse. Socrates, with his "frank and fearless speech," would agree, and so too would Cornel West, with his "prophetic pragmatism."[4] None of us is perfect. Instead, we are finite embodied beings situated within a decentered, self-organizing social order: We create the order and the order creates us.[5] All phenomena, and the (dis)appearance and evoked meanings thereof, are communicatively constituted. This constitutive process is no light affair; it is the means by which human realities are created and fought over.

My investigation of Bush's speech is part of and contributes to the overall social order. This means that all works, scholarly or otherwise, are referentially reflexive.[6] We are left with the critic as inventor, where we pull together disparate scraps of discourse and construct arguments that seek to illuminate hidden or taken for granted social practices.[7] Such an approach favors critical and ongoing dialogue and a willingness to rethink assertions. This itself challenges the tenets of S20 and the dominant framework of our current social situation. Any critique or questioning of S20 is deemed wrong and anti-

American. My essay breaks open this anti-democratic hegemony, reveals some of its internal operations, and serves as a good first step in constructing an alternative understanding of post-9/11 America.

Re-routing Modes of Order

There are two types of order discussed in the S20: institutional and personal. Institutional order refers to various bureaucratic agencies, centers, governing bodies, departments, laws, rules, regulations, etc. Personal order refers to how people act, behave, gesture, talk and live; and, how we reciprocally affect and influence each other. Institutional order is from the "top down"; its power resides in the hands of the decision makers, what Noam Chomsky might call the "coordinating class."[8] Institutional order circulates at the top of the social hierarchy and trickles down into the soils of everyday life. Personal order is from the "bottom up"; its power resides among all of us, what some philosophers might call the "pre-reflective world-of-life"; it has no necessary origination and continually circulates among our everyday interactions.[9] These modes of order, the institutional and personal, are *not* mutually exclusive. In fact, they are often difficult to distinguish. The "decision makers" are part of the masses, and the masses, to whatever degree, participate in social coordination. We could talk about our level of citizen participation, the limits of representative democracy, multiple modes of social order, etc.; but that is another essay. Suffice it to say that institutional and personal orders, serving as analytical distinctions, are woven together, producing the protein of social and cultural life. And when either of or both modes are disrupted, so too is society.

Take for instance the collapse of the Twin Towers. The World Trade Center (WTC) itself embodied both modes of order: it helped to regulate the flow of finances, constituting a strand of institutional order; and it was a site of cultural activity, i.e., personal order. Bush's S20 (to whatever degree) recognizes this. As he states, "I ask for your continued participation and confidence in the American economy. . ." (43). A few paragraphs later, he states that "We will come together to take active steps that strengthen America's economy, and put our people back to work" (48). A strand of institutional order was disrupted with the collapse of the Towers, and S20 seeks to actively re-order it.

Also, the thousands of people that congregated at WTC everyday formed a micro-culture of patterned behavior, with expectations of etiquette, spoken and unspoken rules, and discussions of not just business, but of families, friends, weekend activities, lunch choices, divorces, child-rearing, birthdays, politics, religion, etc. Bush's S20 implicitly addresses this issue throughout. He states, for instance, that we will not "forget the citizens of 80 other nations who died with our own: dozens of Pakistanis; more than 130 Israelis; more than 250 citizens of India; men and women from El Salvador, Iran, Mexico and Japan; and hundreds of British citizens" (11). This acknowledges the WTC as an epicenter of international cultural activity and a site of personal order.

The effects of 9/11 went beyond the modes of order immediately present within the WTC. The effects reverberated throughout the American landscape, disrupting and disturbing institutional and personal order at various levels. It follows then that S20

would address this issue. In the next two sections, I discuss how S20 copes with, and helps to reroute, institutional and personal modes of order.

