Introduction

Abraham Lincoln has appeared so extraordinarily present in the cultural and political imagination of the United States during the almost 150 years since his assassination that it has become impossible to imagine how anyone could have celebrated his sudden death at the close of the Civil War. As an image of American political life, Lincoln's face seems ubiquitous. That face also circulates in currency, appearing not only on pennies but also on five-dollar bills, the only president other than George Washington to be minted more than once. The association with George Washington is significant because during the nineteenth century they were understood to be joined in a kind of national genealogy, a linked parentage for a country torn apart by Civil War.

There are now more books, articles, Web sites, and conversations than any person could take on at once concerning Abraham Lincoln. Public interest seems inexhaustible. The political ideas that his speeches generated have been succeeded by inevitable attention to his sexuality (especially given his intimate relationship with Joshua Speed), his marriage (especially given the involuntary commitment of his widow, Mary Todd, by his oldest son Robert), his attitudes toward race (in a countermove to the celebrations still associated with the Emancipation Proclamation), and his attention to the tactics of the Civil War (especially in a country where physical reenactments of battles are more popular than ever). Books on his photographed image sit next to books on his life.

To address the words and the image of Lincoln must mean inevitably to participate in renegotiating his language, his image, and his political place in history. The statue of Lincoln enshrined in concrete above the fray of politics in the middle of the mall in the United States capital always returns the viewer's gaze, even as tourists stand reading his words on the marble walls. Such words as those of his Second Inaugural Address appear there, as Lincoln pleaded for "malice toward none, charity for all." As tourists read these words carved in stone, they look at the enormous statue gazing out at

the nation's capital. But what kind of gaze is that, after more than 150 years of interpretations of those words?

However many historical and biographical accounts of Lincoln have appeared, the difference made by this collection emerges from the new attention paid here by literary critics who have specialized in matters of style, affect, nationalism, and history in the nineteenth-century United States. Their essays here examine the rhetorical power of Lincoln's prose – from the earliest legal decisions, stump speeches, anecdotes, and letters to the Gettysburg Address and the lingering power of the Second Inaugural Address. What made this language so effective? Succinct in an era when political speeches often lasted for hours, Lincoln could be witty and precise in the face of bombast, as in the debates with Stephen Douglas. Pithy and even vulgar on occasion, although capable of dignified distance, Lincoln performed galvanizing transformations on restless audiences, from the backwoods of Illinois, where he crusaded as a traveling lawyer, to the Cooper Union address in New York City, where he began his run for the presidency, to the dangerous streets of Washington, DC that he traversed on his route to a refuge in the Soldier's Home during the most violent days of the war.

In addition to crucial public statements such as the Emancipation Proclamation, in this collection attention is given to the private words of Lincoln, his relation to the Black Hawk War along the Mississippi River, his correspondence with Civil War generals, the early poems that displayed his dreams and fears, and his attention to theater – in short, the private and the public man. The essays also challenge an interpretation of Lincoln specific to the United States by looking at the influence of Lincoln's language in a larger sphere, that of the Caribbean and Latin America as well as that of relations with Europe. Such a collection of essays enables teachers and students in classrooms around the world to return to the impact of this extraordinary writer – and rare politician – and to consider the impact on the world's stage of his moral vision of human possibility.

For a reader to encounter Abraham Lincoln in the twenty-first century must inevitably mean that his assassination overshadows his life. The difficult matter of interpreting his life as other than momentous set in immediately after its precipitous conclusion on April 14, 1865. The coincidence of the Easter weekend when the nation began to mourn spurred famous poems, stirring oratory, religious analogies, and gilded memories.

In the immediate aftermath of the American Civil War, mourning for lost family members preoccupied inhabitants of the United States. Lincoln's death proved cathartic for such mourners as well as for onlookers around the world, many of whom poured out testimonials. Lincoln's words are, instead, silenced at the moment of his passing. Whereas Lincoln's leading general,

Ulysses S. Grant, could spend his declining years on an autobiography, and Jefferson Davis, the ex-president of the Confederacy's lost cause, could entertain visitors with stories on his southern plantation, Lincoln, dying, left the last words of eulogies and the distorting fame of his assassination in a frozen account.

