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Table of Contents

The Greatest: Lincoln the Great Emancipator and Marshall the Great Chief Justice **by Honorable Frank J. Williams** **2**

An Interview with Allen Guelzo **10**

Lincoln and Douglas: The Debates that Defined America by Allen C. Guelzo **reviewed by Orville Vernon Burton** .. **16**

An Interview with Vernon Burton **18**

Rhetoric in Lincoln's Time **by David Zarefsky** **24**

An Interview with William Lee Miller **31**

President Lincoln: The Duty of a Statesman by William Lee Miller **reviewed by Joseph R. Fornieri** **34**

An Interview with Harold Holzer **36**

The Madness of Mary Lincoln by Jason Emerson **reviewed by Myron A. Marty** **39**

Lincoln's *Alma Mater*: The Lyceum and the Making of a Self-Made Man **by Stewart Winger** **41**

An Interview with Harry S. Stout.......... **48**

This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War by Drew Gilpin Faust **reviewed by John C. Rodrigue** **53**

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The Greatest: Lincoln the Great Emancipator and Marshall the Great Chief Justice

by Honorable Frank J. Williams

Since it declared its independence from England in 1776, America has continually looked for heroes to lead the country and its people. The emergence of a hero in a time of instability is inevitable, and the story of America, and its quest for independence, justice, and equality, is in fact a story of heroic individuals. Fortunately, however, this heroism was not so overbearing that it would confirm the country's fears of another monarchy.

When we think of a hero, we think of the "everyman," the ordinary person who does extraordinary things. We think of a person who not only strives for societal change, but also seeks to inspire people to accept change. Heroes embody courage and strength, are not afraid to do what they believe in, and they will stand up for what is right. It is their strong will and persistence that inspire us, and their flaws and imperfections that allow us to associate with them. They are successful not only by the standards of their own time, but by their achievements, which transcend their era and resonate throughout history. In the words of the late actor Christopher Reeve, "a hero is an ordinary individual who finds the strength to persevere and endure in spite of overwhelming obstacles."[1]

When America became an independent nation in 1776, the Founding Fathers provided the country with a unique sense of identity. America was founded not on a common faith, language, or ethnicity, but on a set of beliefs and values held by the Founders. They believed in freedom, liberty, and the value of hard work. Through their own perseverance, the Founders established the United States of America and declared its independence, and because of their courage, brilliance, and ingenuity, they became the first American heroes.

Although the Founding Fathers crafted the Constitution and laid down the foundation of America, it was up to their successors to give meaning to the principles set forth in the Constitution and to preserve the nation that the Founders labored to establish.

Twenty-five years after the signing of the Declaration of Independence, John Marshall took the bench as the fourth Chief Justice of the United States. Marshall embodied many of the same characteristics as the Founders, and it is because of his strength and political courage that he is still considered a "Founding Father" so many years after this country's establishment. Marshall breathed life into the Constitution. Through the command of his opinions, he bestowed the judicial branch with power and authority, and ensured the realization of the Founders' vision—the coexistence of three separate but co-equal branches of government. Marshall also recognized the insight and forethought of the Founding Fathers and gave meaning to some of the most important constitutional provisions: the necessary and proper clause and the supremacy clause.

Twenty-six years after Marshall's death, a new hero, Abraham Lincoln, took the oath of

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office as America's sixteenth president to "protect and defend the Constitution of the United States." Throughout his presidency, Lincoln recognized the importance of the Constitution's principles and fought to ensure life, liberty, and freedom for all people. Not only did Lincoln give real meaning to the provisions of the Constitution, but he fought to honor the ideas of the founding fathers that formed the impetus behind the Constitution. As commander-in-chief during the Civil War, he led the country in a Civil War not only to preserve the Union that the Founders had fought to create, but to end slavery and ensure equality for all, as they had envisioned it.

Although they lived at least a generation apart, Marshall and Lincoln furthered the country in its quest for independence and civility. Both men possessed the qualities of heroes, and it is due to their strength and perseverance that they aptly led the nation in its first century of independent existence.

Marshall and Lincoln were heroes, not only by the standards of their day, but by today's standards as well. They embodied political courage. Marshall stood up to President Thomas Jefferson in the great contest for judicial independence and separation of powers. Despite heavy criticism from the executive branch, Marshall stood strongly behind his opinions. Likewise, Lincoln fought for the liberty of all people, regardless of their race.

Both men fought for what they believed was right. Through his opinions, Marshall ensured that the Supreme Court finally would become a co-equal branch of the federal government, one with the power of judicial review and the ability, when necessary, to declare acts of the other branches unconstitutional. With the same resolve, Lincoln led the country through the Civil War, in a bloody battle not only to unite and save the nation, but to abolish slavery. During the nation's darkest hour, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation, the first and most important measure toward true freedom for all. As Lincoln scholar Allen C. Guelzo observed, "the Emancipation Proclamation was the most revolutionary pronouncement ever signed by an American president, striking the legal shackles from four million black slaves and setting the nation's face toward the total abolition of slavery within three more years."[2]

John Marshall: The Great Chief Justice

Chief Justice John Marshall is arguably the most important judicial figure in American history and will forever be remembered as "the great chief justice." Marshall was the fourth Chief Justice of the United States and served on the Court for thirty-four years, from 1801 to 1835. During this time, Marshall established the authority of the federal courts to engage in judicial review. He authored two ground-breaking opinions—decisions that set forth the foundation of American constitutional law. In Marbury v. Madison the Court reviewed the constitutionality of an act of Congress and in M'Culloch v. Maryland it upheld the supremacy of the federal government. Through his opinions, Marshall fought and judged for the new nation. By the end of his tenure on the Supreme Court bench, he had succeeded in making the judiciary a full partner in the national government and in establishing the supremacy of federal law.

In addition to elevating the judiciary's status, Marshall helped preserve the nation. He helped preserve our courts as essential guarantors of the rule of law and as protectors of our economic and personal liberty, and is said to have almost single-handedly created constitutional law. Indeed, as Marshall biographer Jean Edward Smith accurately stated, "[i]f George Washington founded the country, John Marshall defined it."[3]

However, when Marshall first assumed the position of chief justice, the Supreme Court did not enjoy the prestige and power it enjoys today. Rather, the Court was by far the weakest of the three branches of government, exercising little authority and independence. In fact, when the government first moved to Washington, D.C., there were neither plans nor funding for the housing of the judicial branch.[4] When accommodations for the Court were finally made, they were hardly impressive. As author James F. Simon acknowledges, "The quarters for the presumed third coequal branch of the federal government were embarrassingly inferior to the accommodations for the president and Congress."[5] The room in which the Court routinely met was described as "a half-finished committee room meanly furnished, and very inconvenient."[6]

After taking over as chief, Marshall instituted change in the judicial branch almost instantly. The initial alterations were small, yet significant, and have heavily influenced the manner in which the judicial branch is run today. His leadership emerged subtly, yet unquestionably. Marshall wore a plain black robe in lieu of the more vibrant scarlet and ermine robes of his fellow justices.[7] This decision was one of symbolic significance. Rather than "flaunt the colors of the English judiciary," he chose to stray from this tradition and give himself and his colleagues a fresh start.[8]

Not only did he alter their dress style, but he changed their living arrangements as well. While the Court was in session, Marshall arranged for the justices to live together in a single boarding house, without their wives. They not only lived together, but ate their meals together, they drank together, and they walked to the courthouse together.[9] This living arrangement yielded a camaraderie that lasted for years to come. Justice Joseph Story, who sat alongside Marshall on the Supreme Court bench, later remarked, "We are all united as one, with a mutual esteem which makes even the labors of Jurisprudence light...We moot every question as we proceed, and familiar conferences at our lodgings often come to a very quick, and, I trust, a very accurate opinion, in a few hours."[10]

Furthermore, it was under Marshall's headship that the Supreme Court justices began issuing a single opinion of the Court. This replaced the traditional practice of having each justice write his own opinions, known as seriatim opinions, and announce them individually. Speaking with one voice "gave the decisions an aura of finality separate opinions could not supply."[11] This small step was one of many toward uniting the third branch of government and insulating its independence. Because Marshall was almost always the author of the opinion, he became the Court's singular voice in the most important cases. Even though the Supreme Court bench was filled with distinct and independent judges, Marshall was usually able to achieve a consensus. For example, from 1801 to 1804, he participated in forty-two cases and authored unanimous opinions for each.[12]

Marshall's pursuit did not stop at uniting the judicial branch. Indeed, through his authored opinions, Marshall succeeded in laying the groundwork for uniting the nation. In Marbury v. Madison, the Court reviewed the constitutionality of an act of Congress and, at the same time, confirmed the Supreme Court's right to settle questions of basic constitutionality. This case was the first important case of Marshall's judicial career, and the opinion proved momentous. In a decision that is still studied and revered today, 205 years after its publication, the Supreme Court, for the first time, struck down an act of Congress as unconstitutional. The Supreme Court invalidated a provision of the Judiciary Act of 1789, holding that it violated the Constitution by endeavoring to expand the original jurisdiction of the Court.