Institutional Order

Nine/eleven was an international incident on domestic land, involving hostile foreign combatants. The nature of *this* situation asks us to rely upon particular strands of institutional order. For instance, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is a strand of institutional order that is specifically equipped to address this particular situation. There are other strands of institutional order that apply, specifically: the Central Intelligence Agency; States Department's Bureau of Intelligence; Defense Intelligence Agency; the National Security Agency (NSA); the Immigration and Naturalization Services (INS); the Federal Emergency Management Agency; Center for Disease Control; Department of Health and Human Services; the Secrete Service; police and fire departments, federal and air marshals; the Pentagon; the Department of Defense; Congress; civil service departments; think tanks; university administrations; banking and credit institutions; financial centers and insurance companies; Department of Transportation; National Transportation Safety Board; air, bus, and subway traffic controls; speech writing staff; editorial boards and television production crews; public relations firms; etc. Also, each of these strands is composed of even smaller strands; e.g., each committee has a sub-committee, each office has another coordinating office, and so on. There are multiple bureaucracies linked in a multilateral fashion, with little to no center, creating a leviathan of order. These various strands of order, whether specifically referred to or not, are manifest in Bush's S20.

As Bush states, "Today, dozens of federal departments and agencies, as well as state and local governments, have responsibilities" (31). Many strands of order must be mobilized, "from FBI agents to intelligence operatives to the reservists we have called to active duty" (34). A few lines later in the same paragraph, Bush announces that the "Armed forces" have been called "to alert." That is, be ready because the mobilization will soon begin and you will be set in motion.

These strands of order must also be expanded, given new freedoms to properly carry out their function. We will need the help of "thousands of FBI agents" (41); we will "give law enforcement" . . . "additional tools," and we will "strengthen our intelligence capabilities" (47). Expansion is needed in more centralized areas, too. For instance, we must "dramatically expand the number of air marshals on domestic flights" (46). To help coordinate all this mobilizing, Bush has created a new "Cabinet-level position," the department of "Homeland Security" (31). This institutes a *new strand* of order. Our institutional order has now taken a new turn. We are now consciously seeking and publicly announcing a particular program. This program consists of (i) overseeing institutional order, and (ii) insulating us from attack, particularly, terrorist attack. The Department of Homeland Security website states three primary missions: "Prevent terrorist attacks within the United States, reduce America's vulnerability to terrorism, and minimize the damage from potential attacks and natural disasters."[10]

Success of these missions necessitates at least two things. First, we must oversee the contours of institutional order; an institution to watch the institution. This is a "big government," bureaucratic approach. This contradicts, or at least changes, slightly, Bush's Republican philosophy of "small government." Contemporary Republicanism supposedly seeks to shrink the reach of the federal government and citizen dependency thereupon. But this must change in post-9/11 America. Fighting terrorism necessitates expanding the government's reach. Institutional order must be wider, deeper, and expanded further than before.

And second, we must insulate the United States from actual and potential harm. This move must transcend traditional defense strategies and already massive military budget. We as a nation must become militarized, bureaucratized, and mass-molded into a Roman pillar of defense. Such changes were concretized in the wake of 9/11 and the months following S20. What follows is a partial list.[11]

On September 14, 2001, Congress passed a resolution entitled "Authorization for Use of United States Military Force." It authorizes the president to use military force with any nation, organization, or person involved directly or indirectly in the 9/11 attacks.

On October 26, 2001, Congress passed the U.S.A. P.A.T.R.I.O.T. Act, which stands for "Uniting and Strengthening America by Providing Appropriate Tools Required to Intercept and Obstruct Terrorism." The Act, among other things, broadens the definition of terrorism, expands the government's domestic surveillance capabilities, and enhances the government's ability to detain and deport immigrants.

In November of 2001, the U.S. Justice Department announced plans to interview five thousand men of Middle-Eastern descent and/or Muslim faith. The Department, unable to locate or interview half of the five thousand, announced in March of 2002 that it would seek to interview another set of three thousand. This totals eight thousand people potentially subjected to institutional interviewing.

On November 5, 2001, the Administration announced that it had taken custody of 1,147 detainees. No names, descriptions, or release dates were announced. And while the number dropped to 104 by May 2002, names, descriptions and dates were still withheld.

In fall of 2002, the Justice Department ordered the mandatory registering of all men from Arab and Muslim countries. They were to report to the immigration service offices for fingerprinting and photographs. Folks without proper papers were immediately taken away in handcuffs.

In the months following 9/11, many cities, towns, and neighborhoods instituted "TIPS hotlines." These hotlines allow citizens to report suspicious activities to local authorities. The federal government originally outlined this operation in its Homeland Security bill, and entitled it "Terrorism Information and Prevention System" (TIPS). The operation encouraged postal workers, cable and telephone installers, and other workers with private residential and workplace-access, to seek out and report any activities that may be

deemed "suspicious." Various Congress members were disturbed by such possibilities, and struck funding for this operation.

