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Neoliberal Epideictic: Rhetorical Form and Commemorative Politics on September 11, 2002

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Public memorial services held in New York City on September 11, 2002, marked the most important U.S. civic commemoration of the present era. Numerous popular and academic critics excoriated speakers on that day for commemorating the occasion with commemorative declamations instead of offering original speeches. This essay contends that assessing these unusual public eulogies according to post-Romantic conceptions of rhetorical practice overlooks the often powerful role of formulaic speech in shaping the politics of civic commemoration. The essay accordingly argues that state eulogies on the first anniversary of September 11 exemplify the emergence of neoliberal epideictic. Ritualized public praise of neoliberal ideals increasingly constitutes the normative speech of our most important civic ceremonies. The essay concludes that neoliberal epideictic defines citizens' involvement in partisan affairs and recognition of sociopolitical difference or inequity as irreverent means of sustaining civic memory, tradition, and virtue.

Keywords: Epideictic; Neoliberalism; Commemoration; Rhetorical Form; September 11

The complex and ambiguous affinities between words and deeds (*logos* and *ergon*) constituted a prevalent leitmotif of classical *epitaphios logos*. Consider Pericles' reticence, in his famed eulogy for Athenian soldiers, to praise heroic deeds with simple words:

> Our belief in the valor of these men should not depend on whether one man's oratory is good or bad. The burial ceremony itself is preferable to the risk of putting the acts of bravery of numerous men into the custody of a single orator who might speak well or badly.[1]

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Demosthenes began his own funeral oration by professing a similar reluctance to entrust the memory of the dead and their heroism to the fallibility of mere words:

> [T]o speak as these dead deserve was one of those things that cannot be done. For, since they scorned the love of life that is inborn in all men and chose rather to die nobly than to live and look upon Greece in misfortune, how can they have failed to leave behind them a record of valor surpassing all power of words to express?[2]

Modern encomiasts, such as Abraham Lincoln in his celebrated Gettysburg Address, likewise invoke communal memory by measuring speech against action: the dead committed heroic acts in the past but the living are bound by custom, however reluctantly, to speak of their actions in the present.

Despite their taciturnity, paeans to the memory of cultural idols contribute to the political viability of civic institutions. The eulogist displays for public audiences past deeds meant to inspire political action in the present, which will be imitated by future generations. Classical epideictic of the sort so famously illustrated in Pericles and Demosthenes' funeral orations indirectly influenced deliberative affairs by promoting standards of civic excellence. In Gerard Hauser's terms:

> Epideictic encouraged the constitutive activity propaedeutic to action: reflection on public norms for proper political conduct. . . . [E]pideictic constructs accounts of nobility worthy of *mimesis* [insofar as] its narrative character sets the conditions for a viable public sphere in which a people may engage in politics.[3]

Ceremonial honors to the valor and sacrifice of state heroes do not simply provide *consolatio* to the living but dramatize models of *arête* worthy of imitation in the present. Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca contend that epideictic speech is thus vital to political processes insofar as its rituals of praise and blame maintain collective values upon which future actions are justified.[4] Whether in somber elegies or celebratory tributes, epideictic organizes the terms of public remembrance in order to shape perceptions of shared values and commitments serviceable to future deliberative agendas. The encomiast bemoans the dubious enlivening power of words precisely in order to enhance their capacity to inspire political action.[5]

Public memorial services in New York City on September 11, 2002, marked the most important U.S. civic commemoration of the present era. They established official precedents concerning how future generations would memorialize and thereby derive models for judgment and action from the September 11 atrocities. On such pivotal epideictic occasions, citizens participate in officially sponsored symbolic rituals through which they derive order and purpose from seemingly senseless tragedy.

The role of place holds inestimable significance in the enactment of these commemorative rituals.[6] Memorials often are staged on the sites of historic events and thereby provide a sense of material connection with the past. Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the decimated site of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan had become a metonymic place of memory representative of the tragedies not only in New York City but also at the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., and in fields near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. By virtue of this connection, official memorial

services held in Manhattan one year later offered the most symbolically representative national forum for the rites of public mourning and civic restoration.

The pregnant affinities between words and deeds understandably informed the character of this event. Fire, police, and military personnel committed heroic deeds on September 11, yet most of those who were murdered in the terrorist attacks were not soldiers or public servants willingly engaged in the defense of their country but innocent civilians preoccupied with ordinary affairs. Whereas celebrated encomiasts typically pay tribute to the tangible military or political achievements of willful agents, eulogists on the first anniversary of September 11 struggled to capture in words a prodigious loss of helpless, anonymous life. Instead of honoring the lasting attainments of famed individuals, speakers were charged with memorializing a massive and nameless absence.

Faced with this daunting prospect, New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg (who closely oversaw preparations for the ceremonies) balked at the prospect of marking the occasion with original speeches. "One of the things that I've tried very hard to do in the ceremonies for 9/11," he explained, "is to keep politics out of it."[7] Bloomberg personally chose a series of canonical texts rather than original speeches to be read by New York and New Jersey politicians throughout the day's ceremonies. On the morning of the one-year anniversary, after a city-wide moment of silence at 8:46 a.m., New York Governor George Pataki recited the Gettysburg Address at the site of the World Trade Center. Following a subsequent reading of victims' names from the destruction of the twin towers, New Jersey Governor Jim McGreevey recited the Preamble and Introduction to Thomas Jefferson's Declaration of Independence. During a sunset ceremony at Battery Park, Bloomberg read from the closing passages of Franklin D. Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech. The day's only original address was a brief speech by President George W. Bush, delivered to conclude memorial services, which nonetheless adhered to standard conventions of public eulogies.

In this essay, I analyze the September 11 memorial readings by scrutinizing their function as illustrations of an epideictic *form*. Such unusual instances of public address—or public *declamation*—oblige one to reconsider conventional approaches to rhetorical criticism, which typically emphasize the rhetor's technical or prudential skill in composing and delivering an original discourse in response to a given exigence. The indirect, symbolic communication of these declamations requires a different protocol of reading. In this case, orators were not responsible for the words they spoke as an author is responsible for the artistry or acumen of his or her composition. Recognition of this fact, however, begs the question of whether or not the epideictic provided efficacious terms for civic restoration, despite the orators' lack of authorial responsibility for the words intended to effect it. For this reason, I scrutinize primarily the sociopolitical significance of the memorial planners' rhetorical choices, the very form of ceremonial speech they adopted, rather than conducting a close textual analysis of Lincoln, Jefferson, or Roosevelt's words as if they were literal or original compositions.

To this end, I argue that the choice of memorial declamations vividly exemplified the characteristic form of *neoliberal epideictic*.[8] This form is defined by its celebration

of presumably fundamental political principles in an ostensibly nonpolitical idiom highly conducive to corporate media dissemination. Neoliberal epideictic reflects the constraints of democratic pluralism, political deregulation, and the free market economy on contemporary ceremonial speech. It seeks to nullify the profound inequities evident in a multicultural polity by acclaiming the historical transcendence of the nation's freedoms over historical crises, the citizenry's presumably essential socioeconomic solidarity to the exclusion of its constitutive political differences, and the virtues of private life over collective political activities. According to these terms, neoliberal epideictic invests an ironically apolitical vocabulary of democratic excellence with the authority of tradition, prosperity, and even sacred prophesy. Nevertheless, I intend to show that such an ostensible refusal of political speech is itself a form of social and political control. The following analysis of public eulogies in Manhattan on September 11, 2002, reveals that this contemporary epideictic form, in a dramatic inversion of classical epideictic, defines citizens' involvement in partisan affairs and recognition of sociopolitical difference or inequity as irreverent means of sustaining civic memory, tradition, and virtue. In doing so, the essay scrutinizes an exceptionally significant instance of neoliberal epideictic in order to document how emergent models of public praise and blame increasingly reflect neoliberal values and ideals.

Nostalgia for Invention

Mayor Bloomberg's attempt on the first anniversary of September 11 to honor the dead with self-effacing discourse, to achieve a solemn and nonpartisan tone, harkened back to the formulaic obsequiousness of celebrated funeral orations. Yet a variety of commentators and ordinary citizens alike castigated Bloomberg and his staff for the presumed offensiveness of their rhetorical choices. Theodore Sorenson, speechwriter for John F. Kennedy's celebrated Inaugural Address, mused: "I keep hearing that words cannot express our feelings about what happened. . . . But it's not as though the American English vocabulary is limited. The imagination of our political leaders is limited, not the vocabulary."[9] Roderick Hart added, "What we expect is our leaders will make the effort to find some words appropriate, and we will identify with their effort. Not necessarily with the exact judiciousness of the words selected, but with the courage to try to find words."[10] The most vocal critics of the memorial readings, as exemplified by these reactions, decried the parochialism of the leaders who recited them.