The formal dispute of the parties in Marbury v. Madison is of relatively minor significance. Just days before Thomas Jefferson was to take office as President of the United States, Congress passed a bill authorizing President John Adams to appoint forty-two justices of the peace. William Marbury was one of the appointed judges, although his commission was never delivered. Marbury, and several others, asked the United States Supreme Court, in its original jurisdiction, to issue a writ of mandamus and compel James Madison, the then Secretary of State, to deliver the commissions.

Marshall determined that Congress had improperly attempted to add to the Court's original jurisdiction and that the Court had no authority to hear Marbury's case in its original jurisdiction. Thus, the Court ruled that when Congress conferred on the Supreme Court the power to issue a writ of mandamus, Congress acted improperly and against the Constitution's mandates. The Court stated that although Marbury was entitled to his commission, the Court was unable to order Madison to deliver the commission. Instead, the Supreme Court, in its interpretation of the Constitution, found the applicable provision of the Judiciary Act violative of Article Three of the Constitution. Marshall wrote: "It is emphatically the province and duty of the judicial department to say what the law is. Those who apply the rule to particular cases, must of necessity expound and interpret that rule. If two laws conflict with each other, the courts must decide on the operation of each."[13]

Nearly sixteen years later, in M'Culloch v. Maryland, the Supreme Court, with Marshall as its spokesperson, recognized the implied powers of Congress, and, at the same time, insulated the federal government from state taxation. The Court was asked to decide whether the state of Maryland could impede the operation of a federal bank by imposing a state tax upon all banks not chartered in Maryland. The primary argument against the tax was that the Constitution did not provide for the federal government to establish a federal bank. Despite this express mandate, Marshall, writing for the Court, explained that although there was no express constitutional provision, the Constitution grants to Congress the implied powers for implementing the Constitution's named powers in order to create a functioning national government. Marshall used the General Welfare Clause and the Necessary and Proper Clause as support for this conclusion. He stated that it would be incomprehensible for the Constitution to enumerate every conceivable federal power. Indeed, he noted that many of the enumerated powers would be useless without Congress's ability to act in a way that is rationally related to the objectives set forth in the Constitution. Marshall further concluded that although Congress had the power to incorporate the bank, Maryland did not have the power to tax this bank without violating the Constitution. Citing the Supremacy Clause, the Court held that the state law must succumb to the conflicting federal law. Any other result would allow the states to destroy the institution created by the federal government and thereby defeat the notion of supremacy as set forth in the Constitution.

His opinions, and in particular Marbury v. Madison, did not go without criticism. Only adding to the already-existing tension between the Republican President Thomas Jefferson and the Federalist Chief Justice, Marbury v. Madison furthered the struggle between the two men—and the two branches—for power. Although Marshall tried to empower the Supreme Court, Jefferson sought to minimalize the influence of the judiciary. Jefferson believed that the Supreme Court did not have the power to exercise judicial review, nor did it have the exclusive authority to determine the constitutionality of the laws. Rather, he was of the opinion that both Congress and the executive branch had as much power as the judiciary to interpret the Constitution.

In a letter to Abigail Adams, wife of former president John Adams, Jefferson wrote, "But the opinion which gives to the judge the right to decide what laws are constitutional and what not, not only for themselves in their own sphere of action but for the Legislature and Executive also in their spheres, would make the Judiciary a despotic branch."[14] Ten years later, Jefferson stated, in a letter to W.H. Torrance:

> The question whether the judges are invested with exclusive authority to decide on the constitutionality of a law has been heretofore a subject of consideration with me in the exercise of official duties. Certainly there is not a word in the Constitution which has given that power to them more than to the Executive or Legislative branches.[15]

As Marshall biographer R. Kent Newmyer so aptly stated, "It was Jefferson and Marshall…who symbolized the competing constitutional persuasions of the age and brought them into explosive focus."[16] Although Jefferson and Marshall never had a direct confrontation on the subject of judicial review, the president's views were well known. Yet, despite Jefferson's indirect confrontation with Marshall, Marshall nevertheless stood behind the soundness of his opinions.

The import of these decisions largely transcends Marshall's era. Through his opinions, Marshall is responsible for the establishment of the Supreme Court as an independent and nonpartisan instrument. He is also responsible for the development of its power. Today, the Court has the authority to declare acts of Congress, as well as acts of the president, unconstitutional. However, the Court has used this power sparingly, mostly in the context of expanding civil rights and individual freedoms, and protecting the system of checks and balances.

Abraham Lincoln: The Great Emancipator

Marshall's influence on the Supreme Court has had an everlasting effect on the country and has especially impacted those directly involved in the law. Marshall laid the groundwork for the constitutional principles that Abraham Lincoln later developed. And Lincoln, through his work as commander-in-chief and as president, preserved and gave life to the tenets that Marshall proclaimed in his opinions.

Although nearly 200 years have passed since Abraham Lincoln's birth, he still remains the leader who spoke the enduring words at Gettysburg that students once memorized, the commander-in-chief who reunited the nation by winning the Civil War, and the chief executive who is continually ranked highest among all American presidents. He has become a mythic figure in the deepest sense of the word and is best remembered for two great acts—his preservation of the Union and his abolishment of slavery through the Emancipation Proclamation, which supported what became the Thirteenth Amendment.

The circumstances of his life and his legacy, time and again, transcend his era. And it is because of this legacy that we still talk about Lincoln and his greatness. To paraphrase Lincoln biographer Carl Sandburg, millions of people outside the United States also take him for their own. Lincoln belongs to them, too. He was a personal treasure who had something they "would like to see spread everywhere over the world." Sandburg told Congress on the 150th anniversary of Lincoln's birth:

> Democracy? We cannot find the words to say exactly what it is, but Lincoln had it. In his blood and bones he carried it. In the breath of his speeches and writings it is there. ...Government where the people have the say-so, one way or another telling their elected leaders what they want. He had the idea. He embodied it. It is there in the lights and shadows of his personality.[17]

Lincoln the Great Lawyer

A great lawyer requires hope, confidence, integrity, and unshakable moral courage. He or she needs the ability to stay the course even when standing it alone, as Lincoln so often did. Attorneys must exercise scholarship and common sense when standing up for their clients. They have a duty to clearly articulate their arguments, which ultimately lead to the decisions that help shape and define how people in our communities live, how they interact with one another, and how they should conduct themselves in their transactions and in their daily lives. As attorney and author Harrison Sheppard has remarked, "Trial lawyers are 'attorneys' in the most critical sense, representing clients in court and advocating their positions. It takes a prudent *counselor*, however, to keep clients out of court, or get them out of it as quickly as they can if they are defendants in a lawsuit."[18]

Abraham Lincoln practiced law for twenty-four years, from 1837 until his presidency in 1861. Lincoln embodied the idea of what makes a "great lawyer." As an attorney, he showed great political courage when he was called upon to defend progress in 1857. At this time, the future of transportation innovation was at stake—old riverboat technology was pitted against new railroad bridge technology.[19] The Rock Island Railroad Company hired Lincoln as lead counsel to defend it in the case of Hurd v. Rock Island Railroad Company, where the river boat Effie Afton, heading south on the Mississippi, smacked into a bridge abutment of the railroad bridge that crossed the river and was set afire.[20] Lincoln tried the case before the United States District Court in Chicago, and rested on a central, key point: the steamboat's crew was to blame for the accident, not the Rock Island Bridge Company—and surely not railroads in general. Ultimately, Lincoln won the case with a hung jury—the case was never retried. This win effectively advanced the cause of commerce in the United States, with both railroad and river transportation, ensuring that it would become the country's prevailing mode of transportation.