In the fall of 2002, the Bush Administration attempted to pass the Total Information Awareness System (TIA). The purpose was to collect, store, and centralize as much information about each American citizen, including government, medical, financial, and school records, travel history, buying habits, tele- and internet-communications, political and religious beliefs, personal and family associations, etc. The information would be computerized and then searched for patterns that suggest terrorist activity.

In October of 2001, Condoleeza Rice, then Bush's National Security Advisor, conferred with network heads from ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN, and Fox, instructing them in "proper protocol" for airing videotaped statements of Osama bin Laden. She "suggested" that bin Laden's statements be "abridged" and potentially "inflammatory" language be omitted prior to broadcast. Ari Fleischer, the White House Press Secretary at the time, also contacted major newspapers and asked that they not print full transcripts of bin Laden's messages. Some media executives appreciated the suggestions. For instance, News Corp executive Rupert Murdoch stated, "We'll do whatever is our patriotic duty." CNN's official statement declared that in "deciding what to air, CNN will consider guidance from appropriate authorities."

On November 13, 2001, President Bush signed a military order establishing military tribunals and commissions to detain and try suspected terrorists. The Secretary of Defense, Donald Rumsfeld, oversees the involved processes. The detainees, while to be "treated humanely," are denied the "principles of law and the rules of evidence generally recognized in the trial of criminal cases" in the U.S. district courts. The detainees are denied the right to seek "remedy in any court," including the U.S., foreign, and international courts.

Since January 2002, the U.S. government has sent over seven hundred people to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba -- the holding base for our captured terrorists and suspects. The Administration labeled the detainees "enemy combatants." At the time of this writing, there are well over six hundred detainees, including an undisclosed number of children. Their label, treatment, and lack of rights, complicates international law, to say the least. The Administration argues that the detainees are not entitled to the protections due prisoners of war or protected persons under the 1949 Geneva Conventions. These detainees, having no rights, are essentially non-existent. Or, as some experts say, they exist as a "legal black hole," i.e., an institutional space outside the reach of any and all legal jurisdictions.

A report released by the Center for Defense Information states that between 9/11 and January of 2003, the U.S. has "made billions of dollars worth of arms deals to strategic countries" in the fight against terrorism. Approximately fifty-seven countries have been involved.

In the fiscal year 2001, the U.S. spent $307.8 billion on military defense. In fiscal year 2002, we spent $328.7 billion; 2003, an estimate of $379.3 billion; and 2004, an estimate for over $400 billion.12 This increase can be traced to our war on terrorism. But in all fairness, this figure is not "that astonishing" when compared to some past years. In the mid-to-late 1980s, we spent over $400 billion for six consecutive years. When placed in context, though, our military spending of both past and present *is* enormous. We annually dedicate over fifty percent of our federal tax money to military defense. And we regularly *outspend the combined total of the next five biggest* national military budgets. Despite our massive military budget, S20 continues to envision a bigger, better, and expanded military defense. For instance, the increased talk of militarizing outer space.13

These examples demonstrate how various strands of order have been rerouted, made to flow in specific directions, and affect our landscape. Some of the strands are entirely new, while others have been flushed out, rethought and reorganized. The above strands of institutional order are very specific, but S20 also calls forth a broader, blanket-type mobilization. Redirecting and creating a few agencies here and there is not enough; we must do more. In fact, we must do everything we possibly can. We must rethink and redirect *every* available strand of institutional order. As Bush states: "We will direct every resource at our command -- every means of diplomacy, every tool of intelligence, every instrument of law enforcement, every financial influence, and every necessary weapon of war . . ." (28). This call is not only domestic, but also international. We "will ask, and will need, the help of police forces, intelligence services, and banking systems around the world" (36). America is not alone in this fight; it is the fight of the world, *of civilization itself*. As such, *every* strand of institutional order from around the world must be mobilized. *Every* institutional order must direct itself toward the eradication of terrorism (and the restoration of American goodness).