In this view, artistic insipidness is not only a technical inadequacy but a moral deficiency. Pataki, McGreevey, and Bloomberg's spurious oratory revealed their moral failings as elected officials when measured against timeless standards of political leadership. Gary Wills asserted:

> The culture loves it when people rise to the occasion. There are people who can rise to the occasion, and it's cowardice not to try. It's an insult to the dead at the towers. . . . to slap on the label from somebody else's tragedy.[11]

On this reading, the speakers' pedestrian intonation of canonical texts (their "cowardice") committed the very offense classical encomiasts painstakingly sought to avoid: insulting the memory of the dead.

By focusing so stringently on these affiliated moral and artistic failings, however, the declamations' many detractors understated the orations' more substantive rhetorical and political significance. Critics left unaddressed the question of how and why these seemingly unimaginative eulogies might have conformed to or reflected widely accepted sociopolitical values. They underestimated the degree to which the orations' bathetic *topoi* might have appealed to audiences as conducive figures of public commemoration and civic renewal. Indeed, the commemorative readings likely carried a measure of institutional authority and popular appeal precisely because of their unoriginality and artlessness.

Influenced by modern notions of artistic originality, critics of the memorial address typically ignored the fact that epideictic forms, particularly the public funeral oration, are not principally artistic endeavors but civic institutions—*institutions of speech*. Pericles' expressed reluctance to speak of the dead testifies to classical beliefs that preserving the ritual form of funeral speech took priority over the artistic innovations of particular speakers. In Nicole Loraux's terms, "the funeral oration was an *institution*" too politically vital to equate with the arbitrary skill of individual speakers: "an institution of speech in which the symbolic constantly encroached upon the functional, since in each oration the codified praise of the dead spilled over into generalized praise of Athens."[12] Even today, ritual performances of such epideictic forms are intended to symbolically preserve cultural tradition, collective memory, and political order—not to stand apart from or transcend them. The inimitable status accorded to Pericles' funeral oration, against which modern scholars habitually evaluate all others, belies the fact that the dictates of classical *epitaphioi* required orators to merely rearrange conventional *topoi* instead of inventing new figures of speech. The institutional value of the genre's form was to conserve customary patterns of speech, and with them traditional figures of communal memory and political dicta, not to achieve artistic distinction.[13]

Epideictic is typically didactic in nature. Encomiasts sustain civic memory from one generation to the next by catechistically instructing audiences in putatively common accounts of collective origins, experiences, and ideals. Like many celebrated encomia, the ceremonial recital of Lincoln, Jefferson, and Roosevelt's texts on September 11, 2002, appeared to rehearse audiences, however implicitly, in foundational civic precepts as a means of rededicating the community to their pursuit in light of national tragedy. For commemorative purposes, the very ritual or symbolic action of *re*citing traditional texts is often more essential to maintaining the continuity of collective memory than conjuring new turns of phrase.

The formulaic, didactic, and even redundant nature of common rhetorical rituals powerfully contributes to the appearance of continuity in public memories and political traditions. In his classic phenomenological study of memory, Edward Casey stresses the significance of *repetition* to commemoration: participants enact verbal and symbolic rituals that sustain collective memories from one generation to the next

in familiar ways, at conventional times, in common places. Ceremonial performances of established symbolic rituals offer vital incitements to collective participation in the preservation of communal memories. Indeed, *memory* and *mantra* are etymologically related; in a fundamental sense, to remember is to repeat a mantra—a sacred and commonplace text or litany of phrases.[14]

The rich oral culture of early American history well illustrates the vital civic role of epideictic rituals used to inculcate audiences in basic communal traditions and values. Before and after the Revolutionary War, the annual Boston Massacre Orations contributed to the formation of a common patriot ideology.[15] The Declaration of Independence, largely forgotten during the late eighteenth century, was revived, orated, and publicly praised during elaborate Fourth of July celebrations throughout the Era of Good Feelings. These select examples of the American epideictic tradition demonstrate that ritually enacting conventional commemorative forms sustains the perdurance of civic memory, and the political lessons it symbolizes, more pervasively than the transcendent artistry of singular oratorical masterworks. The rhetorical and political implications of these symbolic rituals are far too critical to address solely according to post-Romantic models of eloquence.

Based on these observations, I propose that the very form of public address featured on the first anniversary of September 11 deserves as much, if not more, attention than its content, however original or unoriginal it may be. For this reason, I analyze primarily the symbolism of that form instead of pursuing a traditional speech criticism or close textual analysis. None of the speakers on September 11, 2002, adopted a literal or direct mode of communication. Commencing memorial services on that date by reciting the words that Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg in 1863 to refer to the nation's founding eighty-seven years prior ("Four score and seven years ago"), or eulogizing victims of twenty-first-century terrorism with the words that American colonists used to justify revolt against the eighteenth century's greatest military power, makes no literal sense. Hence, a conventional rhetorical criticism devoted to explicating the intended strategies behind original compositions would fail to capture the full symbolic ramifications of the ceremonial discourse. At best, the speakers' words conveyed an indirect, implicit, or allegorical meaning. Local and national audiences were presumably unfamiliar with the nexus of historical and political referents in Lincoln, Jefferson, and Roosevelt's words but nonetheless recognized in them a familiar and reassuring form of speech. In Hayden White's terms, "[t]he form of the poetic text," as well as "oratorical declamation" (among other discursive modes), "produces a meaning quite other than whatever might be represented in any prose paraphrase of its literal verbal content."[16] Such is the symbolic meaning upon which I focus in the following, for *what* was said on the first anniversary of September 11 may have mattered less than *how* it was said.

My emphasis of rhetorical form rejects artificial literary distinctions between form and content, or textual and material reality. Janet Lyon's conception of form in her analysis of modern political manifestoes provides an apt alternative to such rigid classifications:

> [F]ar from being no more than scaffolding for expressions of angry dissent, the manifesto's formal contours actually produce and intensify the urgency of its particular imperatives. They do so in part by activating the symbolic force of the form's role in earlier political confrontations: to write a manifesto is to announce one's participation, however discursive, in a history of struggle against oppressive forces.[17]

Epideictic speech, like political manifestoes, commonly adheres to familiar rhetorical forms. Its "contours" do not provide mere ornamentation but acquire a semiotic dimension, signifying its customary meaning and value in the perpetuation of civic norms and traditions. The form itself acquires an institutional character, or ethos, through ritualized performances that conditions the legitimacy and appeal of its "imperatives." Kenneth Burke describes how rhetorical form, rather than logical proof alone, solicits assent to particular motives:

> [W]e know that many purely formal patterns can readily awaken an attitude of collaborative expectancy in us. Once you grasp the trend of the form, it invites participation regardless of the subject matter. . . . [A] yielding to the form prepares for assent to the matter identified with it.[18]

The symbolic meaning attributed to commonplace forms of address helps to explain audiences' perceived identification with the legitimacy of particular statements of public values, ideals, and judgments.

My methodology accordingly pursues James Jasinski's recommendation that "the interpretive burden faced by rhetorical critics" requires analysis of "the performative conditions or performative traditions that enable and constrain discursive action."[19] In his estimation, "[i]nvention is a social process in that the words employed by any author [or orator] are always already part of a performative tradition in which the author is situated and from which the author draws."[20] The central issue of this investigation is how the rhetorical form, or the customary pattern of public speech, represented by the September 11 declamations demonstrates the ways in which our traditions of epideictic performance are evolving to shape the nature of collective commemoration and civic ideals in the present era.

Epideictic in the Neoliberal Era

Conventional rhetorical forms, despite the appearance of continuous memory and political stability they invoke, are subject to inevitable mutation over time as rhetors employ them in response to unforeseen exigencies. State eulogies featured during public memorial services on September 11, 2002, illustrate a seminal moment in the emergence of *neoliberal* epideictic. The funeral orations in question allow one to delineate the manifestation of a contemporary form of speech that renders the signature *topoi* of U.S. democratic traditions compatible with prevailing neoliberal priorities. I do not claim that the declamations illustrate every manifestation of neoliberal epideictic. Nonetheless, the official encomia offered to local, national, and even global audiences on the first anniversary of September 11 provides valuable

insight into the models of public speech according to which we increasingly praise our civic traditions and sanctify the memory of those who embody them.