These words of loss obscure two dynamic possibilities for considering the resonance of Lincoln's language. The first is comic, the oral traditions that came to be characterized as southwest humor. Such traditions link Lincoln's patterns of speech not only to the frontier tall tales that reached their fullest resonance in the writings of Mark Twain but also to the cultural echoes in the oral traditions associated with slavery. Born in the slave state of Kentucky, Lincoln grew up on the margins of slave culture. His attention to the fraught legal matter of how the United States might endorse the expansion of slavery into newly acquired territories must be read against his intimate witnessing of its consequences during travel on the Mississippi River.

Second, the cadences of Lincoln's language drew on classical traditions of oratory. Whether declaiming or debating, Lincoln appeared before audiences whose ears already rang with the oscillations between the bawdy insult of the political arena and the rhetorical flourish of training in classical rhetorical modes. Lincoln's debates with Stephen Douglas remain famous, but contemporary accounts punctuate them with thrown cabbages and tomatoes, approving cries, raucous shouts, and jeering comments.

In this volume, the cacophony of such a crowd cannot appear. We can, however, work at hearing the voices of Lincoln's friends and colleagues as they remembered him as well as when they challenged him. The derision that greeted his notoriously ungainly appearance follows a North/South divide about race as well as invoking an East/West quarrel about class. The presumption so early bandied about that Lincoln's racial ancestry was suspect blurs the uneasy relation that his "log cabin" origin had to the anxious resistance of a still-emerging aristocracy in America.

The very repetition of arguments based on the presumed intentions of the founding fathers to exchanges with Karl Marx makes Lincoln's language both relevant and rich. Biographical attention to Lincoln has included close scrutiny of his courtship and marriage as well as debate over his political stands, notably with respect to the abolition of slavery. For almost 200 years, readers have recounted the reactions to speeches heard in the public squares of small towns in Illinois as well as reactions to the repeated memorizing and memorializing combined in recitations of the Gettysburg Address.

The Abraham Lincoln who galvanized cultural memory in the years after his tragic assassination remains for students as an iconic figure in large part through his enigmatic language. Such pithy sayings as "'Tis better to be

silent and be thought a fool, than to speak and remove all doubt" are a lasting legacy of a president who enjoyed presenting aphorisms about wisdom in that language of the folk. The vividness of Lincoln's language lies at the surface of a deep strategy that this famed politician used to draw attention toward a moral vision of the United States.

Lincoln's sacred document was the Declaration of Independence. The strongest declaration of his reliance on the founders of his nation came in the Gettysburg Address when he declared, "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the principle that all men are created equal." The dedication of the cemetery at Gettysburg that was the occasion for the address has been overshadowed by the power of Lincoln's words as he sought, there and elsewhere, to bring together a nation divided by a bloody Civil War. Relying on a patriarchal "birthing" both makes the nation a familial space and encourages a masculine lineage of inheriting national responsibilities. Hence, Lincoln was often paired with George Washington. The ringing close of the address expresses Lincoln's heartfelt desire that "government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth."

Much of our sense of Lincoln survives through such language, but Lincoln's face survives because of images. The first president to be photographed and the first to be recorded as responding to his public image, Lincoln repeatedly visited the photography studios of Mathew Brady in Washington, DC, and tried to tame his stiff wiry hair for the camera lens. Growing a beard in response to comments about his appearance, Lincoln shaped the face that now appears in countless presentations about the nineteenth-century United States. He was also the first president, indeed the first world leader, to be shown on the battlefield in conversation with his generals.

The image of Abraham Lincoln persists through anecdote as well as elegy. Lincoln was shot on April 14, 1865, only five days after the war ended, while attending the satirical play *Our American Cousin* at the Ford Theater in Washington, DC. The Reverend Henry Ward Beecher, brother to Harriet Beecher Stowe, memorialized Lincoln in a sermon a week after the assassination, declaring, "This nation has dissolved – but in tears only!" The tears that the nation was imagined to shed collectively became a way to unify not only the nation but also the memory of Lincoln.

Although Lincoln has been strongly associated with the American Civil War, his speeches also reflect his pained resistance to war. The first chapter of this collection addresses the effect of Lincoln's language on the formulations that came to define the United States. Such expressions as "A House Divided cannot stand" have become so powerfully identified with Lincoln that the lively context of his campaign speeches and the debates with Stephen

Douglas has almost dropped away. Here the effect of such oratorical traditions, especially in language that establishes a sense of national division and possible reconciliation, appears in analyses of the speeches about the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave Law in which Lincoln made some of his most powerful arguments.