This mass mobilization is not a random moving of order; it's not a simple exchange of this order for that order; it's not a "shuffling around" of some various strands. Instead, this mobilization seeks to *re-route* order in a *particular direction* and *toward a particular end*. Installing a Department of Homeland Security (DHS) suggests this. DHS is a new epicenter by which all the strands of order will flow. And Tom Ridge, the original head of DHS, "reports directly to" President Bush (31). Thus, the strands of institutional order come across, if not directly flow through, the eyes of the Bush Administration. I am no doubt overstating the case. No person, group of people or Administration can have such oversight of such a vast process. But this is the feel, the *mood* of S20. Institutional order flows through the DHS and moves toward a particular end, that ending being the security and defense of the American way of life. The DHS was created by and directly reports to the Bush Administration. At the very least, then, the Administration has a word as to which way the strands will move and what course of action the orders will take. In one sense, this *is* the job of a democratic president. But in another sense, it is the job of an aristocratic ruler.

This vast maneuvering of institutional order affects personal order, too. Our cultural practices have taken a turn; our behavior-ing has changed. It must; the institutional and personal are woven together. The S20 acknowledges this. For instance, Bush asks for our

"cooperation" with the "thousands of FBI agents" who are working on the case (41). He asks for our "patience" when encountering "delays and inconveniences that may accompany tighter security" (42). He asks for our "continued participation and confidence in the American economy" (43). Cooperation, patience, participation and confidence are attitudinal behaviors; they are expressions that regulate our daily interactions. S20 asks us to order our personal lives according to these and other attitudes.

Before moving to the topic of personal order, specifically, I want to discuss one more place where the institutional directly touches the personal.

Toward the end of the speech, Bush talks of a "police shield" that belonged to a man "who died at the World Trade Center trying to save others" (53). Bush received the shield from the man's mother. The shield is Bush's "reminder of lives that ended, and a task that does not end" (53).

This story no doubt personalizes S20. But it also attunes us to the symbiotic relationship between institutional and personal order. The mother's giving of the gift was a personal, not institutional, gesture. She had no institutional authority to imbue Bush with any type of institutional power. There was no legal transfer of power and Bush never became a police officer. But the symbolism of the shield holds institutional significance. It is a "shield" because of its institutional facticity. That shield allows and *demands* the beholder to serve and protect; it designates you as a gatekeeper of order; it asks that you enforce the law of the land. Bush did not receive a white dove, a hawk, an M-16 bullet, a dozen roses, an academic or judicial robe, or a golden key. If he had, the image and implications would be different. Bush received a police shield, casting him as a "legal" protector of order. But the complexity continues.

Which order does he now have the right to protect, the institutional or the personal? His institutional authority is already established as President and as overseer of DHS. Is he also the head of personal order? The Commander-in-Chief of our cultural practices and everyday living? As he states: "I will not forget this wound to our country or those who inflicted it. I will not yield; I will not rest; I will not relent in waging this struggle for freedom and security of the American people" (54). The institutional significance of that shield, coupled with his institutional authority as President, and placed within the wider context of S20, distinguishes him as *the* guardian of both institutional *and* personal order.

Personal Order

Bush's rhetorical approach to 9/11, embodied in S20, also affected the personal order of American society, shifting the nation toward a more defensive attitude. Defensiveness can be understood as a psychological need to continually ward off perceived and actual attack; a continuous need to prevent and/or resist personal harm; a feeling of impending danger; and/or the presumption that others are always out to harm us. Lashing out to preemptively defend from actual and/or perceived harm signifies defensiveness. These characteristics are endorsed by S20 and permeate our social landscape.

S20 starts out by stating that no "report on the State of the Union" is needed. This is because such a report "has already been given by the American people" (2). This implies that S20 has been called into effect by the will of the people; that the personal order of America has given rise to the forthcoming S20 logic. It implies that S20 is a manifestation of we, the people of the United States of America. This sets the stage for accepting, and not thoroughly investigating, S20 and its various re-routings.

An important theme of S20 is "the American way of life" and the defense thereof. Bush states in paragraph twenty-six: "These terrorists kill not merely to end lives, but to disrupt and end a way of life." Also, in paragraph thirty-three: ". . . the only way to defeat terrorism as a threat to our way of life is to stop it, eliminate it, and destroy it where it grows."

Our way of life has been threatened and disrupted and we must put an end to this threat. To do this we must re-order our lives so as to better engage the task. Before we do this, we need to acknowledge the tenets of our ways, the guidelines of our personal order.