Neoliberalism is a political orientation hospitable to global free market capitalism and international media conglomeration. Predicated upon the priorities of free trade (including privatization, social-spending cutbacks, deregulation, deficit reduction, and economic globalization), neoliberal policies promote the profit-making capacities of markets while minimizing the goods of nonmarket institutions. According to Robert McChesney, neoliberalism "posits that society works best when business runs things and there is as little possibility of government 'interference' with business as possible. In short, neoliberal democracy is one where the political sector controls little and debates even less."[21] To date, studies of neoliberalism have focused on the conjunction of governmental policies, corporate practices, and media cultures responsible for the emergent political, economic, and social hegemony of neoliberal values. Scholars have investigated in far less detail how the diminishment of substantive civic debate to which McChesney refers enhances the cultural currency of neoliberal vocabularies of excellence. We have yet to assess sufficiently the rhetorical means by which common forms of speech have coalesced into the public idioms of neoliberalism and endowed its precepts with the legitimacy and appeal of *doxa*.

In the following section, I begin to address this deficiency by delineating the characteristic features of neoliberal epideictic as exemplified in public commemorations on the first anniversary of September 11. Although state eulogies admittedly represent only one of many epideictic forms, the anniversary declamations nonetheless demonstrate provocatively how ritualized public praise of neoliberal ideals (including the sordidness of politics and public institutions, the ingenuity of free enterprise, the democratic potentialities of information technology, and the enrichments of global consumer capitalism) increasingly constitutes the normative speech of our most important civic ceremonies. Neoliberal epideictic is a mode of civic discourse consisting of seemingly nonpolitical speech intended to annul the myriad cultural, political, and economic disparities inherent to contemporary U.S. pluralism while accommodating the sensationalist culture of corporate media.

Patriotic Liturgies

The widespread impact of the terrorist attacks on Americans from diverse cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds called for a commemorative idiom suited to both national and international media coverage on September 11, 2002. Cable news television and other corporate media during the previous year powerfully shaped Americans' sense of collective loss and mourning after the events of September 11.[22] Contemporary eulogists marking the anniversary were constrained by editorial conventions of corporate media, which compel today's speechwriters to employ a language of "value-free conversation" suited to mass communication. The recitation of cherished words may be rhetorically banal according to Romantic conceptions of the art, but it provides an oratorical performance well suited to the defining verbal

and visual elements of corporate news media—namely, "sound bites and photo ops."[23] In one editorialist's apt assessment:

> Speechlessness may also suit the times. [Contemporary politicians] are not trained in oratory, and their audiences are skeptical and impatient. In a society fragmented by race, ethnicity and class, it is harder to find language and allusions that resonate widely and to find meanings that can be broadly embraced.[24]

In the neoliberal era, corporate media conventions effectively influence the nature of contemporary public address by emphasizing terse, memorable slogans more reminiscent of advertising catchphrases than refined eloquence. Denise Bostdorff and Steven Vibbert show how corporate public relations campaigns increasingly engage in the epideictic strategy of "values advocacy," through which they appeal to presumably noncontroversial cultural values in order to improve their image and deflect criticism of policies and practices.[25] The examples of neoliberal epideictic addressed in this essay indicate how such forms of corporate communication are being adopted as the idiom of contemporary civic spectacles.

Bloomberg and his staff adhered to corporate media conventions, on the one hand, by providing concise, thematically broad orations and imitated classical encomiasts, on the other hand, by offering a novel arrangement of familiar *topoi*. Along with the Preamble to the U.S. Constitution, Jefferson's Declaration of Independence and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address comprise the so-called American Testament.[26] Generations of exegetical commentary inform contemporary audiences' reception of these texts; popular and political discourse designates them as central articles of American civil religion. So conceived, their most venerated passages are said to communicate nonpartisan truths available to all Americans, irrespective of historical or cultural circumstance. Their nominally sacred character recommends them as integral epideictic resources in the neoliberal era: their ubiquity, alleged self-evidence, and "value-free" expressions of American political ideology offer a seemingly nonpartisan form of speech bearing presumably universal (or democratic) significance for heterogeneous audiences.

Neoliberal epideictic embellishes the exegetical tradition according to which documents such as the Declaration of Independence and the Gettysburg Address have attained their quasi-sacred status. It paradoxically identifies such texts as the transcendent ground of American political principles and institutions: they authorize and govern our secular and political affairs while retaining the status of quasi-sacred, transcendent symbols of democratic wisdom and virtue. Neoliberal epideictic renders the content of their signature maxims immune from partisan appropriation or definitive interpretation, suggesting instead that one may apprehend these documents' recondite and transcendent truths through dutiful personal meditation rather than public debate. As such, it assigns allegorical meaning to the benchmarks of American political speech. In our fiercely democratic and presumptively postmodern age, when politicians and citizens alike disparage markers of sociopolitical status and cultural hierarchy, the allegorical symbolism frequently invoked in neoliberal epideictic appears to lend audiences the interpretive freedom to derive deeply

personal meanings from the most ubiquitous articles of U.S. civil religion. The ceremonial readings on September 11, 2002, evoked precisely this indirect, allegorical meaning rather than adopting Lincoln, Jefferson, and Roosevelt's words as literal statements.[27]

By presenting sacred templates of American political speech as allegorical symbols, as a profusion of patriotic signs, neoliberal epideictic presumably yields a more democratic yet nonpartisan social and political text invested with the ethos of sacred tradition.[28] Heterogeneous audience members allegedly find in such documents' semantic plentitude personal grounds for rededication to essential, if unspoken, principles of U.S. democracy. Neoliberal epideictic thereby illustrates Roland Barthes' (and, in rhetorical studies, Michael McGee's) premise that in contemporary culture readers (or auditors) have assumed the position of authors (or speakers), fabricating coherent texts out of continually recycled discursive fragments.[29] Only by this logic could one conclude, as the September 11 memorial planners did, that revered expressions of American political values would provide appropriately *non*political *epitaphioi* on that occasion.

In this frame, the symbolic action of publicly reciting Jefferson and Lincoln's words on September 11, 2002, testified to the continuous presence of foundational American freedoms, the unspoken meaning of which presumably transcended both historical circumstances and cultural differences. Event planners invited such an interpretation by arranging Jefferson and Lincoln's texts in a non-chronological manner. True to the associative structure of allegory, Lincoln's nineteenth-century address preceded Jefferson's eighteenth-century document in the morning services. For contemporary audiences, the chronological inversion (*hysteron proteron*) of Lincoln and Jefferson's texts invoked familiar sociopolitical axioms more readily than a historically representative arrangement.

Conventional wisdom regards Lincoln's Gettysburg Address as a definitive interpretation of Jefferson's Declaration. Its renowned first line identifies the achievement of the revolutionary "fathers," specifically their dedication to equality professed in Jefferson's document, as the event that unifies the nation's past, present, and future while giving meaning and purpose to the sacrifices of its soldiers: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."[30] In his comprehensive account of the speech, Wills asserts: "The Gettysburg Address has become an authoritative expression of the American spirit—as authoritative as the Declaration itself, and perhaps more influential, since it determines how we read the Declaration."[31] The address reflects Lincoln's belief that the Declaration comprised a transcendent expression of indispensable freedoms, "a standard maxim for free society, which would be familiar to all, and revered by all; constantly looked to, constantly labored for. . . . augmenting the happiness and value of life to all people and of all colors everywhere."[32] His elegy at Gettysburg accordingly transformed forensic principles authored specifically to justify colonial separation from Great Britain into universally applicable, and typically unquestioned, assumptions concerning the origins and extension of American freedoms. Lincoln

famously expressed the country's enduring bond with its revolutionary origins in his closing prediction that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."[33]

Unlike the deceptive simplicity of Lincoln's prophesy, Jefferson's declaratory language holds legal and political connotations specific to July of 1776, and consequently addresses contemporary audiences in comparatively prolix and antiquated eighteenth-century phrasing. Bloomberg and his planners therefore selected only the Declaration's Preamble and Introduction, its least political passages, as the second declamation on September 11, 2002. Divorced from Jefferson's indictment of King George III's crimes against the American colonies, as well as his closing appeal to "our British brethren," the Declaration's Preamble and Introduction speak in apparently transcendent terms about the nature of government and its universal aims, based on "self-evident" truths, to preserve the "unalienable Rights of Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness."[34] By themselves, the Declaration's Preamble and Introduction conform to *any* historical period and political body: its abstract and conditional language addresses purely theoretical scenarios "[w]hen, in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another."[35] Drained of specific historical, legal, or political content, McGreevey's reading of the Declaration on September 11, 2002, consisted of seemingly apolitical civic platitudes.