The second chapter considers how, as a lifelong reader of poetry, Abraham Lincoln's literary taste reflected both the wide range of his aesthetic and intellectual interests and the versatility of this literary genre in the nineteenth century. A master of comic storytelling, Lincoln read and wrote satirical doggerel with pleasure, penning poems that mocked his neighbors even as they also mocked their speakers' rough-hewn vocabularies and outsized postures. Lincoln read and memorized literary poetry as well: his courtship with Mary Todd was fueled in part by their shared love of poetry. Not surprisingly, poems about Lincoln abounded both during and after the Civil War. Chapter 2 examines the poetry that Lincoln read and the poetry that he wrote; it also considers some of the many poetic representations of Lincoln written by northern and southern writers in the Civil War era. The third chapter turns from literary tactics to explore imaging tactics used from the earliest days of political photography, when an engraving of the photograph of Abraham Lincoln as clean shaven prompted a letter from a young viewer to suggest that he grow a beard. Chapter 3 also addresses the political cartoons that presented Lincoln as always telling jokes while finding himself in precarious scenarios of political risk taking.

Books have been written about Lincoln's short account in the Gettysburg Address of the terrible business of reclaiming national identity through bloody sacrifice. The fourth chapter looks at the language he used for this consolidation out of tragedy – a consolidation carried further in the Second Inaugural Address – and it treats Lincoln's style of political mourning at a time when mourning rituals convulsed the United States, North and South, as it reeled from the impact of more than 600,000 Civil War deaths. The fifth chapter analyzes the production of national identity and the translation of the violence of war into political meaning. In his wartime speeches, Lincoln drew on four contemporarily available figures of nationhood – territory, common ancestry, social contract, and embodied actor – to counter the challenge of secession. While Lincoln countered the logic of territorial nationalism by appealing to the American pastoral image of a "national homestead," increasing death tolls urged the question of what conception of nationhood Union and Confederate soldiers could draw on. Using the figure of the "body politic," Lincoln integrated the questions of nationhood and violence.

The sixth chapter concentrates on Native Americans and political questions. During Lincoln's lifetime, the diverse populations of the emerging

United States included populations along the frontier that involved themselves in land disputes. Lincoln saw military service in the armed conflict that came to be known as the Black Hawk War. The legal construction of land disputes during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries forms the background of the discussion. Although he continues to be associated with the Emancipation Proclamation, the earlier public writings of Lincoln addressed racial discrimination in rather more hesitant ways. Responding to the implication of extending the practice of slavery within the United States (an implication contained in the proposed Kansas-Nebraska Act) during his debates with Stephen Douglas, Lincoln wonders with honest trepidation whether slavery can be ended as a matter of legal practice. The seventh chapter examines Lincoln's conception of race in the decades leading up to the Civil War by looking at the role of the constitution and legal decisions in these famous debates.

The Civil War greatly exacerbated the ongoing spiritual crises of a republic nearly torn apart by opposing accounts of belief, doctrinal authority, and national narrative. These struggles over the nature, meaning, and religious elements of the American idea are documented in the debates about Lincoln's personal spirituality during his White House years. The eighth chapter considers what we should make of the long and passionate accounts of Lincoln's religious practice and orthodoxy. It also considers how Lincoln's religious vision greatly deepened from 1862 onward. Highlighted by such themes as fatalism, reliance on Providence, and the continuing bonds with the dead, this is depicted in the major speeches and other writings.

The South relied on the need for cotton in the industrialized Midlands even as the politicians in London tried to maintain a neutral stand with respect to the Civil War. The ninth chapter looks at the language of Lincoln's exchanges with London as well as considering what impact the war had on attitudes about the United States. The effect is to consider the transatlantic view of Lincoln as well as to look at Lincoln's legacy in Victorian Britain. The revolutions of 1848 had excited a great deal of interest in the United States. Attention to the heroes of Poland, for example, affected the concepts of democracy bound up with the United States. France had come to the aid of the United States during the American Revolution, and large numbers of emigrants from countries such as Germany, Ireland, and Poland had changed the political landscape, so there were direct appeals to Europeans to join in as allies during the war. At the same time, anxieties about European immigrants seem at odds with such appeals. The tenth chapter considers how Lincoln, who began as a backwoods lawyer, became an international president.