Even more so than his sense of courage, Lincoln was well known for his honesty and integrity, and the stereotype of "Honest Abe." "I do not state a thing and say I know it, when I do not," he explained in one of his debates with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858.[21] "...I mean to put a case no stronger than the truth will allow."[22] The following story evidences Lincoln's honesty. He met with a potential client who was soliciting his legal expertise. After hearing the facts of the case, Lincoln replied:

> Yes, there is no reasonable doubt but that I can gain your case for you; I can set a whole neighborhood at loggerheads; I can distress a widowed mother and her six fatherless children, and thereby get for you six hundred dollars which you seem to have a legal claim to; but which rightfully belongs, it appears to me, as much to the woman and her children as it does to you. You must remember some things that are legally right are not morally right. I shall not take your case – but I will give you a little advice for which I will charge you nothing. You seem to be a sprightly, energetic man, I would advise you to try your hand at making six hundred dollars in some other way.[23]

While riding the Eighth Judicial Circuit in Illinois, Judge David Davis appointed Lincoln and another attorney, Leonard Swett, to defend a man indicted for murder.[24] Although this defendant did not have the means to retain a lawyer, he had friends who managed to raise one hundred dollars for his defense.[25] Swett accepted the money and handed half of it to Lincoln. When Lincoln and Swett consulted the defendant, Lincoln became convinced that the defendant was guilty.[26] Lincoln tried to convince Swett that the only way to save the defendant was to have him try for a plea agreement.[27] Swett, a rather talented criminal lawyer, would not agree to Lincoln's suggestion, so the case came to trial.[28]

During the trial, Lincoln did not participate. He took no part in it further than to make an occasional suggestion to Swett in the course of the examination of witnesses. Ultimately, the defendant was acquitted due to a number of technicalities that Swett took advantage of. When the jury rendered its verdict, Lincoln reached over Swett's shoulder, with the fifty dollars in hand, and said: "Here, Swett, take this money. It is yours. You earned it, not I."[29]

Lincoln's integrity is best illustrated by a story he told when explaining what influenced him in choosing the law as his profession. Lincoln explained that a widow had lost her cow when it was killed by a railroad train.[30] She hired him to represent her and sue the company for damages.[31] Before bringing suit, the railroad company approached Lincoln with the proposition that, if he would throw over the widow, it would remunerate him handsomely and give him legal work connected with the railroad.[32] Lincoln refused.[33] Instead, not only did he take her case, but he won it for her.[34]

Lincoln also emphasized the need for civility, something that both the bench and bar must exercise in their daily interactions with one another. In referring to lawyers who swindled their clients, Lincoln was unyielding; he declared: "I never want the reputation enjoyed by those shining lights of the profession *Catch'em & Cheat'em*."[35] Lincoln's enthusiasm in the representation of his clients' interests was tempered by knowledge that there were boundaries, both professional and moral, to his behavior. He believed in civility not only toward his clients, but also toward his fellow attorneys. As a colleague once said, Lincoln "would not do anything mean, or which savored of sharp practice, or which required absolute sophistry or chicanery to succeed."[36]

Lincoln sought to ensure that the people would have confidence and respect for the institution trusted to balance the scales of justice. One of Lincoln's colleagues, when discussing Lincoln's courtroom demeanor, stated that "[Lincoln] never misstated evidence, but stated clearly and fairly and squarely his opponent's case."[37] Indeed, as author Brian Dirck noted in *Lincoln the Lawyer*, "no one seems to have ever accused [Lincoln] of being an unethical attorney."[38]

Not only was Lincoln a great lawyer, but he was an excellent trial attorney. He consistently demonstrated his precise skill of interviewing to collect data and his extremely effective direct and cross-examination of witnesses. He had a great talent in speaking to the jury and putting the entire case into focus in an appealing manner. A colleague recalled that "Lincoln was the plainest man [he] ever heard. He was not a speaker, but a talker. He talks to jurors…almost as in conversation, no effort whatever in oratory. But his talking had wonderful effect. Honesty, candor, fairness, everything that was convincing, was in his manner and expressions."[39]

He knew that people judged cases as much by their hearts as by their heads. Fellow attorney Lawrence Weldon wrote: "Mr. Lincoln's speeches to the jury were most effective specimens of forensic oratory. He talked the vocabulary of the people, and the jury understood every point he made and every thought he uttered….He constructed short sentences of small words, and never wearied the mind with mazes of elaboration."[40]

Lincoln also knew how to strike the ideal balance for courtroom demeanor, and avoid overly aggressive behavior. He possessed what one observer called "courtroom finesse to an extraordinary degree."[41] He had a reputation as a tenacious litigator, one who knew how to employ a technicality or pitch an argument to get what he needed. People underestimated him at their peril. Colleague Leonard Swett said of Lincoln: "He was wise as a serpent in the trial of a cause….Any man who took Lincoln for a simple-minded man would very soon wake [up] with his back in a ditch."[42]

Abraham Lincoln's career as a great attorney and an excellent advocate in the courtroom provides today's attorneys with significant guidance. In following in his footsteps, lawyers know to practice law honestly and with integrity; show civility and professionalism towards their fellow members of the bar; and have courage—they cannot be afraid to stand up for themselves and their beliefs.

Lincoln the Great Commander-in-Chief

From the first, Lincoln's paramount goal as president was to preserve the greater Union, to unite this country forever under one flag. In city after city, as he made his way to Washington, Lincoln addressed throngs of onlookers eager to catch a glimpse of their new leader. His message remained consistent—one nation, one people, one law.

Lincoln's actions were not always popular and he fell subject to great criticism only months after taking his oath of office. In the earliest days of his presidency, he fearlessly exercised extraordinary powers to protect a failing nation on the brink of a civil war, powers which many lamented were unconstitutional.

Within moments of his inauguration, he was called upon to make unprecedented decisions that implicated constitutional questions. The emissaries of the south were upon him with their proposals for adjusting the withdrawal of the confederate states. Fort Sumter was fired upon less than a month after Lincoln took office. On April 19th, the Sixth Massachusetts militia arrived in Washington after having literally fought its way through hostile Baltimore.

On April 20th, Marylanders severed railroad communications with the North, almost isolating Washington D.C. from that part of the nation for which it remained the capital. Lincoln was apoplectic. He had no information about the whereabouts of the other troops promised to him by Northern governors, and Lincoln told Massachusetts volunteers on April 24th, "I don't believe there is any North. The Seventh Regiment is a myth. Rhode Island is not known in our geography any longer. *You* are the only Northern realities."[43] On April 25th, the Seventh New York militia finally reached Washington after struggling through Maryland.

Lincoln immediately perceived the grave danger that the war would be lost if the Confederates seized the capital or caused it to be completely isolated, but he was reluctant to suspend the precious writ of *habeas corpus*—by which one can have his or her imprisonment reviewed. The right of *habeas corpus* was so important that the president actually considered the possible bombardment of Maryland cities as a better alternative to suspension of the writ, having already authorized General Winfield Scott, Commander of the Army, in case of "necessity," to bombard the cities. But only "in the extremist necessity" was Scott to suspend the writ of *habeas corpus*.

In these times, Lincoln was left with no option but to suspend the great writ. His unilateral suspension of *habeas corpus* between Washington and Philadelphia proved instrumental in securing communication lines to the nation's capital. The effect was to enable military commanders to arrest and detain individuals indefinitely in areas where martial law had been imposed. Many of those detained were individuals who attempted to halt military convoys, raised troops for the Confederacy, or cut mail and telegraph lines. Lincoln saw that immediate action and a declaration of martial law was necessary to divest of certain civil liberties those who were disloyal. Furthermore, those whose acts against the United States threatened its survival could not, under the circumstances, be afforded immediate access to all of the rights that are available in our usual judicial process.

In the draft of Lincoln's report to Congress on July 4th he defended his position:

> The whole of the laws which were required to be faithfully executed, were being resisted, and failing of execution, in nearly one-third of the States. Must they be allowed to finally fail of execution? [A]re all the laws, but one, to go unexecuted, and the government itself go to pieces, lest that one be violated?[44]

Lincoln never denied that he had stretched his presidential power. "These measures," he declared, "whether strictly legal or not, were ventured upon, under what appeared to be a popular demand, and a public necessity; trusting, then as now, that Congress would readily ratify them."[45] Lincoln was correct. Congress ultimately ratified the president's actions in all respects.

This would not be the only constitutional question that Lincoln would have to grapple with during his presidency, but his strong convictions and sense of what was right in a given situation helped him resolve all of these questions, making him a powerful leader amidst such grave times.

Apart from his suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, Lincoln brazenly authorized a southern blockade of Confederate ports, and unilaterally expanded the army to suppress an impending insurrection. To Lincoln, there was no tolerable path of least resistance. He was acutely aware that his actions would be sharply criticized. The alternative, however, was far worse. In Lincoln's estimation, nothing was worse than allowing the nation to succumb to Confederate forces.

In the midst of the Civil War, Lincoln's commitment to preserving the unity of the nation was unwavering. He insisted that the Mississippi River was meant to belong to one country and urged that the Union Pacific Railroad must be made a reality to achieve coast to coast railroad transportation. In his plight to assure just that, battles were not always victorious for the Union but Lincoln remained undeterred. He commissioned brave and tenacious generals who understood true war. Battles, often bloody, were fraught with terror, frightfulness, destruction, but, in the end, under Lincoln's strong command, the nation was again united.