We are, according to S20, "strong" (5); we have "courage" (51); we believe "in progress and pluralism" and "tolerance" (35); we are dedicated to "hard work," "creativity" and "enterprise" (43); and we are on the correct side of divine nature because we "know that God is not neutral" in this fight between us and the terrorists (55).

But the American way of life is more than these admirable characteristics. We are about freedom: the "freedom of religion," the "freedom of speech," and the "freedom to vote and assemble and disagree with each other" (24). But 9/11 calls us to go even further; we must go beyond our traditional ways. We can no longer be concerned with our own freedom, only. No. We must be concerned with the freedom of the world: "what is at stake is not just" our own, but also, and more importantly, *the world's freedom* (35). Our fight is for "all of those who believe in . . . freedom" (35). S20 argues that "freedom itself is under attack" (12) and we have been "called to defend" it (6).

S20's call to defend freedom as a universal rather than as national principle reroutes our personal order. We must no longer live for ourselves, only; we now must live for *the advancement of the world*. We have "found our mission and our moment," which is "the advancement of freedom" (51). This calling is not entirely new for us. We have been previously called to similar tasks. For example: Lyndon B. Johnson's rationale for invading South Vietnam; Dwight D. Eisenhower's worry that the Korean situation would set off a dominoes effect; Theodore Roosevelt's belief that the U.S. was justified in exercising itself as an international police power; the doctrine of James Monroe that calls us to protect Latin America and the Western Hemisphere from European control; etc. It is safe to assume that most if not every United States president has asked his citizens to defend freedom and the free world. Consider the following comments by Madeleine Albright, the Secretary of State during Bill Clinton's second term: "If we have to use force, it is because we are America. We are the indispensable nation. We stand tall. We see farther into the future."[14] Even the Clinton Administration, considered a bastion of

liberalism, could not escape the imagery of America as the inherent protector of human society.

Despite these precedents, our post-9/11 calling *is* unique. Bush confirms this. After briefly referring to our familiarity with wars, surprise attacks, and a loose reference to Pearl Harbor, he states that with 9/11, "night fell on a different world, a world where freedom itself is under attack" (12). Our world has changed, and so must our personal order.

Our call to carry the weight of the world emerges from the "great harm" that has "been done to us" and the "great loss" that "we have suffered" (51). S20 declares, "we are a country awakened to danger and called to defend freedom. Our grief has turned to anger, and anger to resolution" (6).

This last statement about anger and resolution is a gesture toward defensiveness, and characterizes S20 and our post-9/11 personal order. The following list supports my point.15

Hate crimes against Arabs and Muslims in the United States increased by 1,700 percent in 2001. In 2000, twenty-eight hate crimes against Arabs and/or Muslims were reported to the FBI. In 2001, that number increased to four hundred and eighty-one.

Within six months of 9/11: The American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee reported six hundred racially motivated crimes nationwide; the Council on American-Islamic Relations reported 1,717 backlash incidents, including but not limited to employment discrimination, verbal abuse, and physical assault; and forty-five cases of beatings, harassment, threats and vandalism were reported against Arab-American students in elementary and high schools, and universities. At least three and perhaps as many as seven people were murdered after 9/11 due to anti-Arab backlash.

Prior to 9/11, eighty percent of Americans opposed racial profiling. In the days following 9/11, seventy percent of Americans believed that some form of racial profiling was necessary to ensure public safety. ABC News and the Washington Post conducted a poll two days after 9/11. Their findings: forty-three percent of respondents were more likely to be suspicious of people who they thought were of Arab descent. Subsequent polls found that fifty-eight percent favored more security checks for Arabs, forty-nine percent favored special identification cards, and thirty-two percent supported special surveillance. The respondents were of different racial backgrounds, including African American, Latino, and Caucasian.

Bill O'Reilly, host of Fox News' "The O'Reilly Factor," verbally attacked and physically threatened Jeremy Glick, an interviewee whose father died in the World Trade Center. O'Reilly was set-off when Glick compared the civilian deaths of 9/11 to the civilian deaths of the U.S.-Afghanistan bombing campaign.16 The exchange between the two was very heated, with O'Reilly abruptly ending the segment. Glick reported that O'Reilly, after the interview, said to him, "Get out of my studio before I tear you to

fucking pieces."