Lincoln's Union, like the nineteenth-century United States, was both a national and hemispheric construct, deeply intertwined with the fates of colonial possessions throughout the Caribbean and vitally linked to the national interests of Mexico. The eleventh chapter revises our understanding of Lincoln by positing him as a protagonist – and antagonist – of trans-American literary and political history. His enduring link to Latin American counterparts like President Benito Juarez of Mexico is perhaps the strongest evidence that the history of the North-South conflict and the Civil War is also a history of trans-American relations.

The impact of an assassination that took place on Good Friday and was widely known by Easter Sunday was to produce a widespread hagiography about Abraham Lincoln. The effect of enshrining a political figure was also to produce language about Lincoln that drew on legends that go back thousands of years. Because politicians in the early republic tended to have classical training, the purpose of the last chapter is at once to look at how such classical images entered into Lincoln's language and to consider the afterimage of his assassination.

Throughout the collection Lincoln's voice emerges in conversation with artists, writers, and politicians whose alternating astonishment and admiration reveal perhaps the most vividly present president of the nineteenth-century United States. As a contemporary observer told the story, when pleading to have one of her sons spared from battle, a troubled mother stood running her fingers through the president's hair, tears streaming down her face.[1] The mother's presumption of intimacy reveals her feeling that the White House contains a president whose head can be touched as well as his heart. However legitimate the story, the tears that started from Lincoln's eyes on that occasion speak to the great grief he felt over losing his own sons as well as to the great empathy he felt for the sons and daughters of the nation over which he so briefly and powerfully presided. I want to acknowledge the help of three wonderful graduate students at Cornell: Alex Black, Jill Spivey, and Xine Yao.

NOTES

1 Francis Bicknell Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln: The Story of a Picture* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1867), 338.

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IVY G. WILSON

Rhetorically Lincoln: Abraham Lincoln and Oratorical Culture

In a November 1884 issue of *The Christian Recorder*, one of the leading nineteenth-century African-American periodicals, the Reverend R. G. Mortimer recounted an anecdote about a visit from Abraham Lincoln to a prominent Sunday school. With all the excitement that might be expected from such a visit, the students anticipated a long and profound speech. Instead, Lincoln offered only a simple statement: "My dear young friends, do not chew, do not smoke, do not swear."[1] Mortimer, a former professor of Latin, Greek, and exegesis at Wilberforce University, used the moment less as an illustration of the children's disappointment than as a didactic tool of instruction. He implored his readers to heed Lincoln's example, noting that "the address deserves to be held up as worthy the imitations of public speakers generally."[2] Underlining the address's "brief, plain, sensible, timely" delivery, Mortimer accentuated the succinct economy of Lincoln's mode of rhetoric as ideal.[3]

Mortimer's assessment of Lincoln's address is a reminder of Lincoln's significance as a rhetorician and orator. Remembered now for political phrases like "A house divided against itself cannot stand" and a "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth," Lincoln is also identified with popular adages such as "Better to remain silent and be thought a fool than to speak and remove all doubt." Lincoln's "House Divided" speech is one of his most identifiable and iconographic, but like most speeches it has been rendered recognizable primarily through one or two encapsulated key phrases. Beginning with George Washington, Americans have been especially enamored of presidential speeches and, even more so, with their figures of speech. From Thomas Jefferson's "That government is best which governs least, because its people discipline themselves" in the nineteenth century to John F. Kennedy's "And so my fellow Americans, ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country" in the twentieth century, Americans have remained fond of presidential maxims.

However recognizable these phrases remain as forms of synecdochic representation, they are often excised from the larger, more complex social narratives of their historical moment even as they point to the wider command of their speaker's oratorical range. Many of Lincoln's most well-known phrases are associated with the impending crisis of the Civil War. Lincoln's speeches, however, were articulated not only during a particular political era but also at a particular cultural moment in the history of performative speaking in the United States, one that was influenced by reprinted speeches revoiced in public forums to the declamatory, recitative poetry delivered in living room parlors. Rather than turn to Lincoln's speeches as a way to trace his political discourse, this essay turns to his political discourse as a way to examine his understanding of rhetoric and mid-nineteenth-century oratorical culture.