Yet, he retained his wonderful sense of humor—General Pope, an Illinois man, would write dispatches from the field titled: "From Headquarters in the Saddle." Lincoln reported to a friend that the trouble with Pope was that he had his headquarters where his hindquarters ought to have been. And in a telegram to General McClellan he wrote: "I have just read your dispatch about sore tongued and fatiegued [sic] horses. Will you pardon me for asking what the horses of your army have done since the Battle of Antietam that fatigue anything?"[46]

Finally, Lincoln was obsessed with character. When he talked about problems, he talked about selflessness and honor. He did not go to Gettysburg having commissioned a poll about what to say there. His words at Gettysburg were sacred, yet strange with a color of the familiar: "…we can not consecrate, we can not hallow this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here have consecrated it far beyond our poor power to add or detract."[47]

Lincoln the Great Emancipator

As President-elect Lincoln boarded the inaugural train and wound his way toward the nation's capital, this country stood on the threshold of civil war. When he took his oath as the sixteenth President of the United States on March 4, 1861, Lincoln knew he had inherited a nation divided. This would be an arduous role for any president, let alone one who had less experience in public office than any previous president, with the exception of Zachary Taylor and perhaps William Henry Harrison. However, Lincoln was courageous. He strongly believed that everyone should have an equal chance in the race of life—devoid of tyranny and terrorism. So strong was his conviction that Lincoln was willing to challenge the political hierarchy, in order to attain that goal.

Even before becoming President of the United States, Lincoln strongly believed in the magnitude of the words that are considered the underpinning of American democracy. He believed that "all men are created equal," an undying phrase first used by Thomas Jefferson, author of the Declaration of Independence. In an 1855 letter to his close friend and colleague Joshua Speed regarding slavery, Lincoln wrote:

> Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation, we began by declaring that '*all men are created equal.*' We now practically read it 'all men are created equal, *except negroes*.' When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read 'all men are created equal, except negroes, and *foreigners, and Catholics*.' When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty—to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocracy [sic].[48]

One year prior, in his speech at Springfield, Illinois, Lincoln objected to the Kansas-Nebraska Act, an act that would allow slavery to spread into western territories.

> What *natural* right requires Kansas and Nebraska to be open to slavery? Is not slavery universally granted to be, in the abstract, a gross outrage of the law of nature? Have not all civilized nations, our own among them, made the Slave trade capital, and classed it with piracy and murder? Is it not held to be the great wrong of the world?[49]

As president, Lincoln's opposition to slavery was manifest. Indeed, he openly spoke out against the *Dred Scott* decision, declaring the Court's decision erroneous and one that should be overruled.[50] In 1864, Lincoln wrote a letter to A.G. Hodges of Kentucky:

> I am naturally anti-slavery. If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong. I can not remember when I did not so think, and feel…I claim not to have controlled events, but confess plainly that events have controlled me. If God now wills the removal of a great wrong, and wills also that we of the North as well as you of the South, shall pay fairly for our complicity in that wrong, impartial history will find therein new cause to attest and revere the justice and goodness of God.[51]

Perhaps Lincoln's greatest achievement, and the achievement that gave him the nickname "the great emancipator," was the beginning of the end of slavery. He had the courage to do what was right in the face of adversity; he fought for the unity of our nation, and he issued the Emancipation Proclamation. On September 22, 1862, Lincoln issued the preliminary proclamation. This proclamation declared that the slaves in areas still in rebellion against the United States on January 1, 1863, would be then and forever free. The final version was issued on January 1, 1863. The Emancipation Proclamation declared that the slaves in these states or parts of slave-holding states still under Confederate control were freed forever, and that their freedom would be recognized and protected by the United States government. Lincoln could free only those slaves because slavery was still protected under the Constitution; it would take a constitutional amendment, (the thirteenth), rather than a presidential proclamation, to free all the slaves. The Emancipation Proclamation marked the end of governmental support of slavery and shifted the purpose of the Civil War from a quest to restore the Union to a more moral purpose—the freedom of all slaves.

The southern states disagreed with Lincoln's emancipation and not everyone in the North agreed with its policy. Yet, as Lincoln so eloquently professed, "I desire so to conduct the affairs of this administration that if at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every other friend on earth, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside me.[52]"

The Greatest: Lincoln and Marshall

Chief Justice Marshall all but created the judicial branch as it stands today. He bestowed to it the power of judicial review and gave the Constitution the power of law. Indeed, as John Quincy Adams remarked, "[Marshall] has done more to establish the Constitution of the United States on sound construction than any other man living."[53] Marshall's complete transformation of the United States Supreme Court is his legacy and the reason he is nicknamed the "Great Chief Justice."

Likewise, the name Abraham Lincoln will live always, wherever liberty and freedom are revered. Whether it was as president, lawyer, or schoolboy, Lincoln always exemplified the foundational virtues of our society: character, leadership, justice, and a commitment to excellence in whatever one endeavors. He had a focused pursuit of justice. He had great respect for the mandates of both the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, and he also knew that without a true dedication to preserving these United States as *united* states, our founding fathers' vision of democracy would crumble and disappear.

Although they lived half a century apart, Marshall and Lincoln were rather similar in both appearance and character. Lincoln, fifty-four years Marshall's junior, bore a remarkable physical resemblance to the great chief justice. "Both were very tall men, slender, loose-jointed, and awkward…"[54] According to Marshall scholar Albert Jeremiah Beveridge, the two were so similar both physically and in their "negligent" style of dress, that, had they been of the appropriate age, they could very easily have been mistaken for brothers.

More so than their physical resemblance, they were alike in their ability to guide the country through hard-fought struggles that ensured the sanctity of the Constitution and its principles. It is their strength, their political courage, and their ability to do what is right in the face of adversity that makes them revered today.

Lincoln was not yet born by the time Marshall commenced his tenure as Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court, but Marshall greatly influenced Lincoln's presidency, and by extension, the fate of America at the close of the Civil War. The Civil War was a war that eradicated the institution of slavery and created the idea of nationhood. In his 1863 Gettysburg Address, Lincoln captured the spirit of the war and the cause for which he and the Union soldiers were fighting so relentlessly. He proclaimed that "this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."

The timeless phrase "government of the people, by the people, for the people" has resonated far beyond the bloody battlefield in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. Lincoln was mistaken when he predicted "the world will little note, nor long remember what we say here." Instead, these words captured the definition of democracy in the United States. But Lincoln was not the first to use these words. Forty-four years earlier, in the infamous case of M'Culloch v. Maryland, Chief Justice Marshall proclaimed that the Union truly was a "government of the people."[57] He wrote that the Constitution was submitted to the people, to accept or reject, and that in accepting the Constitution, it is right to say that the government proceeds directly from the people.[58]

Lincoln worked to preserve what Marshall proclaimed in his opinions. Marshall laid down the doctrines that Lincoln later expounded upon. Lincoln did not repeat the theme Marshall set out in his judicial opinions. Rather, he transformed them into the theme of America and made Marshall's words immortal.

The dilemmas facing Lincoln and Marshall were as robust in their own time as in ours, and deserve careful reexamination by modern historians. Marshall and Lincoln remained true to their visions and today we remain blessed by the courage, valor and justice reflected in the colors of our national flag that they saved for us.

So, too, must we preserve for posterity the unified judiciary of our forefathers—honorable, noble, and revered.

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Honorable Frank J. Williams.

An Interview with Allen Guelzo

(Editor's note: The questions for this interview are based upon my reading of Allen Guelzo's newest book, Lincoln and Douglas: The Debates that Defined America, *published by Simon and Schuster, 2008.)*

Q: The prevailing political wisdom frequently states that an incumbent should not agree to debate a challenger. Why did Stephen Douglas agree to debate Abraham Lincoln? Ego? A good way to humiliate and dispose of a pesky opponent?

A: The 'prevailing political wisdom' is correct, but usually impractical. No one running for office wants to look unwilling to meet a challenger on even terms, and certainly Stephen Douglas had no wish to do so. But Lincoln's public stature was so small, especially against the all-powerful party machinery Douglas had built up in Illinois, that he probably could have dismissed Lincoln's challenge without suffering any particular penalty. "The whole country knows me," Douglas said, while "Lincoln, as regards myself, is comparatively unknown." Douglas never actually offered a reason for accepting the challenge, but I suspect it had a lot to do with Douglas's penchant for risk-taking. Old Tom Corwin, the veteran Ohio politician, said that Douglas was "inconsiderate and reckless," which meant that Corwin thought Douglas often made decisions on the spur-of-the-moment, betting that "his quickness of apprehension, his amiable manners and his general urbanity" would help him brass his way through. Douglas stayed away from horses and cards, but all the same, he was notorious for being a tremendous bluffer. Even his reputation as a "formidable parliamentary pugilist" was a gamble he took with the fact that he was actually, in physical terms, sickly and fragile.

Q: Was this series of debates between Senatorial candidates a common occurrence in 1858? If not, why Illinois?

A: No, this was a genuine political novelty in American politics. Until 1912, U.S. senators were elected by the state legislatures, not directly by vote of the people. Since it was the legislature that did the electing, the practice was to wait until after the state legislative elections in whatever November preceded the expiration of a U.S. senator's six-year term, and then, from November to January, lobby the incoming legislature with as many glad-hands as possible. This is what happened in 1854, when Lincoln made his first bid for the U.S. Senate. After watching Illinois voters massacre Douglasite state legislators in retaliation for the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, Lincoln concluded that enough anti-Nebraska Democrats and enough old-line Whigs had been elected to give him the votes he needed to upset the incumbent, James Shields, a Douglasite whose term was up for re-election. So, Lincoln set about buttonholing the newly-elected state legislators, both anti-Nebraska and Whig, about dumping Shields and electing Lincoln in his place. It nearly worked. But he fell short of a majority on the first ballot, and when the Douglasites substituted another of their own stripe, former governor Joel Matteson, for Shields, Lincoln withdrew and told his followers to vote for the anti-Nebraska (and anti-Douglas) Democrat, Lyman Trumbull.