The combined ethos of Lincoln and Jefferson's texts, so ordered, symbolized the nation's abiding connection with the original enunciation of American liberties, suggesting that the past, present, and future of U.S. freedoms were both destined and continuous, irrespective of historical or political circumstances. Modern Americans may be able to recite much of the Declaration's Preamble and Introduction by rote but popular and political wisdom accepts the Gettysburg Address as a pithy and morally praiseworthy (if not historically precise) distillation of its essential meaning. By this logic, the authoritative status of Lincoln's speech renders sociopolitical truths embodied in Jefferson's document perpetually available to present and future audiences alike, regardless of immediate cultural or political differences. David Zarefsky noted that none of the selected texts

> have anything to do specifically with terrorism or the attacks . . . . They are much more transcendent in their appeal. . . . [W]hat he [Bloomberg] is trying to express is that this is an event that transcends politics, by using texts that evoke a kind of resonance between then and now, and recommits us to the ideals that are contained in those texts.[36]

In this manner, the declamations adhered to a defining formal requirement of celebrated public eulogies: the didactic rehearsal of civic axioms intended to restore the public's perceived connections with its communal origins, rededicate it to its original civic mission, and thereby reaffirm its traditional bonds of sociopolitical solidarity in times of crisis, tragedy, or uncertainty.

The morning declamations of Lincoln and Jefferson's words symbolized the nation's unbroken affiliation with its origins and destiny; Bloomberg's evening

recitation of Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech and President Bush's statements displayed essential civic virtues necessary to galvanize the citizenry in the face of impending threats to its freedom and stability. In his 1941 address to Congress, Roosevelt employed universal terminology at a time of geopolitical turmoil, propounding recognizably American conceptions of freedom that everyone should enjoy. On September 11, 2002, Bloomberg recited Roosevelt's vision of "a world founded upon four essential human freedoms"—namely, "freedom of speech and expression," "freedom of every person to worship God in his own way," "freedom from want," and "freedom from fear."[37] Preceded by Jefferson and Lincoln's politically sacred expressions of the American experience, Roosevelt's modern phrasing similarly assumed the ethos of revealed truth concerning the origins, nature, and scope of U.S. liberties. Thus, even the somewhat idiosyncratic choice of Roosevelt's speech evoked the formal, exegetical qualities of the so-called American Testament.

Although it was the most unconventional reading featured in the day's ceremonies, Roosevelt's speech nevertheless fulfilled a conventional twofold purpose. On the one hand, Roosevelt's address (like Lincoln's) proclaims fidelity to the origins of fundamental U.S. liberties while also portending their continued enlargement—or, in the logic of the ceremonies, transcendence. The portion of his speech that Bloomberg recited is marked by a rhythmic pattern in which Roosevelt asserts that each freedom must be secured "everywhere" or "anywhere in the world."[38] Echoing the symbolism of the Gettysburg Address, such recognizably U.S. liberties form a transcendent model of universal freedom.

Roosevelt's speech is a prime example of numerous statements in which he reinterpreted the meaning of the Declaration of Independence in light of the economic ravages of the Great Depression and the international conflicts of World War II. Prior to and throughout his presidency, Roosevelt asserted that economic inequities hindered citizens' abilities to realize the pursuit of happiness which the Declaration stipulated as an unalienable right and called for an "economic Bill of Rights" applicable at home and abroad.[39] In the "Four Freedoms" address, he maintained that the country was still animated by the "perpetual, peaceful revolution" initiated in Jefferson's document and that "freedom from want" when "translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy peacetime life."[40] Much as Lincoln did in the nineteenth century, Roosevelt articulated the twentieth century's most consequential, and universally inclusive, augmentation of the Declaration's meaning in response to historical and political strife.[41] In the context of September 11 memorial services, Roosevelt's rhetoric symbolically heralded the transcendence of the nation's founding principles and their applicability to the exigencies of twenty-first century geopolitical crises.

On the other hand, the selected portions of Roosevelt's speech provided deftly suggestive terms with which to memorialize, not only an unprecedented loss of life, but the decimation of the country's most important financial center as well. Roosevelt's signature identification of economic security, or "freedom from want," as an indispensable means to "secure for every nation a healthy peacetime" implicitly

addressed the fiscal ramifications of the terrorist attacks in a putatively respectful and nonpolitical vernacular.[42] Americans likely could not recite Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech as they could recite Lincoln or Jefferson's most famous words; but its language nonetheless evoked familiar and widely accepted precepts of modern liberalism. According to these precepts, one takes for granted that international threats to U.S. security principally threaten a uniquely prosperous economic order: American capitalism. In this Rooseveltian logic, equal opportunity for the pursuit of happiness as such should be hailed as a primary civic ideal because economic prosperity allows the community to transcend its other crippling inequities and achieve lasting social harmony. As a central *topos* of neoliberal epideictic, one's private pursuit of economic well-being assumes the status of an unquestioned public good: consumer capitalism honors the loss of innocents by maintaining financial opportunities equivalent to the preservation of American freedom.

Commonplace reverence for the so-called greatest generation only enhanced the allegorical significance of Roosevelt's rhetoric on September 11, 2002. During the final decade of the twentieth century, journalists, film producers, historians, novelists, and politicians all celebrated the World War II generation's defense of pluralist society.[43] In the wake of the September 11 attacks, commentators frequently pondered parallels between those who came to their country's defense following the Japanese raid on Pearl Harbor and the present generation's prospects for responding to violations of American sovereignty at the dawn of the twenty-first century. Thus, the popular memory of World War II recommended fashionable cultural symbols with which to assess the gravity and significance of the September 11 atrocities while invoking the iconic image of a model community unified and mobilized against dire threats to its intertwined democratic and economic institutions. By virtue of these perceived connections, Roosevelt's text offered a form of address understood to have rallied the public around the protection of sacred U.S. liberties during World War II and therefore suited to invoking such a model community once again.

The ceremonial recitation of Roosevelt's speech thus supplied a formally and patriotically satisfying model of virtue where one appeared to be lacking in the wake of the terrorist attacks. Ordinary and defenseless citizens, not soldiers, overwhelmingly were murdered in the destruction at the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and in the fields of Pennsylvania; victims of the attacks, moreover, included hundreds of foreigners from around the world. Their largely anonymous virtues and tragic deaths ironically proved unfitting models of excellence for the often militaristic and nationalistic rites staged to commemorate their loss.[44] Hence the memory of the so-called greatest generation provided icons of citizen-soldiers better suited to the formal requirements of neoliberal funeral ceremonies than the individuals who were being memorialized. This weird symbolic substitution demonstrates how the very form of our memorial discourse profoundly structures the medium and content of public memories as well as the models of virtue promoted in their name.

Paired with Roosevelt's address, President Bush's original speech utilized formulaic (and, to that extent, unoriginal) Rooseveltian terms. The similarities between

Roosevelt and President Bush's language were hardly accidental. John Murphy discerns repeated echoes of FDR's rhetoric in Bush's public statements following September 11, 2001, and Denise Bostdorff demonstrates that in the same period Bush frequently called upon younger Americans to respond to the terrorist attacks in the spirit of their putative elders, the World War II generation.[45] On the first anniversary of September 11, he similarly eulogized the victims of the terrorist attacks by calling on the community, in the formulae of classical funeral orations, to recognize its debt to those who had been lost, to pay them tribute with "the most enduring monument we can build: A world of liberty and security made possible by the way America leads, and the way Americans lead their lives." Bush's speech accordingly summoned the community to answer "history's call" by rehearsing the defining tropes of wartime rhetoric in the era of modern liberalism, including "a great struggle that tests our strength, and even more our resolve"; an epic battle "between those who believe all men are created equal, and those who believe that some men and women and children are expendable in the pursuit of power"; and a depiction of the U.S. as the nation that "has defeated tyrants and liberated death camps" and "raised this lamp of liberty to every captive land."[46] With such language, Bush not only echoed Roosevelt's call to the greatest generation but, in doing so, thematically unified the day's orations by recalling the nation's promise to extend equality as first envisioned in Jefferson's Declaration and hallowed in Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. As such, his speech was notable more for its formulaic invocation of modern liberal commonplaces than its original content. Consistent with classical *epitaphioi*, the address's most evident rhetorical novelty was its distinctive rearrangement of conventional *topoi*.