Bill Maher, a comedian and political satirist, was forced to resign from his hosting position of the television program "Politically Incorrect." Corporate sponsors, such as FedEx and Sears Roebuck, revoked their funding after on-air comments by Maher. Maher called into question the courage of U.S. military procedure that fires cruise missiles from two thousand miles away, and argued that terrorism, regardless of its immorality, takes courage. The show was subsequently cancelled on June 22, 2002.

The musical group, The Dixie Chicks, had their play lists pulled from various radio stations after the lead singer in a concert in London said, "We're ashamed the president of the United States is from Texas." The group originally hails from Texas. Many listeners called into their respective radio stations after hearing reports of the comment. The incident occurred in March of 2003, as the Administration was preparing for war with Iraq.

Such actions, while not necessarily agreeable, are "understandable." 9/11 has brought a great uncertainty to our lives, and one way to cope with that uncertainty is to act defensively. Pre-9/11 was a more open atmosphere. Particular comments and actions could be passed over; there was no need to quiet, squelch, or squeeze out non-patriotic feelings. Our personal order was different. For instance, a poor rendition of "God Bless America," such as Roseanne Barr's 1990 incident, brought ridicule. But today, she might have to fear for her life. An Arab man reciting prayer on the sidewalk might catch a glance. But today might provoke sneers or even physical harm. Another country criticizing U.S. foreign policy might have brought international bickering. But today brings boycotts of their companies' goods. This occurred when various citizens and congressional persons sought to change "French fries" to "Freedom fries." The reason: France refused to support our invasion of Iraq.

These incidents and the change in American disposition in no way result directly from S20. There is too much involved to pinpoint any one cause or catalyst. But, Bush's S20 did helped nurture the soil for such things; it implicitly encouraged a cultural atmosphere of defensiveness. I acknowledge the fact that S20 explicitly states support for our Arab and Muslim friends and condemns backlash: "The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends" (22). Instead, terrorists and their evil are our enemies. But the overall attitude of S20 invites the aforementioned changes to our personal order. S20 encourages a cultural spirit that shuns criticism of the U.S., twinkles the possibility of hate crimes, and hardens a national identity of defensiveness. Its through-line is defense, and its logic is to take up arms: fleshed-fists, verbal assaults, or bunker-busting bombs.

Consider this statement: "Every nation, in every region, now has a decision to make. Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" (30). This is probably the most widely talked about assertion of S20. Explicitly, it addresses other nations and regimes. But implicitly, it affects our citizen-mindset; it affects how we think about ourselves and each other, and what it means to be "American." If you are American, you must be in the

fight against terrorism; you must support the nation's actions; you must help the campaign; and you must do all that you can to win this war. Refusal to accept this brings suspicion. Are you American if you refuse this agenda or tire in your efforts? Are you perhaps a hostile combatant if you object to and/or criticize this agenda? Should we call the TIPS hotline on you? The incidents of Bill O'Reilly, Bill Maher and the Dixie Chicks point to this possibility.

S20 also shuns dialogue and privileges authoritarianism. For instance: "These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion" (21). This refers specifically to the Taliban's deliverance of Al Qaeda. But again, the words exceed their intended meanings and audience. A no-negotiating, absolutely justified mindset is created. If you agree with us, then you are in the right. If you disagree, then you are in the wrong. If you do not speak out for and support America and its operations, then you are a traitor, and an ignorant one at that. This either/or, "with or against us" attitude inspires us toward the defensive.

S20 also uses smaller, less grandiose statements, like "to defend." These are sprinkled throughout. These literal declarations, while effective, act as background material, mere seasoning for the main course. More potent are the clustering of words, the images, and the evoked emotions and the instructions on how to use those emotions.

For instance, we are instructed to hold onto our grief, keep it in, and remember it. This will soon turn into anger (6, 52). By all accounts, this smacks in the face of healthy psychology. But according to S20, this is a *good* thing because it grants us a foundation for the proper resolution needed to "lift a dark threat of violence from our people and our future" (51). For me, "lifting this dark threat" irresistibly evokes the image of walking into a dark, cold cave while holding a single-flame lantern. Darkness is all around and loneliness abounds. I have two opposing possibilities: I can walk in fear, hoping that I am not attacked by some unseen presence, human or otherwise. Or, I can walk with virility, drawing forth a sword, challenging any and all on comers. The first option is cowardice; the second is heroism. S20 obviously beckons us toward the heroic. But our hero must be defensive, for s/he is looking to defend constantly against an unseen danger. This is the definition of "defensiveness": chest out, shoulders back, eyes gleaning, and always on guard.