Four years later, the political map had changed dramatically. The Whig party had disintegrated, Lincoln had joined the new Republican party, and Douglas, whose U.S. Senate seat was now up for re-election, had split with the leadership of his own party by opposing James Buchanan over the Lecompton Constitution. Buchanan was eager to destroy Douglas, even if it meant splitting the Illinois Democratic party. That looked like another opportunity for Lincoln. But Lincoln's new party was a far more wobbly affair than the old Whigs had been, and Douglas might still win if the Republicans also split into quarrelling factions.

In order to keep the focus on defeating Douglas clear, the state Republican convention jumped forward in June, 1858, and endorsed Lincoln as "the first and only choice of the Republicans of Illinois for the U.S. Senate, as the successor of Stephen A. Douglas." This would do two things: it would force any rivals Lincoln might have (such as "Long John" Wentworth of Chicago) to line up behind Lincoln as the single Republican nominee, and it would put every Illinois voter on notice that the votes they cast in November for Republican state legislators were now also, indirectly, votes for Abraham Lincoln for the U.S. Senate, since those Republican candidates were bound by the state convention's endorsement to support Lincoln.

Q: You refer to the debates as the "ultimate omen in a season of omens." Please sketch your reading of the year 1858.

A: One New Englander recalled, "The agitation against slavery had taken hold of the whole country; it was in politics, in journalism, in literature, in the public hall and parlor." The Lincoln-Douglas debates did nothing but underscore that lethal obsession, since the debates discussed nothing except slavery – not tariffs, not 'internal improvements,' not a national banking system, not even annexation of Cuba or Central America, which had all been the defining issues of American politics from the 1820s to the 1850s. The debates showed how virulent the disagreements over slavery were, since Lincoln and Douglas not only talked about specific policy solutions for slavery, but ran all the way down to the marrow of how Lincoln and Douglas defined democracy itself. In that respect, the debates were a gauge which showed how close the country was to exploding.

Lincoln and Douglas also foreshadowed several other developments that pointed toward civil war. For one thing, the Illinois Democrats splintered in 1858 (much as the Democratic Party would on a national scale two years later). Four years before, Stephen Douglas had promised the country, in the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, that 'popular sovereignty' would solve the uproar over slavery. Instead, it gave us 'Bleeding Kansas' and the assault on Charles Sumner on the floor of the Senate, followed almost directly by the Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* decision, which effectively prevented any of the western territories from banning legalized slavery, by 'popular sovereignty' or any other means. Douglas's credibility hung by a shred—he had to argue that 'popular sovereignty' had never really been properly tried in Kansas, and that *Dred Scott* did not actually conflict with 'popular sovereignty.' But this was not the line laid down by President James Buchanan, who supported (and maybe connived) at *Dred Scott*. Douglas wanted to convert his desperate plea for 'popular sovereignty' into a display of political courage by bucking 'Old Buck,' which would make Douglas look like a hero to Illinois voters and restore the luster of 'popular sovereignty.' But that was taking a big risk. Buchanan promptly turned every weapon at his disposal against Douglas, firing Douglasite office-holders, stripping Douglas newspapers of government contracts, and finally putting up a rival candidate, Sidney Breese, as the "official" Democratic nominee for the Senate.

It's not likely that Buchanan's maneuvering made all that much difference to the Illinois election—Douglas was immensely popular among Illinois Democrats. But in 1860, the same forces which Buchanan had represented in 1858 now tried to bar Douglas's nomination for the presidency, and once again, they erected an anti-Douglas insurgency around Buchanan's vice president, John C. Breckinridge. This time, the Democratic vote, nationally, was split so disastrously that the election of a Republican was almost a foregone conclusion—and the Republican candidate was Abraham Lincoln.

Q: In terms of the intellectual history of the United States, how do you view the debates as expressions of intellectual ideas?

A: Remember that this was a political election, and the debates were aimed at the practical goal of influencing how voters cast their ballots. So there is not too much in the way of lofty argument—no Transcendentalists, no collegiate moral philosophers, no Kant or Hegel get summoned up by either Lincoln or Douglas.

What is interesting, however, in the history of American ideas is the way the debates shifted from these two candidates' disagreements about the best *policy* toward slavery, to a disagreement about *principle*—in this case, about how a democracy copes with the presence of evil in its own system. Douglas thought the controversy over slavery was mostly about the *controversy*—in other words, the problem was not slavery, but the political upset that slavery was causing—and therefore what needed to be done was to find the best way of damping down the controversy. He was not being merely a politician in believing this. Stephen A. Douglas really did believe he was preaching democracy. What this meant, though, was that Douglas regarded democracy as an end in itself—that the purpose of democracy is to enable the people to have whatever thing they want, provided a majority want it, without any regard to whether that thing is right or wrong. Democracy, for Douglas, was about process; considerations of principle and morality belonged entirely to the individual's private judgment. When people appealed for limitations on slavery based on the immorality of human bondage, Douglas was quick to tell them that morality was not a concept that had a place on the public square. "The great fundamental principle of self-government" is that "the people" are "entirely free to form and regulate their domestic institutions and internal concerns in their own way." And he sharply criticized the efforts of moralists "to establish a theocracy to take charge of our politics and our legislation."

But for Lincoln, the controversy over slavery was about *slavery*, and that the *controversy* would never be put to rest until people grappled with the central question of whether slavery itself had a rightful place in a democracy. That's the significance of Lincoln's "House Divided" Speech at the very beginning of this campaign: "We are now far into the fifth year, since a policy [Douglas's 'popular sovereignty'] was initiated, with the avowed object and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation," Lincoln said—as if by concentrating on the policy, one could turn away from the fundamental cause of the problem. But "under the operation of that policy, that agitation has not only not ceased, but has constantly augmented." If slavery was right, one set of policies could be adopted—and Lincoln freely admitted that, if this was the answer, then slavery might as well be nationalized. But if it wasn't, then a different set of policies, aimed at slavery's "ultimate extinction" should be set to work. But either way, one cannot avoid (as Douglas hoped to) coming to grips with that fundamental question of slavery's morality or immorality, or avoid having the coming-to-grips determine the direction of policy. One cannot conclude that something is wrong, and then also conclude that there is no action to be taken, or take an action which perpetuates the wrong. Douglas's response was to pretend that he did not know, or care, whether slavery was right or wrong.

This underscores what a different idea of the purpose of democracy Lincoln held. Democracy was a *means*—a wonderful, noble and right means—but a means toward the protection and enjoyment of the natural rights spelled out in the Declaration of Independence, and hard-wired into every person's human nature. Democracy is the political mechanism which allows us the fullest and freest exercise of those natural rights—but democracy cannot revoke or award those rights. Those rights, as the Declaration states, are inalienable. And this, for Lincoln, constituted the essential offense of slavery and the folly of popular sovereignty: slavery proposed to take a human being and de-humanize that human being by eliminating any natural right to liberty, and popular sovereignty justified that de-humanization so long as a referendum of sorts approved it. If we put this in modern terms, we could say that Douglas was "pro-choice" and Lincoln was "pro-liberty."

Q: Please discuss the importance (or unimportance) of the "Freeport Question."

A: The Freeport Question served two purposes for Lincoln. I should say first what the Freeport Question did *not* do—it did not, as so many accounts later claimed, force Douglas to reiterate his support for 'popular sovereignty' so that he could please Illinois voters who wanted some assurance that slavery could be banned from the territories, but thereby lose him support among Southerners who wanted open access for slavery in the territories. Douglas's public split with Buchanan had already nailed the Little Giant's position on 'popular sovereignty' to the door and cost him Southern support. Even Lincoln recognized this: he told Henry Asbury in July of 1858 that Douglas "cares nothing for the South; he knows he is already dead there."