Together with Roosevelt's "Four Freedoms" speech, Bush's rehearsal of familiar commonplaces emphasized not only the triumph of American freedoms over former historical and political conflicts, but their inevitable transcendence of present and future calamities. "We will not relent until justice is done and our nation is secure," Bush proclaimed. "What our enemies have begun, we will finish."[47] In Bush's phrasing, the public—"we"—is an emphatically singular body unified in belief and action. As in the morning recitations of Jefferson and Lincoln's words, these appeals to the transcendence of American freedoms provided an implicit warrant for civic unity in response to the events of September 11 by invoking the celebrated mantras of the World War II generation, which allegedly transcended its immediate sociopolitical differences in order to ensure the global propagation of democratic liberties. Indeed, in popular memory this model wartime generation fought to preserve freedom in the form of an economic system under which Americans presumably attained a standard of prosperity unrivaled in modern history. In an era dominated by the military-industrial complex and consumer capitalism, Bush's model of citizenship valorizes equally the armed defense of U.S. liberties and their expression in a culture of individual consumption—or, to use his words, in "the way Americans lead their lives." Not coincidentally, in previous statements on September 11 Bush had consistently rehearsed the public in drawing parallels between the country's economic vitality and its armed defense.[48]

Such was a fitting resolution to a series of public declamations tailored for mass media consumption. The featured oratory amplified the didactic qualities of conventional epideictic forms to produce patriotic liturgies easily edited for television coverage and composed of nominally universal, self-evident truths. Indeed, such epideictic *topoi* provided serviceable fodder for what one commentator described as "a television event" more "than a political oratory event."[49] This mediated presentation of Jefferson, Lincoln, Roosevelt, and Bush's words encouraged simultaneously national yet intimately personal, even unspoken, reflection on their truths as an appropriate response to the memory of those killed on September 11, 2001. The epideictic addresses constituted a democratic vernacular of deeply personal emotion disseminated to national and international audiences. September 11 memorial services in Manhattan demonstrated vividly how corporate media enhance the appeal of neoliberal values through the management of collective pathos.[50] Event planners sought to unify heterogeneous audiences in a public display of mourning that would transcend intervening social, political, or economic divisions. In a period of untold grief and uncertainty, powerful bonds of sentiment would serve as proof of abiding unity. The sacred, personal, affective resonance of the official epideictic therefore called on the public to endorse presumptive beliefs in both the historical transcendence of fundamental U.S. freedoms and its integrity as a civic body.

The September 11 memorial epideictic thus provides a historic example of how contemporary public spectacles endow the idiomatic values of neoliberal democracy with simultaneously personal and universal pathos. Such spectacles provide a virtual civic forum designed for the private spectatorship of a presumably nonpartisan, emotionally-charged media event. In our so-called society of the spectacle, public events—including political conventions and campaigns, state ceremonies and cultural festivals, or national and international sports competitions—increasingly are organized to unite an otherwise fractured citizenry in a dynamic affective experience.[51] The symbolic rituals of mass mediated spectacles offer an affective idiom that appears to engender a common civic identity from public displays of sentiment during an era of widespread political polarities, conflicting moral paradigms, and heterogeneous cultural traditions. Public address on such occasions provides, as sociologist Michel Maffesoli might put it, "a communication" whose "sole objective [is] to 'touch' the other, to simply be in contact, to participate together in a form of gregariousness."[52] Offering incantation rather than invention, the epideictic at the site of the World Trade Center and in Battery Park contributed yet one more sound to an ongoing funeral dirge paratactically composed of interwoven texts, music, and other funeral rites.[53] The putative effect of public speech in this form is to nullify debilitating sociopolitical differences ordinarily evoked by deliberative speech—such as the political polarization, class and racial disparities, and vociferous debates over social mores that divided the public at the dawn of the twenty-first century—and thereby induce audiences to ritually affirm a tacit yet indelible communal bond. Assured of this bond, neoliberal epideictic does not summon citizens for public advocacy in the presence of others (the essential

condition of democratic politics) but excuses them to the preoccupations of private life.

America's Machiavellian Moment

Even as it offers a form of speech ostensibly denuded of political ramifications, neoliberal epideictic (like all versions of the genre) rehearses audiences in ideal conceptions of governance, civic participation, and social order based on prevailing sociopolitical values. State eulogies given in New York City on September 11, 2002, during the most important public commemoration of the present era, vividly illustrated the civic implications of neoliberal epideictic's appeal. Much of the nation experienced the events of September 11 as a violent rupture in time. In their wake, Americans from all walks of life surmised that a halcyon era of prolonged peace and stability had precipitately ended, and that a new epoch of historic geopolitical conflict had begun. The U.S. entered a twenty-first century "Machiavellian moment" as J. G. A. Pocock describes it, in which a republic, composed of a potentially unruly mixture of partisan interests, is compelled by the unpredictable fortunes of human affairs to ask how it may "remain morally and politically stable in a stream of irrational events conceived as essentially destructive of all systems of secular stability."[54] In this moment, the polity is forced to confront the prospect of its inherent contingency, even its temporal finitude, as a sociopolitical body. During such historic episodes of temporal disorientation, officials call upon epideictic resources to symbolically incorporate radical ruptures in communal time into the unfolding of central commemorative traditions and thereby assign coherent meaning and purpose to the labor of sociopolitical restoration.[55] Renewal of the public's *vita activa*, in other words, follows from the fitting expression and collective ratification of a revised historical consciousness.[56]

In response to the perceived advent of a new and dangerous era, the public eulogies of September 11, 2002, insisted upon the community's unbroken, or transcendent, connections with its incipient values. The arrangement and parallelism of Lincoln, Jefferson, Roosevelt, and Bush's words encouraged audiences to view the recent tragedies as yet one more trial in the destined reign of American liberties over the forces of violence, fear, and repression. In this fashion, neoliberal epideictic promotes a conception of transcendent time rooted in American civil religion. Since the Puritans arrived on the shores of New England in the seventeenth century, Americans of all stripes have mythologized their country as a model community founded to deliver the good news of salvation (whether secular or sacred) to the world.[57] The September 11 epideictic affirmed this article of civic faith by suggesting that the community was witnessing an epic struggle between the forces of freedom and oppression, of good and evil. Yet the outcome of this struggle had been prophesied: freedom will vanquish despotism, good will prevail over evil.

Roosevelt and Bush's words in particular invoked the messianic themes of Cold War rhetoric in order to prophesize such triumphs. Inspired by Roosevelt's World War II addresses, which depicted an epic contest between Allied and Axis powers over

the fate of popular government, American officials throughout the Cold War routinely elaborated upon such messianic themes by portraying the U.S. and its allies as agents of Christian liberty engaged in an epochal struggle against Soviet forces of godless communism. In his Truman Doctrine of 1947, the Cold War's opening rhetorical salvo, President Harry Truman stressed that "[a]t the present moment in world history nearly every nation must choose between" a way of life "based upon the will of the majority" and one "based upon the will of a minority forcibly imposed."[58] Three years later, Senator Joseph McCarthy notoriously amplified such themes of apocalyptic crisis: "Today we are engaged in a final, all-out battle between communistic atheism and Christianity," he proclaimed. "Can there be anyone who fails to realize that the communist world has said, 'The time is now,' that this is the time for the showdown between the democratic Christian world and the communist atheistic world?"[59] More recently, President Ronald Reagan implored the public to recognize that "no government schemes are going to perfect man" and "to pray for the salvation of all those who live in that totalitarian darkness" of the so-called Evil Empire.[60]

The September 11 declamations likewise heralded the triumph of U.S. freedoms over cataclysmic historical and political events while imploring the nation to affirm such prophesy in the face of climactic geopolitical conflict. President Bush concluded official memorial services by conjuring the day's most explicit messianic reference, substituting the United States for Jesus Christ (the Messiah) as "the light" to which the New Testament refers in the Book of John:

> I believe there is a reason that history has matched this nation with this time. . . . This ideal of America is the hope of all mankind. That hope drew millions to this harbor. That hope still lights our way. And the light shines in the darkness. And the darkness will not overcome it.[61]

Presenting American political principles as prophetic signs and revelations, the September 11 anniversary epideictic thus invoked the conventional messianic symbolism of wartime rhetoric in the era of modern liberal democracy.

The logic of messianic time is ahistorical: it conforms to a divine calendar in which social agents cannot change prophesied ends, only hasten their coming. Speech that affirms such prophesy assigns primarily universal significance to particular events. It encourages audiences to intervene in them only insofar as they may further the arrival of a destined and desired outcome. This epideictic *topos* suggests that the fate of the very freedoms at stake in the present conflict has been destined since their original enunciation. In other words, the rhetoric calls on the community not to protect or augment those freedoms through sustained civic advocacy, devoted to negotiating profound sociocultural differences and inequities, but by bearing witness to a divine prophesy.