This great task also provokes the question: "How will we win this war?" Bush's rhetoric responds: with "every resource at our command" (28). This phrase and its implications were discussed in the previous section. But here, in the context of personal order, its meaning has slightly different implications. When coupled with all that is said in S20, we can assume that every aspect of our lives must now be dedicated to fighting terrorism and defending freedom. The entire well of our personal order must flow toward the defeat of terrorism and the defense of freedom, America, and world civilization. This is defensiveness.

S20 prepares us for this hefty task. We "should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign, unlike any we have ever seen" (30). The timetable of this new war is indefinite

and the geographic reach infinite: "Our war on terror begins with Al Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated" (23). We have been "put on notice: We are not immune from attack" (31). But we will not cower, because that is un-American. Instead, we will rise and face this challenge. We will "take defensive measures against terrorism to protect Americans" (31).

But we are not entirely alone; the world is *there*, waiting for us. "The civilized world is rallying to America's side. They understand that if this terror goes unpunished, their own cities, their citizens may be next. Terror, unanswered, can not [sic] only bring down buildings, it can threaten the stability of legitimate governments. And you know what -- we're not going to allow it (Applause)" (37). The world is looking to us for leadership, and we will, *we must*, rise to this grand occasion.

This call asks us to carry the weight of the civilized world. And if we refuse, then we are failing our fellow human beings. All of civilization is rallying for us; and if we fail, so too will civilization. We are thus living in a pressure-cooker situation. It could be assumed that this pressure is too great. But Americanism has enjoyed a long and affectionate relationship with pressure. Our history (the hi-story) is imbued with tough, straight shooting, proud and tall-standing individuals called to defend our borders, ideals, and horse carriages. Our own rugged hands have repeatedly stopped the oncoming foreigners, savages, and natives. Our personal order already simmers with pressure and corresponding defensiveness. We enjoy the feel of pressure and the act of defense. Bush's rhetoric pulls at this tradition and remakes it into an everyday, obsessive-compulsive job. It is no longer about defending our national borders and interests, some of the time. No. It is now about defending the world's safety and universal freedom, and spreading *our* principles, all of the time. We must wrap the world in our flag and protect good from evil. Shying from this call is shying from American tradition and its newest manifestation: S20.

Conclusion: A Call for Exposure

Neither Bush nor his S20 address is solely responsible for our current social and political climate. Multiple factors are involved. But Bush's S20 did help establish a dominant framework. This framework legitimizes retaliation by force, authoritarianism, and an us/them mentality; incites American pride and arrogance; promotes uncritical acceptance of government procedure; and disapproves of social and political criticism.

Judith Butler, a post-structuralist cultural critic, argues that our current socio-political frame "works both to preclude certain kinds of questions, certain kinds of historical inquires, and to function as a moral justification for retaliation." She also believes that attending to this frame is crucial, "since it decides, in a forceful way, *what we can hear*, whether a view will be taken as explanation or as exoneration, whether we can hear the difference, and abide by it" [original emphasis].17 And Bruno Gulli, a scholar of literature, history, and philosophy, acknowledges the worrisome possibility that we have entered "a point in history when even reasoning about these things has become taboo, for

the critic must always be sure to denounce terrorism energetically, lest he or she be seen as defending or justifying terrorism."18

We are living through an unquestioned, "absolutely justified in our actions" national mindset. Too many people understand war, restriction of civil liberties, and a conservative social order as natural outgrowths of the terrorist attacks. But this is false; multiple responses are possible, and each is a construction.

S20, and the slew of other Bush addresses, harden the conditions for the post-9/11 American order outlined in this essay. And it is our job -- the critical scholars, activists, organizers, and concerned citizens of all types -- to expose the links between the rising social order and political rhetoric. This task goes beyond specific presidential administrations and political affiliations. We have been privy to discourses of national interest and world-betterment since America's inception. This will not change in the near future, regardless of the specific president or social order. Listening to speeches, reading the policies, deconstructing political texts, and asking tough questions evoke an order of social critique. Mobilizing our society according to critical thought, dialogue and rigorous debate can better establish an informed and thriving democracy. Social critique can chip away at the bureaucratic barrage and heal our cultural defensiveness. As Herbert Marcuse asserts: "critical analysis continues to insist that the need for qualitative change is as pressing as ever before. Needed by whom? The answer continues to be the same: by the society as a whole, for every one of its members."19

Notes

1 Michel Foucault, "Discourse on Language," in *Archaeology of Knowledge*, trans. R. Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 216.