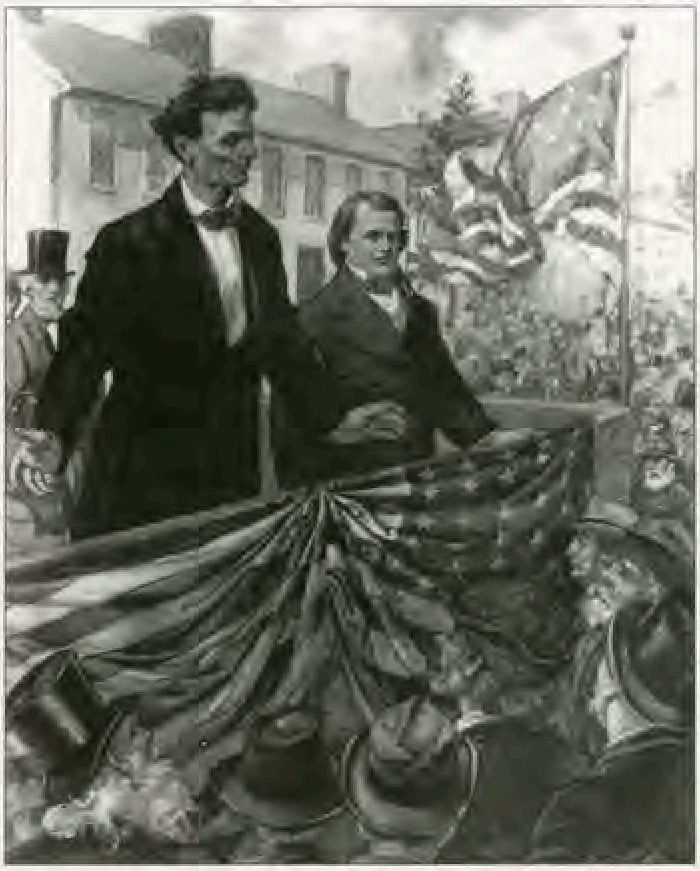
On the other hand, it did not hurt for Lincoln to keep rubbing this point publicly, and in fact, over the next two years, Southern Democrats who loathed Douglas would routinely refer to Douglas's "Freeport Doctrine" as the best of all reasons for dumping Douglas. But I think there's a larger reason at work, and that is Lincoln's anxiety that Douglas might be adopted by the Republicans.

By splitting with the national Democratic leadership, and especially in such a way as to frustrate the ambitions of Southerners for a clear path toward legalizing slavery in the territories, Douglas actually began to look like something of a hero to east-coast anti-slavery Republicans. There was ongoing political chatter about the possibility that Douglas, like so many other Northern Democrats, might jump ship to the Republicans. And if he did so, delighted Republican strategists could see Douglas at the head of a dream-ticket which would install a Republican in the White House in 1860. (It would be something close to Joe Lieberman walking out on the Democrats in 2004 and running as George W. Bush's vice-president). Lincoln and the Illinois Republicans, who had endured twenty years of close campaigning against Douglas, knew this was an act of fantasy. And posing the Freeport Question—which is say, forcing Douglas to pledge his primary loyalty to 'popular sovereignty'—would make it clear to Republicans that Douglas was not really an anti-slavery man at all. What Republicans wanted was to ban slavery from the territories, not give it a 50/50 chance, depending on which way the majority in a territory voted.

Q: What role did the debates play in the actual senatorial campaign?

A: Since no one was voting directly for either Lincoln or Douglas, it's hard to draw a direct line from the performance of either candidate in the debates to the actual election results. In fact, we have to remember that the debates were only seven moments in an overall campaign that lasted for four months, so there were plenty of other opportunities for Lincoln and Douglas to sway the voters apart from the debates.

Let's assume, though, that we can measure the impact of each debate by looking at how the seven *counties* in which the debates were held voted for Republican or Democratic legislators. If we do, we would have to conclude that Lincoln "won" five of the debates, since Republican candidates carried five of those counties. But five counties do not a majority make, especially in the state legislature. But let's try again, this time using how the state house districts in which the seven debates were held voted. Now, the balance shifts to Lincoln "winning" four debates and Douglas "winning" three. Still, seven legislative districts do not make a majority, either. Shift our view to the voting patterns in the U.S. Congressional districts where the debates were held, and things get even more erratic—if the way people voted in the U.S. Congressional districts reveals who "won" the debates held in each of those districts, Lincoln wins only two of the debates, Douglas wins five. But a five-to-two majority does not reflect the actual voting in the state legislature in January, 1859, where Douglas was re-elected, but by a 54-46 party-line vote.



Lincoln Douglas Debates. (TLM # 175)

Nor does it reflect the larger voting patterns for Democratic and Republican legislative candidates across the state. Since it was the state legislature, voting in January, 1859, which would do the electing of a U.S. Senator, the only voting statistics reported in the political almanacs for the 1858 elections in Illinois were the tallies for the two state offices which *were* up for direct election—state treasurer and state superintendent of public instruction. Republican candidates won both of those offices—Horace Greeley's *Tribune Almanac* duly records 125,430 votes for the Republican candidate for State Treasurer and 121,609 for his Democratic opponent, out of a grand total of 247,000 votes in all. The conclusion jumped-to by subsequent historians has been that the voting for the two state offices is probably similar to the way people voted for the state legislature, and so for Lincoln and Douglas. In other words, if they voted for the Republican candidate for state treasurer, Illinoisans were probably also intentionally voting for a state legislator who would vote for Lincoln.

But in fact, because a number of Illinois state house districts were entitled to elect two or more representatives, there were actually 366,983 votes cast in the legislative elections, of which 166,374 were for Democratic candidates and 190,468 for Republican.

(None of this is in the almanacs; but it *is* buried away in the voting ledgers in the archive of the Illinois secretary of state's office.) If Illinois voters were consciously voting for legislative candidates who would, in turn, vote for Lincoln or Douglas, then we have to say that Lincoln "won" the votes cast for the House races by nearly 24,000 votes -- or, 52% of the votes cast, whereas Douglas got only 45%. The same story holds true in the state Senate races. Of the 99,482 votes cast in the twelve open state Senate races, 44,750 went to Democrats, but 53,784 went to Republicans. In other words, if the votes cast for Republican state representatives and senators were also intended as votes for Lincoln, then Lincoln "won" the 1858 election with a healthy 54% of the votes cast. The problem for Lincoln was that, while Lincoln candidates may have won a substantial overall victory, they won it unevenly. The apportionment of representation in the legislature, based on the state's 1854 re-apportionment plan, rewarded votes cast in downstate Democratic districts with greater representation than those cast in the Republican districts in the North.

So, how did the debates play into this? There are too many twists and turns in the pathway to the final vote in January, 1859, to say. We can say two things about the impact of the debates, though. One of them is that no one blamed Lincoln's loss on a poor showing in the debates. Illinois Republicans blamed voter fraud, the out-dated district apportionment plan, even an "October surprise," but not the debates, and that says something important about how well Lincoln performed against Douglas. One Republican newspaper in Chicago was so pleased that it wished "these joint debates before the people…could be more frequent," perhaps even "two or three times a week" and "in all the principal towns of each Congressional district," since the people "would be so strongly and sweepingly in favor of Lincoln before election day that Douglas would have to abandon himself utterly to despair…."

The other impact of the debates lies in how, away from Illinois, where the debates were the only thing Americans read about the campaigns, Lincoln acquired a national stature that he could probably have achieved by no other means. Once the debates began to be reprinted across the country, letters began pouring in, asking "who is this new man? …You have a David greater than the Democratic Goliath or any other I ever saw." That brought Lincoln invitations to campaign for Republican candidates in Ohio and Kansas in 1859, and his crucial debut before east-coast Republicans at Cooper Union in 1860.

Q: What were the primary reasons for Douglas's victory and Lincoln's defeat in 1858?

A: Republicans afterward pointed a number of fingers—to the hesitancy of the east-coast Republican leadership to back Lincoln more enthusiastically, to a conspiracy between Douglas and the Illinois Central to recruit bogus voters from the IC's immigrant Irish workforce, to Douglas's incessant race-baiting—but there are two points which I think were really crucial to Douglas's victory. One was the "October surprise" I mentioned before. The key bloc of votes that Lincoln and Douglas needed to win was that of the mid-state moderates who had once, like Lincoln, been members of the Whig party, and who comprised the mid-state's "Whig Belt." Douglas's race-baiting was an attempt to smear Lincoln as a radical who was trying to seduce fine old Whig moderates into an alliance with abolitionism; and a great deal of Lincoln's campaign was centered around trying to show how much his policies on slavery were replicas of the great Whig statesman, Henry Clay. One Whig whom Lincoln failed to convince was Judge T. Lyle Dickey, who not only endorsed Douglas, but who solicited a letter endorsing Douglas from Henry Clay's heir-apparent in the U.S. Senate, John J. Crittenden. Dickey and Douglas sat on Crittenden's letter from July until October 19th, and then published it in the Illinois newspapers. "Where has it been all this time," howled the *Illinois State Journal*, "Why has it been held back for THREE MONTHS AND NEVER TILL NOW ALLOWED TO SEE THE LIGHT?" But the damage was done, and too late for Lincoln to repair. The Crittenden letter gave Douglas candidates narrow victories in a half-dozen key districts, and doomed Lincoln.