Defined as a transcendent achievement, freedom is a gift bestowed by the past rather than a product of civic *agon* in the present—a condition passively received, not actively pursued. This transcendent quality reflects Hannah Arendt's claim that "freedom can so easily be mistaken for an essentially nonpolitical phenomenon."[62]

Event planners for the September 11 memorial services sought precisely to coin a nonpolitical commemorative idiom of freedom and citizenship by appealing to historical transcendence. In this instance, neoliberal epideictic dissociates history from politics by suggesting that the polity's fate lies in a concurrent devaluation of political action and embrace of historical prophesy. In this chiliastic frame, immediate events warrant faith in the foreordained ends of American democracy rather than a rededication to their deliberative enlargement. Hence, the cost of the public's assurance in its destined freedoms is its inattention to collective commitments for their deliberative pursuit in response to immediate sociopolitical dilemmas. Indeed, several commentators noted the September 11 ceremonies' conspicuous lack of explicit calls for public service or civic improvement emblematic of leaders' statements on similar epideictic occasions in U.S. history.[63]

Neoliberal epideictic therefore reorients the public to its own history in a way that restricts the citizenry's collective capacity to derive resources for speech and action from the terms of civic memory. Such historical disorientation was most evident in the words used to commence memorial services on September 11, 2002: Lincoln's cherished allusion in 1863 to the nation's founding "[f]our score and seven years ago." In seeking nonpolitical words and rituals, the September 11 memorial services refused the possibility of codifying historically distinctive interpretations of immediate events that could be remembered, narrated, and reinterpreted by future generations as precedents for political judgment. This doubtful epideictic mode fails to yield the kind of "strong statement" that James Young contends is essential for ensuring that commemorative rituals provide "a basis for political and social action." Citing his own studies of Holocaust memorials, Young argues:

> The question is not, How are people moved by these memorials? but rather, To what end have they been moved, to what historical conclusions, to what understanding and actions in their own lives? This is to suggest that. . . . the social function of such art *is* its aesthetic performance.[64]

Communal memories are inherently political because public rituals used to formulate and maintain them necessarily condition the community to derive precedents for further speech and action from its remembered past. Bloomberg and his planners' effort to "keep politics out" of official September 11 commemorations diluted this vital civic function of public memory.

These considerations confirm the political significance of ritualized epideictic forms—or the notion that, in Young's terms, their aesthetic performance determines their social function. Memory rooted in the unquestioned transcendence of civic tradition can instill tremendous reverence for both its origins and ordained ends, yet it produces dubious public resources with which citizens might speak and act in response to immediate events. Pocock cautions:

> [P]olitical processes often (some say always) go on within a received and inherited pattern of behavior, and the interpretation of tradition can be a complex and self-conscious political decision. Yet it remains true that a citizen, constantly involved with his [*sic*] fellows in the making of public decisions, must possess an intellectual

> armory which takes him beyond the perception of hierarchy and tradition, and gives him cause to rely on his and his fellows' power to understand and respond to what is happening to them.[65]

Neoliberal epideictic praises as a public virtue the nominally *a*political decision to refrain from questioning inherited institutional wisdom. It solicits the polity's faith in the continuity of its enabling political processes without articulating conditions for their revitalization in light of immediate sociopolitical conflicts. The genre's failure to do so tragically neglects the requisite capacity for response definitive of freedom itself in Arendt's conception: the distinctly human capacity to begin again, to create something new amid the stream of irrational and destructive events, or Machiavellian moments, to which Pocock refers.[66]

Given advantageous circumstances, *either* formulaic *or* novel speech might draw a constructive "intellectual armory" from the terms of collective memory. The principal issue here is not the originality of an epideictic performance but the discernible institutional ends it serves (or fails to serve) in replenishing the political resources of civic remembrance. Neoliberal epideictic reduces the rhetorical rituals of public memory to discursive forms deprived of deliberative consequence, to mere symbols of tradition. On the eve of the September 11 memorial services, Susan Sontag lamented that when great speeches "are ritually cited, or recycled for commemoration, they have become completely emptied of meaning. They are now gestures of nobility, of greatness of spirit. The reasons for their greatness are irrelevant."[67] Neoliberal epideictic consequently amounts to a willful, and therefore dangerous, aestheticization of politics: it risks confirming classical encomiasts' worst fear that epideictic speech amounts to words alone.

In this manner, the genre evinces a profoundly conflicted mode of political address and moral judgment. Despite the September 11 memorial planners' intent to merely orate a litany of patriotic signs, to allow figural language to speak in the absence of partisan directives, the artistic conventions and institutional histories of allegory and epideictic alike invoke cultural and political hierarchies that neoliberal epideictic only appears to dismantle. Allegory traditionally offered an effective rhetorical technique for political, religious, and cultural authorities who used it to symbolically instruct audiences in moral truths or generalizations about human existence and worldly affairs. Notwithstanding our reigning democratic sensibilities, moreover, oratorical traditions historically have denoted the existence of demonstrable sociopolitical hierarchies. In classical Greece, when the scope of citizenship was severely restricted, only orators with a certain measure of cultural authority and influence conventionally enjoyed the privilege of instructing audiences in their allegedly common heritage, values, and ideals.[68] Classical encomiasts who denied the suitability of their own words nonetheless employed epideictic speech as a means of maintaining normative civic orders. Since antiquity, paeans to democratic institutions have ironically belied their accommodations to established cultural hierarchies and seats of power.[69]

In the context of public speech, performative rituals manage the semantic excesses of allegorical language in order to surreptitiously control the production of meaning. The allegorical *topoi* of neoliberal epideictic demonstrate that an apparent surfeit of

meaning in democratic vernaculars can nevertheless accommodate the interests of reigning sociopolitical authorities and agendas. Strangely, this more democratic public idiom defines explicitly political speech as an inappropriate response to ritualized expressions of U.S. freedom and civic virtue. Assigning universal meaning to the Preamble of the Declaration of Independence diminishes recognition of the fact that its language of equality and revolt provides perpetual rhetorical resources with which subordinate groups might seek to redress continuing social, political, and economic inequities concomitant with corporate capitalism and federal deregulation. Presuming that the Gettysburg Address contains a transcendent vision of expanding popular government belies the fact that Lincoln's many layers of temporal, historical, and quasi-theological symbolism justified an unprecedented concentration of federal power. In this manner, the rhetorical conventions of neoliberal epideictic curtail opportunities for public debate over the inherent sociopolitical entailments and contradictions of our defining political languages precisely as it appears to provide a more democratic hermeneutic thereof. Simply put, such conventions control political speech by appearing not to do so. In eschewing the political entailments of ceremonial speech, those who speak in the language of neoliberal epideictic deprecate the sociopolitical order and authority that forms its very condition of possibility. The symbolic action of their performance reifies hierarchies of address and authority they merely appear to denounce.

Guided by this moral and political confusion, neoliberal epideictic sponsors a democratic yet apolitical speech that validates citizens' disinclination for explicitly political pursuits—*democratic* in its presumably universal dissemination and self-evident significance for all citizens but *apolitical* insofar as it transfigures documents historically cited as warrants for civic participation into allegorical paeans to the virtues of private life over public advocacy. Pataki, McGreevey, Bloomberg, and even Bush commemorated the events of September 11 by invoking sacred axioms of American political ideology. Their formulaic incantation symbolically summoned the citizenry to affirm the transcendence of both U.S. liberties and sociopolitical differences as imperatives for civic renewal. In doing so, they concomitantly beseeched national audiences to honor the dead with private and supposedly nonpartisan responses to the recent tragedies rather than using the occasion to advocate public tributes in the form of collective rededication to modes of political advocacy, to potentially transformative projects of communal justice, responsibility, and equality. The cardinal liability of epideictic in this form is not its obviously unoriginal memorials to the dead but its identification of politically consequential words and deeds as inappropriate means of honoring their memory.

In antiquity, ceremonial speech urging rededication to political commitments did not dishonor the dead; rather, it constituted a necessary method of paying them tribute. Neoliberal epideictic extols the pursuits of private life, both social and economic, as ideal standards of citizenship. Its allegorical presentation of sacred democratic maxims oddly summons the community to celebrate the prophesied history and integrity of its political institutions—forums intended for the public performance of political acts in the presence of others—while simultaneously

validating a withdrawal from collective participation therein to the secluded spaces and diversions of private life.[70]

If we should avoid romanticizing modern oratory, then we should also avoid romanticizing the apparent artistic and political virtues of classical epideictic. As I have indicated, classical encomiasts customarily celebrated the virtues of democratic citizenship, of public over private life, at a time when democracy and citizenship alike depended upon slave labor, socioeconomic privilege, and severe gender inequities. We should be wary of the temptation to replace neoliberal praise of private life with classical epideictic models devoted to extolling an ideal, narrowly circumscribed public sphere.