Lincoln's Oratorical Style

One early site where Lincoln rendered his understanding of rhetoric was his 1852 "Eulogy on Henry Clay." As part of the Great Triumvirate, which also included South Carolina's John C. Calhoun and Massachusetts's Daniel J. Webster, the Kentuckian Clay was one of the most important orators of the 1830s and 1840s. If Clay's ability to broker compromises on the slavery issue became increasingly untenable to Lincoln by the early 1850s, Lincoln nonetheless appreciated Clay's service as a statesman. As Lincoln reminded the audience before him at an Episcopalian church in Springfield, Illinois, Clay was involved with seemingly all the major political events of the day, including the War of 1812, the formation of the American Colonization Society, the Nullification Crisis, the Missouri Compromise of 1820, and the Compromise of 1850. Lincoln's eulogy praised Clay's congressional accomplishments and traced the political biography of Clay with the political history of the nation, waxing that "the infant nation, and the infant child began the race of life together. For three quarters of a century they have traveled hand in hand."[4] However, as a type of speech itself, Lincoln's eulogy was less than remarkable, a sentiment that was expressed by his law partner William Herndon, who surmised that "if his address in 1852, over the death of Clay, proved that he was no eulogist, then this last effort … demonstrated that he was no lecturer."[5]

Beyond Clay's political feats, Lincoln's encomium of Clay's speeches also intimates his own understanding of oratory.

> Mr. Clay's eloquence did not consist, as many fine specimens of eloquence do, of types and figures – of antithesis, and elegant arrangement of words and sentences; but rather of that deeply earnest and impassioned tone, and manner,

> which can proceed only from great sincerity and a thorough conviction, in the speaker of the justice and importance of his cause. This it is, that truly touches the chords of sympathy; and those who heard Mr. Clay never failed to be moved by it, or ever afterwards, forgot the impression. All his efforts were made for practical effect. He never spoke merely to be heard. He never delivered a Fourth of July oration, or an eulogy on an occasion like this.[6]

If there is a distinction between oration, whereby oratory is the art of speaking eloquently, and rhetoric, whereby rhetoric is the art of logical argumentation, Lincoln underscores Clay's achievement as an orator who is masterfully adroit at engaging emotion and sensation. In Lincoln's assessment, Clay's oratorical subtleties exploited affect, tapping "the chords of sympathy" of his listeners. Lincoln's understanding of oratory, in this respect, accentuated its affective dimensionality and its sensory capacity. As an illustration of this understanding, Lincoln cites one of Clay's speeches on the War of 1812 in which, "during its delivery the reporters forgot their vocations, dropped their pens, and sat enchanted from the beginning to quite the close."[7] Yet, insofar as Clay did not regularly offer ceremonial deliveries, his speeches could indeed be said to have a "practical effect"; that is, they could simultaneously be examples of oratory in their style and delivery as well as examples of rhetoric in their design and functionality.

While Lincoln praised Clay for his use of affect and sensation, his own "A House Divided" speech manipulated both affect and a kind of austere formulaic method in deploying his mode of persuasion. Late in the evening on June 16, 1858, Lincoln took to the stage to deliver an address as part of his campaign to secure the Republican nomination for U.S. Senate. In the speech, Lincoln rehearsed many of the ideas that he would rearticulate in his debates with the Democratic nominee Stephen A. Douglas later that year. In substance, Lincoln's speech before the Hall of Representatives was not much different from other recent speeches in which he critiqued the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 and the threat of expanding slavery. The Kansas-Nebraska Act, Lincoln maintained, was joined by the recent Dred Scott decision to form a new kind of "machinery."[8] He excoriated Douglas's advocacy of "popular sovereignty," which proposed that residents of a territory should decide whether or not slavery would be allowed, and ridiculed his "care-not" policy as a feigned indifference that was actually a political, if not moral, threat to the nation.[9] Perhaps most importantly, Lincoln opened his speech with a paraphrase from Matthew 12:25 as a metaphor for the current state of the nation, cautioning his audience, "A house divided against itself cannot stand."[10]

As an example of rhetoric, the speech is noteworthy less for its invocation of biblical verse than for how Lincoln deftly parsed the quoted aphorism