The other factor in Douglas's victory was the apportionment. While Lincoln candidates may have won a substantial overall victory in terms of the total number of votes cast, they won it unevenly. The apportionment of representation in the legislature, based on the state's 1854 re-apportionment plan, rewarded votes cast in downstate Democratic districts with greater representation than those cast in the Republican districts in the North. "If the State had been apportioned according to population," complained Joseph Medill, the editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, "the districts carried by the Republicans would have returned forty-one Lincoln representatives, and fourteen Lincoln Senators, which of course would have elected him." But they didn't. Ironically, two years later, the shoe would be on the other foot: Lincoln would garner less than 40% of the popular vote in the presidential election of 1860, but he would be elected because his votes were clustered in Northern states rich with electoral votes in the electoral college.

Q: Lincoln detractors today frequently use his comments at Charleston to prove that he was a racist. Please give our readers your interpretation of the matter.

A: Bear in mind that race was the nine-hundred-pound gorilla in Illinois imaginations; it filled the room with the smell of unwashed white supremacy. Illinoisans who loathed slavery and were ready to cheer any blow struck at slavery would pause in mid-stroke if it was pointed out that the end of slavery would free several million blacks to (as Douglas put it) "come into the state and settle with the white man…to vote on an equality with yourselves, and to make them eligible to office, to serve on juries, and to judge your rights." Lincoln began his campaign on July 10, 1858, with a speech which he hoped would dash the race issue out of Douglas's hands. "Let us discard all this quibbling about this man and the other man," all the blathering about "this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position" and "unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal." Instead of that statement deflating the race issue and putting the attention exclusively on the wrongs of slavery, Douglas used it as proof that Lincoln would have no objection to making civil equality the next step after the abolition of slavery. "I do not regard the negro as my equal, and positively deny that he is my brother or any kin to me whatever," Douglas announced, "I hold that this government was made on the white basis, by white men, for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever, and should be administered by white men and none others." This, in turn, galvanized anxious Republicans to put pressure on Lincoln to repudiate publicly any connection to "negro equality." One Republican adviser diligently instructed Lincoln to say "That as for Negro equality in the sense in which the expression is used you neither believe in it nor desire it. You desire to offer no temptations to negroes to come among us or remain with us, and therefore you do not propose to confer upon them any further social or political rights than they are now entitled to."

It is against that background of that pressure that we have to read the infamous first paragraph of Lincoln's opening at Charleston:

> that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race.

At best, Lincoln was caving-in to party pressure, or at least public prejudices. And it has to be said in his defense that he was drawing on a real distinction between natural rights (permanent assets of human nature like life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness) and civil rights (which are the privileges individual communities award their members, and which can be withheld or bestowed without that changing the essential *natural* equality of all human beings); and that unlike Douglas, he clearly believed black people to have precisely the same natural rights, and the same essential humanity, as white people. "There is no reason in the world why the negro is not entitled to all the natural rights enumerated in the Declaration of Independence—the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," Lincoln insisted. "In the right to eat the bread, without leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, *he is my equal and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man*."

But it is easy to read these words without remembering the pressure of either party or public opinion, and easy to operate from the modern tendency of "rights talk," which is to collapse both natural rights and civil rights into a single category of human rights. On those terms, we could conclude that Lincoln really was a racist, that he was making a distinction without a difference, that he was pandering to white prejudice in order to get elected, and was only interested in getting rid of slavery without any intention of assisting black people to reach the plateau of full civic equality. I think it's more likely that the natural rights/civil rights distinction (which is a real one, after all) simply gave Lincoln an opportunity to affirm equality where he thought it really counted while allowing him to let civil equality go, like the proverbial tub to the whale. It was the worst and weakest thing he ever said on the subject. I think he was less weak than all but a handful of his contemporaries; but I cannot tell you that his moral intuitions were too feeble for him to know that this was weakness.

It does make me wonder, though, what kind of motives lurk behind the people who play this game of *gotcha* with Lincoln. They do not seem to notice that Lincoln *could* have very easily denied any interest in both the natural *and* civil equality of black people, and still paid absolutely no penalty for it in Illinois in 1858; whereas, affirming the natural equality of blacks and whites, even if it mounted no higher than that, really did cost him votes. If he was as deeply-dyed a racist as some people have maintained, he would never have shinnied out on the limb of natural racial equality, much less find himself seven years later urging black voting rights and equal access to public education.

Q: Please explain Douglas's views on slavery. Did his views change during his lifetime?

A: Douglas was not pro-slavery, nor was popular sovereignty really shell-game politics to allow slavery into the territories. On that point, Lincoln's attempt to make Douglas part of a pro-slavery conspiracy with James Buchanan, Franklin Pierce, and Roger Taney was simply over the top. But he was not anti-slavery, either, since he was, for a few years, a slave-owner of sorts himself. (Douglas's father-in-law from his first marriage left the Douglases a Mississippi plantation, complete with slaves, which Douglas managed as power-of-attorney for his two under-age sons; he was embarrassed to have this known, but felt obligated to execute the terms of the trust for the benefit of his sons). It was simply not an issue worth losing sleep over, because the subject of the question was a black slave, and therefore an inferior being over whom no white man should lose sleep, more than it would be lost over pigs or cows. When he declared in the Senate that he did not care whether slavery was voted up or down in Kansas, so long as the vote was legal and above-board, he meant exactly that. He had as little use for Southern fire-eaters, claiming slavery as a 'positive good' that saved poor whites from becoming the laboring 'mud-sills' of society, as he did for abolitionists, claiming that it was a sin which marred the image of God. The problem with slavery was the fire-eaters and the abolitionists, blowing up partisan ill-will. There is no evidence that he ever changed his mind on the subject.

Q: Do you find a specific debate more fascinating than the others? If so, why?

A: No, I've loved writing about them all. The debates are the most amazing mix of frontier carnival and high political symposium that can be found anywhere in American history, or anyone else's history for that matter. I suppose, though, of them all, I tend to favor Alton, the last of the debates, for Lincoln's eloquent statement of "the real issue" posed by slavery—that it betrays democratic government, that it is tantamount to the rule of kings which we were supposed to have left behind at the Revolution, that it involves the conflict of eternal moral right and wrong:

> That is the real issue. That is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between these two principles, right and wrong, throughout the world. They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time, and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity, and the other the divine right of kings. It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same old serpent that says, "You work and toil and earn bread, and I'll eat it." No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.

Americans do not like to allow questions of morality intrude on our politics, even today. But Lincoln forced the issue, and it's that which makes Lincoln's brand of democracy so forceful—and I would even say, necessary—today.

I first read those words when I was in high school, narrating Aaron Copland's *A Lincoln Portrait* with the school orchestra. Those words have stayed with me since. And even now, when I'm invited to appear as the narrator in the Copland piece (as I was most recently in February, 2008, with the Illinois Symphony), they send the same chills through me.

Q: Can you give a general description of the crowds which attended the debates? Their responses? Did the debates influence the votes of those who attended?

A: The crowds were of all sorts and condition of Illinoisans. Their numbers varied from 1500 (the smallest) to as many as 25,000. Watching these crowds streaming into the debate towns must have been like witnessing the Children's Crusade or Chaucer's pilgrims en route to Canterbury. Horace White, a twenty-four-year-old reporter for the *Chicago Tribune*, got up early on the morning of the first debate to watch the incoming traffic, and the first thing he saw were "clouds of dust…on the horizon…from all points of the compass," which soon resolved themselves into trains of "large four-horse" wagons, filled with raucous political clubs and canvas banners "indicating their habitation and their political belonging." The roads, and then the streets of Ottawa, were "densely packed with human beings," and the rail fence which ran around the square had given up "every inch of space" to "wagons, buggies," and "teams of all sorts." Sometimes the crowds were surly and argumentative. At the second debate at Freeport, on August 27th, someone shied a melon at Douglas and hit him on the shoulder; the "Little Giant" was frequently interrupted, and turned to baiting the crowd, shaking his fist at them, and roaring back, "I know that the shoe is pinching you. I am clinching Lincoln now and you are scared to death for the result…. I have seen your mobs before, and defy your wrath." Two days after the Charleston debate, Lincoln and Douglas were both in Sullivan, and there, a Douglas meeting on the town square stood in the path of a Republican parade to the north part of town. While the Republican marshal argued with the Douglas marshals to make way, a brass band which had been hired by the Lincoln marchers began "blowing and drumming with all their might" in order to drown out Douglas. Finally, the band tried to force its way through the Douglas crowd, and a street brawl broke out. At a rally at Rock Island, the banners people made up were literally nauseous: one showed Douglas swallowing a large pig marked DRED SCOTT, and then vomiting up the pig.

Yet, for all the rambunctiousness, the crowds listened with an intensity that I don't think we can really capture, in the Age of the Remote. George Beatty, who lived as a young man just outside Ottawa, Illinois, recalled the debates as "something very different than…idling about, listening to the speakers for a half hour or so" and finally concluding "what's the use of listening to that chap! I can get his speech in tomorrow's paper." When the debates came to Ottawa, Beatty remembered that "it did not take long for this crowd of farmers to realize that the question that was before them was one that demanded sober, solemn decision, if they were to vote rightly. …I tell you that debate set folks to thinking on these important questions in ways they hadn't dreamed of."