Instead of devoting our epideictic rituals to the praise of *either* public *or* private goods, we should affirm forms of speech that enable one to continually assess the quality of public life in relation to private liberties, and that of private liberties in relation to public life. Neoliberal epideictic falters as a politically efficacious institution of speech because it propagates a version of *liberalism* (or individual freedom) that denigrates *republicanism* (or the political pursuit of collective freedoms). It assigns superior significance to principles such as privacy, consumption, and spectatorship over those of equality, justice, and mutual responsibility. In this regard, Bloomberg and his staff's omission of the United States' principal republican document and the third text of the so-called American Testament—the Constitution—speaks volumes.

The public vocabulary of excellence coined by neoliberal epideictic lauds individual, or "negative," freedoms as nonpolitical goods bestowed by the transcendence of traditional values and the nullification of sociopolitical differences. In publicizing this paradoxical political ideal, neoliberal epideictic implicitly disparages republican principles of civic participation vital to the protection and extension of such individual liberties. Insofar as it reflects pervasive sociopolitical values, the genre suggests that an egalitarian discourse on U.S. republicanism is found wanting in our emergent forms of public praise, comprised as they are of mutually constitutive political and corporate interests. The project of devising an egalitarian vocabulary with which we might once again praise the virtues of public institutions in productive measure to those of private liberties begins by affirming that our customary rhetorical forms do not, and must not, amount to mere words alone. To the contrary, we must assert that even formulaic words, when constructively employed, might spur the very deed upon which all of politics depends: the act of beginning again.

Notes

[1] Thucydides, "Funeral Speech," in *The Speeches of Pericles*, trans. H. G. Edinger (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1979), 2.35.

[2] Demosthenes, "The Funeral Speech," in *Demosthenes VII*, trans. Norman W. DeWitt and Norman J. DeWitt, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 1.

[3] Gerard Hauser, "Aristotle on Epideictic: The Formation of Public Morality," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 29 (1999): 17–18.

[4] Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca, *The New Rhetoric: A Treatise on Argumentation*, trans. John Wilkinson and Purcell Weaver (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1971), 48.

[5] An introductory list of sources pertaining to the artistic form or civic functions of epideictic includes Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 1.9; Walter H. Beale, "Rhetorical Performative Discourse: A New Theory of Epideictic," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 11 (1978): 221–46; Theodore C. Burgess, *Epideictic Literature* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987); Richard Chase, "The Classical Conception of Epideictic," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 47 (1961): 293–300; Celeste M. Condit, "The Function of Epideictic: The Boston Massacre Orations as Exemplar," *Communication Quarterly* 33 (1985): 284–98; Scott Consigny, "Gorgias's Use of the Epideictic," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 25 (1992): 281–97; A. Leigh DeNeef, "Epideictic Rhetoric and the Renaissance Lyric," *The Journal of Medieval Studies* 3 (1973): 203–31; Bernard K. Duffy, "The Platonic Function of Epideictic Rhetoric," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 16 (1983): 79–93; Hauser, "Aristotle on Epideictic"; Nicole Loraux, *The Invention of Athens: The Funeral Oration in the Classical City*, trans. Alan Sheridan (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1986); Josiah Ober and Barry Strauss, "Drama, Political Rhetoric, and the Discourse of Athenian Democracy," in *Nothing to Do with Dionysos: Athenian Drama in Its Social Context*, ed. John J. Winkler and Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 237–70; John W. O'Malley, *Praise and Blame in Renaissance Rome: Rhetoric, Doctrine, and Reform in the Sacred Orators of the Papal Court, c. 1450-1521* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1979); Christine Oravec, "'Observation' in Aristotle's Theory of Epideictic," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 9 (1976): 162–74; John Poulakos, "Gorgias' and Isocrates' Use of the Encomium," *The Southern Speech Communication Journal* 51 (1986): 300–307; Takis Poulakos, "Isocrates's Use of Narrative in the *Evagoras*: Epideictic, Rhetoric and Moral Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73 (1987): 317–28; "Historiographies of the Tradition of Rhetoric: A Brief History of Classical Funeral Orations," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 54 (1990): 172–88; Lawrence W. Rosenfield, "The Practical Celebration of Epideictic," *Rhetoric in Transition*, ed. Eugene E. White (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), 131–56; Rosenfield, "Central Park and the Celebration of Virtue," in *American Rhetoric: Context and Criticism*, ed. Thomas W. Benson (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), 221–66; Dale L. Sullivan, "The Ethos of Epideictic Encounter," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 26 (1993): 113–33; Jeffrey Walker, "Aristotle's Lyric: Re-Imagining the Rhetoric of Epideictic Song," *College English* 51 (1989): 5–28.

[6] See especially Edward S. Casey, *Getting Back into Place: Toward a Renewed Understanding of the Place-World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993); *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Casey, Cheryl R. Jorgensen-Earp and Lori A. Lanzilotti, "Public Memory and Private Grief: The Construction of Shrines at the Sites of Public Tragedy," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 150–70; Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past,* vol. 1 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). See also John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[7] Randal C. Archibold, "Political Ad and 9/11 Speech May Be an Unwelcome Mix," *New York Times*, August 15, 2002, B4. See also "'We Owe It to Those That We Lost to Expand Our Quest': Perspectives," *New York Times*, September 11, 2002, A15; Rick Hampson, "NYC Unveils Plans for Sept. 11 Events," *USA Today*, August 7, 2002, 3A; Karen Matthews, "Former Mayor Giuliani to Read Victims' Names at WTC Ceremony," *The Associated Press State and Local Wire*, August 6, 2002; Janny Scott, "Sept. 11 Leaves Speakers at a Loss for Their Own Words," *New York Times*, August 11, 2002, A29; Joel Stashenko, "Pataki Will Read Cherished Speech on Sept. 11," *The Associated Press State and Local Wire*, September 8, 2002.

[8] Thanks to David Depew for his interpretation of these addresses as politically neoliberal.
[9] Clyde Haberman quoting Sorenson, "Speechless in the Face of History," *New York Times*, August 30, 2002, B1.
[10] Scott quoting Hart, "Sept. 11 Leaves Speakers at a Loss," A29.
[11] Scott quoting Wills, "Sept. 11 Leaves Speakers at a Loss," A29.
[12] Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, 2.
[13] Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, 2, 3, 4, 5-10.
[14] Casey, *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, 2nd ed. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 216–57.
[15] See Stephen H. Browne, "Remembering Crispus Attucks: Race, Rhetoric, and the Politics of Commemoration," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 85 (1999): 169–87; Condit, "The Function of Epideictic."
[16] Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987), 43.
[17] Janet Lyon, *Manifestoes: Provocations of the Modern* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 10.
[18] Kenneth Burke, *A Rhetoric of Motives* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969), 58.
[19] James Jasinski, "Instrumentalism, Contextualism, and Interpretation in Rhetorical Criticism," in *Rhetorical Hermeneutics: Invention and Interpretation in the Age of Science*, ed. Alan G. Gross and William M. Keith (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 197.
[20] Jasinski, "Instrumentalism, Contextualism, and Interpretation," 214.
[21] Robert W. McChesney, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy: Communication Politics in Dubious Times* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 6. See also David Baldwin, ed., *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); John L. Campbell and Ove K. Pedersen, eds., *The Rise of Neoliberalism and Institutional Analysis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001); Jean Comaroff and John L. Comaroff, eds., *Millennial Capitalism and the Culture of Neoliberalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001); Randall Rothenberg, *The Neo-Liberals: Creating the New American Politics* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984).
[22] The Editors, "Finding a Way to Remember," *U.S. News and World Report* 133 (August 2002): 10; Joyce Purnick, "A Modern Rite of Mourning: Must-See TV," *New York Times*, September 12, 2002, A22.
[23] Haberman, "Speechless in the Face of History," B1.
[24] Scott, "Sept. 11 Leaves Speakers at a Loss," A29.
[25] Denise M. Bostdorff and Steven L. Vibbert, "Values Advocacy: Enhancing Organizational Images, Deflecting Public Criticism, and Grounding Future Arguments," *Public Relations Review* 20 (1994): 141–58.
[26] Mortimer J. Adler and William Gorman, *The American Testament* (New York: Praeger, 1975), 9–13.
[27] Rhetorical scholarship on allegory includes Robert Hariman, "Allegory and Democratic Public Culture in the Postmodern Era," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 35 (2002): 267–96; Martin Irvine, "Interpretation and the Semiotics of Allegory in Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Augustine," *Semiotica* 63 (1987): 33–71; Robert C. Rowland, "On Limiting the Narrative Paradigm: Three Case Studies," *Communication Monographs* 56 (March 1989): 39–54; V. Tejera, "Irony and Allegory in the *Phaedrus*," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 8 (Spring 1975): 71–87; Phillip Walker, "Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*: Tragedy or Allegory?," *Western Speech* 20 (Fall 1956): 222–24.
[28] On the democratic or postmodern qualities of allegory, see Hariman, "Allegory and Democratic Public Culture"; E. D. Hirsch, Jr., "Transhistorical Intentions and the Persistence of Allegory," *New Literary History* 25 (1994): 549–67; and Zhang Longxi, "Historicizing the Postmodern Allegory," *Texas Studies in Language and Literature* 36 (1994): 212–31.