2 Ari Fleischer, former White House Press Secretary, *Press Briefing*, "Bill Maher's comments," September 26, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010926-5.html>.

3 See the following texts: Alex Callinicos, *New Mandarins of American Power* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2003); Noam Chomsky, *9-11* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001); Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004) 12-33; Michael Parenti, *Super Patriotism* (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2004); Jennifer Van Bergen, *The Twilight of Democracy: The Bush Plan for America* (Monroe, ME: Common Courage Press, 2005).

4 See the following texts: Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, ed. Joseph Pearson, (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001); Cornel West, *Democracy Matters: Winning the Fight*

Against Imperialism, (New York: Penguin Press, 2004); Cornel West, "On Prophetic Pragmatism," in *The Cornel West Reader*, (New York: Basic *Civitas* Books, 1999).

5 Harold Garfinkel, "What is Ethnomethodology?," in *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996).

6 Melvin Pollner, "Left of Ethnomethodology: The Rise and Decline of Radical Reflexology," *American Sociological Review* 56 (June 1991): 372.

7 "Critical Rhetoric: Theory and Praxis." *Communication Monographs* 56 (June 1989): 101.

8 "Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media," VHS, directed by Mark Achbar and Peter Wintonick (1992; New York: Zeitgeist Video).

9 See, for example, Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970), 142-189.

10 Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.dhs.gov/dhspublic/faq.jsp>.

11 Helpful resources: Cynthia Brown, ed. *Lost liberties: Ashcroft and the Assault on Personal Freedom* (New York: The New Press, 2003); Stanley Aronowitz and Heather Gautney, eds. *Implicating Empire*: *Globalization and Resistance in the 21st Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2003); Nancy Chang, *Silencing Political Dissent: How Post-September 11 Anti-terrorism Measures Threaten our Civil Liberties* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2002); Human Rights Watch, "Terrorism and Post September 11" campaign, <http://www.hrw.org/>; Center for Defense Information, <http://www.cdi.org/>; Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting, www.fair.org/; and the White House News Releases, 2001, <http://www.whitehouse.gov/new/releases>.

12 Numbers taken from <http://www.whitehouse.gov/budget/omb/fy2005> and <http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0904490.html>.

13 About militarizing outer space, see Noam Chomsky, *Hegemony or Survival: America's Quest of Global Dominance* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2003), 225-32.

14 Quoted in Callinicos (2003), 64.

15 Helpful resources: "Hate Crimes against Arabs and Muslims on the Upswing," *Inter Press News Agency*, November 23, 2002, <http://www.ipsnews.net/>; Brian Willoughby, "Intolerance in a Time of War," *Alternet News*, March 23, 2003, <http://www.alternet.org/>; Nicole Davis, "The Slippery Slope of Racial Profiling," *Alternet News*, December 13, 2001, <http://www.alternet.org/>; Bill O'Reilly Transcript, <http://www.bushpresident2004.com/oreilly-transcript.htm>; Victor Navasky, "Profiles in Cowardice," *The Nation*, October 18, 2001,

<http://www.thenation.com/doc.mhtml?i=20011105&s=navasky>; "Firestorm of
Controversy: Dixie Chicks Speak Out on Backlash to Anti-Bush Comment" April 24,
2003, <http://abcnews.go.com/sections/primetime/Entertainment/
dixiechicks030423.html>; "Free Expression After September 11th -- An Online Index,"
National Coalition Against Censorship, <http://www.ncac.org/issues/freeex911.html>.

16 According to *Project on Defense Alternatives*, between 1000 and 1300 civilians were
killed as a direct result of aerial bombing, and a minimum of 3000 more civilian deaths
are attributable to the impact of the bombing campaign. Statistics available at
<http://www.comw.org/pda/0201strangevic.html>.

17 *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 4
and 5.

18 "Beyond Good and Evil: A Contribution to the Analysis of the War on Terrorism," in
Implicating Empire (2003), 192.

19 *One Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society*
(Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), xlv.