[29] See Roland Barthes, "Death of the Author," in *Image Music Text*, trans. Stephen Heath (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977); Barthes, "From Work to Text," in *Image Music Text*; Michael Calvin McGee, "Text, Context, and the Fragmentation of Contemporary Culture," *Western Journal of Communication* 54 (1990): 274–89.

[30] Abraham Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address," in *Great Speeches: Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Dover, 1991), 103.

[31] Gary Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster), 146–47. See also Adler and Gorman, *The American Testament*, 121, 127, 132; Edward Dumbauld, *The Declaration of Independence And What It Means Today* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1950), 58.

[32] Abraham Lincoln, "Speech at Springfield, Illinois, June 26, 1857," in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, vol. 2, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press), 406.

[33] Lincoln, "Gettysburg Address," 104. See Philip F. Detweiler, "The Changing Reputation of the Declaration of Independence: The First Fifty Years," *William and Mary Quarterly* 19 (October 1962): 557–74; Stephen E. Lucas, "Justifying America: The Declaration of Independence as a Rhetorical Document," in *American Rhetoric: Context and Criticism*, ed. Thomas W. Benson (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), 67–130; Henry V. Jaffa, "Abraham Lincoln and the Universal Meaning of the Declaration of Independence," in *The Declaration of Independence: Origins and Impact*, ed. Scott Douglas Gerber (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2002), 29–44; Pauline Maier, *American Scripture: Making the Declaration of Independence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997); Merrill D. Peterson, *Jefferson and the New Nation: A Biography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 92; Charles Warren, "Fourth of July Myths," *William and Mary Quarterly* 2 (1945): 237–45.

[34] Thomas Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence," in *The Essential Thomas Jefferson*, ed. John Gabriel Hunt (New York: Random House, 1994), 24.

[35] Jefferson, "The Declaration of Independence," 44.

[36] Jennifer Steinhauer quoting Zarefsky, "New York to Observe Sept. 11 With Dawn-to-Dusk Tributes," *New York Times*, August 7, 2002, A1.

[37] Franklin D. Roosevelt, "'Four Freedoms' Speech," in *Nothing to Fear: The Selected Addresses of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932–1945*, ed. B. D. Zevin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946), 274–75.

[38] Roosevelt, "'Four Freedoms' Speech," 274–75.

[39] See Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Progressive Government," in *American Rhetorical Discourse*, 3rd ed., ed. Ronald F. Reid and James F. Klumpp (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2005), 734–46; Roosevelt, "Annual Message to Congress—the Economic 'Bill of Rights,'" in *Nothing to Fear: The Selected Addresses of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, 1932–1945*, ed. B. D. Zevin (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1946), 387–97.

[40] Roosevelt, "'Four Freedoms' Speech," 274.

[41] See Adler and Gorman, *The American Testament*, 107; Charles A. Kromkowski, "The Declaration of Independence, Congress, and Presidents of the United States," in Gerber, ed., *The Declaration of Independence: Origins and Impact*, 136.

[42] Roosevelt, "'Four Freedoms' Speech," 274.

[43] Representative examples of this trend include Stephen E. Ambrose, *Band of Brothers: E Company, 506th Regiment, 101st Airborne* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); *Band of Brothers*, 600 min., HBO Video, 2002; Tom Brokaw, *The Greatest Generation* (New York: Random House, 1998); *Saving Private Ryan*, dir. Stephen Spielberg, 2 hr. 49 min., Dreamworks Home Entertainment, 1999, videocassette. For commentary, see Barbara A. Biesecker, "Remembering World War II: The Rhetoric and Politics of National Commemoration at the Turn of the 21st Century," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 88 (November 2002): 393–409; Denise M. Bostdorff, "George W. Bush's Post-September 11 Rhetoric of Covenant

Renewal: Upholding the Faith of the Greatest Generation," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 4 (2003): 293–319; Richard Goldstein, "World War II Chic," *Village Voice*, January 19, 1999, 47.

[44] On the militarism and xenophobia of eulogies in the classical tradition, see Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, 45, 80, 221–62.

[45] John M. Murphy, "'Our Mission and Our Moment': George W. Bush and September 11th," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 4 (2003): 607–32; Bostdorff, "George W. Bush's Post-September 11 Rhetoric."

[46] George W. Bush, *"We Will Prevail": President George W. Bush on War, Terrorism, and Freedom*, sel. and ed. by National Review (New York: Continuum, 2003), 182.

[47] Bush, *"We Will Prevail"*, 183.

[48] Murphy, "'Our Mission and Our Moment.'"

[49] Haberman, "Speechless in the Face of History," B1.

[50] See, for example, F. G. Bailey, *The Tactical Uses of Passion: An Essay on Power, Reason, and Reality* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983); Catherine A. Lutz and Lila Abu-Lughod, eds., *Language and the Politics of Emotion* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Jorgensen-Earp and Lanzilotti, "Public Memory and Private Grief"; Robert Hariman and John Louis Lucaites, "Dissent and Emotional Management in a Liberal-Democratic Society: The Kent State Iconic Photograph," *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 31 (Summer 2001): 4–31; Michel Maffesoli, *The Contemplation of the World: Figures of Community Style*, trans. Susan Emanuel (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

[51] Murray Edelman's *Constructing the Political Spectacle* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988) represents a classic study of political spectacles in this vein. For a rhetorical analysis of contemporary ceremonial spectacles, see David Procter, "The Dynamic Spectacle: Transforming Experience into Social Forms of Community," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (May 1990): 117–33.

[52] Maffesoli, *The Contemplation of the World*, 57, 62.

[53] Dan Barry, "Vigilance and Memory," *New York Times*, September 12, 2002, A1.

[54] J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press), viii.

[55] Bonnie J. Dow, "The Function of Epideictic and Deliberative Strategies in Presidential Crisis Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 53 (1989): 294–310; John M. Murphy, "'A Time of Shame and Sorrow': Robert F. Kennedy and the American Jeremiad," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 76 (1990): 401–14.

[56] See Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment* and *Politics, Language and Time: Essays on Political Thought and History* (New York: Atheneum, 1971).

[57] The origins of this tendency are suggestively explored in Sacvan Bercovitch's *The Rites of Assent: Transformations in the Symbolic Construction of America* (New York: Routledge, 1993). See Bostdorff, "George W. Bush's Post-September 11 Rhetoric," for a rhetorical analysis of President Bush's messianic themes in the wake of the terrorist attacks.

[58] Harry Truman, "The Truman Doctrine," in *American Rhetorical Discourse*, 2nd ed., ed. Ronald F. Reid and James F. Klumpp (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 1995), 751.

[59] Joseph McCarthy, "Speech at Wheeling, West Virginia, February 9, 1950," in *In Our Own Words: Extraordinary Speeches of the American Century*, ed. Andrew Carroll, Robert Torricelli, and Doris Kearns Goodwin (New York: Washington Square Press, 2000), 173.

[60] Ronald Reagan, "The 'Evil Empire' Speech," in *American Rhetorical Discourse*, 3rd ed., ed. Ronald F. Reid and James F. Klumpp (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc., 2005), 802.

[61] Bush, *"We Will Prevail"*, 183.

[62] Hannah Arendt, "What is Freedom?," in *The Portable Hannah Arendt* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), 458.

[63] Haberman, "Speechless in the Face of History," B1.

[64] James E. Young, *At Memory's Edge: After-Images of the Holocaust in Contemporary Art and Architecture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 199; Young, *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 13.

[65] Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 49.

[66] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998); and "What is Freedom?"

[67] Susan Sontag, "Real Battles and Empty Metaphors," *New York Times*, September 10, 2002, A25.

[68] Loraux, *The Invention of Athens*, 16, 19.

[69] James Jasinski reminds us that epideictic is potentially subversive, despite its frequent invocation by privileged subjects; see "Rearticulating History in Epideictic Discourse: Frederick Douglass's 'The Meaning of the Fourth of July to the Negro,'" in *Rhetoric and Political Culture in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Thomas W. Benson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 71–89. See also Browne, "Remembering Crispus Attucks."

[70] This echoes Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's claim that global capitalism has privatized public goods, services, and exchanges; see *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 300–303.