Q: Which candidate gained the most from the debates? Douglas in 1858? Lincoln in 1860?

A: This campaign had started off as a referendum on Stephen A. Douglas, and whether he would survive to grasp the presidential nomination that everyone believed was within his reach in 1860. And in that context, the debates were a great success for Douglas. They allowed him to beat back the political leadership of his own party and emerge, bloodied but unbowed, as the greatest Democratic politician in the country. But by the debates' end, Lincoln had so riveted peoples' attention that before the votes were even cast in November, Illinoisans had begun talking about Lincoln's chances for the presidency. Years later, in the White House, Lincoln would say that his election stemmed "from the fact of his having made a race for the Senate of the United States with Judge Douglas in the state of Illinois," and by "running that race in a local election, his speeches had been published," and from that "his name became prominent," and on that basis "he was accidentally selected" as a Republican dark horse candidate "and elected afterwards as president of the United States." If Lincoln did not exactly win the great debates of 1858, it was, nevertheless, because of them that he won the presidency in 1860.

Q: What is your next project?

A: That would be telling. Actually, I'm working right now on a short biography of Lincoln for Oxford University Press's 'Very Short Introductions' series, bringing out a collection of my Lincoln essays over the last thirteen years with Southern Illinois University Press, and getting ready to deliver the Commonwealth Fund Lecture at the University of London. Plus a few 'other things.'

Lincoln and Douglas: The Debates that Defined America

By Allen C. Guelzo
(Simon and Schuster, 2008)

Reviewed by Orville Vernon Burton, University of Illinois

The challenger, reluctant to confront a renowned debater, preferred a strategy of tailing the front-runner and giving his remarks the following day. His committee and handlers convinced him otherwise. The front-runner, reluctant about sharing his stage with an upstart, did not want the show to give the challenger any additional exposure. Nevertheless, Douglas did accept Lincoln's challenge, and the rest, as they say, is history.

The distinguished Lincoln historian Allen Guelzo has written a superb account of this historical episode. Adding to his already rich work on religion, emancipation, civil war, and Lincoln, Guelzo describes, analyzes, and counts votes from Illinois political districts. He presents party operatives and showcases political divisions within parties. Supporters suggested tactics and coached their candidate, but other party leaders had different goals and ambitions for themselves. Some lacked enthusiasm, some were rivals for power, some offered very weak endorsements, and some left town to get off the hook. Guelzo introduces the people on the arrangement committees. He gives the state of the weather and emotional state of the audience. He provokes us with the excitement of the crowds and the importance of the ideas.

Guelzo's main thesis is that the essence of debate revolved around conflicting visions of what democratic politics should be. For Douglas it was process; for Lincoln it was principle. Guelzo centers the debates in the never-ending discussion of the meaning of democracy and freedom, ultimately of a decision between moral choice and political process. He challenges the reader to "pose anew" the differences of vision. Is America about being free or acting morally? Does a majority have the right to do what is wrong? Which should rule, enlightened self interest or beloved community? Guelzo claims these same questions plague our time when we face an "assault on liberal democracy" from "Islamized versions of fascism" (p. 312).

During the nineteenth century, Abraham Lincoln acted as a fulcrum around whom swirled ideas about freedom, principles, and politics. How differing groups defined liberty within a republican form of government was a debate central to the Age of Lincoln, and Lincoln often spoke about the differences between two antagonistic groups who "declare for liberty." Some, he said, used the word liberty to mean that each man could "do as he pleases with himself, and the product of his labor." (Address at Sanitary Fair, Baltimore, April 18, 1864). The debates epitomize some of those ideas. Lincoln and Douglas, having already spoken in Springfield and Chicago within a day of each other, agreed to "joint appearances" in Illinois's seven remaining state senate districts. The diverse nature of Illinois voters, having much to do with immigration patterns, gathered into three somewhat cohesive areas. The politics in Ottawa, LaSalle County, site of the August 21 debate, tended toward Republican. Anti-slavery Republicans in Ottawa were suspicious of this unknown Lincoln since he was born in a slave state. The Illinois *Belleville Weekly Advocate*, earlier in October of 1856, had proclaimed that Lincoln "was a Southerner." But Lincoln won them over with appeals to the Declaration of Independence. On August 27 the protagonists met in Freeport in the far north of the state, a district safely Republican. Here Lincoln took the offense rather than playing defense against Douglas's accusations. On September 15 at Jonesboro, close to the southern tip of the state, the lackluster crowd was smaller and tended to be Democrats. It was into the undecided former Whig region of the central part of the state that both Lincoln and Douglas poured their efforts: Charleston on September 18, Galesburg on October 7, Quincy on October 13, and Alton on October 15. Alton, while Whig territory, nevertheless was heavily anti-abolition. It would take some convincing by Lincoln to woo them.

In Guelzo's capable hands, the discussion of fractious dissent within each party becomes the picture of raw politics unrestrained. Former Whigs were divided. Many Whigs liked Douglas. After all, Douglas and Clay were the masterminds behind the Compromise of 1850 that pulled the Union back from the brink of war. Douglas rebuked Lincoln for claiming the mantle of Henry Clay, but Lincoln admired the Whiggery of Henry Clay, whose family, like the Lincolns, had come from Virginia to settle in Kentucky. Whigs supported government initiatives to construct roads, improve river navigation, and build railroads. Whigs supported a protective tariff as well as a national bank to provide capital for business. The party of national self-improvement—and historians have judged, the economic and cultural elite—Whigs appealed to Lincoln, set as he was upon personal self improvement. Lincoln wrote on December 20, 1859, that he was "Always a whig in politics, and generally on the whig electoral tickets, making active canvasses" (*Collected Works*, Vol. III, p. 512). Lincoln and his supporters tried various political maneuverings to get John Crittenden, as the leading former Whig, to endorse Lincoln, or at least to maintain silence. Instead, merely weeks before the election, a letter by Crittenden extolled the courage and patriotism of Douglas. The letter, read at a Democratic rally, was subsequently published in Chicago, as well as in east coast newspapers. Guelzo states that "the impact was devastating" (p. 276).

Democrats were divided. Many Democrats hated Douglas for his opposition to the Lecompton Constitution for Kansas. President Buchanan worked mightily against Douglas in the state of Illinois, putting pressure on patronage employees and instituting a rival National Democratic Party that drew votes away from the incumbent. Guelzo disagrees with those who say that the problems Buchanan caused for Douglas were exaggerated, and he offers compelling evidence that Douglas had a serious fight against Buchanan Democrats. The tactics of the Buchananites were direct and nasty, but Guelzo is of the opinion that subterfuge would have been more effective than their direct opposition.

While some Democrats accused Douglas of betraying the Democratic Party and turning instead to "Black Republicanism," Lincoln worried and fretted because the eastern establishment Republicans suggested that Douglas be the Illinois senator for the Republican Party. According to Guelzo, even stalwart Joseph Medill of the *Chicago Tribune* thought that Douglas would be a Republican by 1860 (p. 49). In 1858 when Abraham Lincoln was diligently molding the emerging Illinois Republican Party in his own image of old line Whig, he was dismayed to learn that some eastern Republicans, including Horace Greeley and William Seward, suggested that Illinois Republicans should support Douglas for re-election to the Senate. On March 9, 1858, Charles H. Ray, editor of the *Chicago Tribune*, wrote to Senator Lyman Trumbull that Stephen Douglas "is coming among us; and that we have got to deal with him in our own camp. The disposal of him will be a difficult problem, unless he will remain content with the hope of a place in the Cabinet of the next Republican President" (Charles Ray to Lyman Trumbull, March 9, 1858 in the Papers of Lyman Trumbull, Library of Congress). Lincoln complained to Lyman Trumbull about Greeley's New York *Tribune*'s constantly "eulogizing and admiring and magnifying Douglas" and wondered if eastern Republicans had decided that "the Republican cause, generally, can be best promoted by sacrificing us here in Illinois? If so, we would like to know it soon; it will save us a great deal of labor to surrender at once" (*Collected Works*, Vol. II, p. 430). Except for the speedy intervention of Lincoln's friends, Douglas may have had the support of Illinois Republicans, in which case, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas would not have needed the famous seven debates to garner political support for their differing positions.

But while Douglas might play a game and string them along, he always opposed Republicans for being a sectional party. Furthermore, he was angered by their alliance against him with the pro-Lecompton forces. He condemned "a political organization that will try to make an unholy and unnatural combination with its professed foes to beat a man merely because he has done right." (p. 222). Maybe Lincoln should have agreed with that attitude. Speaking earlier, in Peoria Illinois on October 16, 1854, against Stephen Douglas and the Nebraska Act's repeal of the Missouri Compromise, Lincoln advised his Whig friends not to fear a connection with the abolitionists on that issue: "Stand with anybody that stands right. Stand with him while he is right and part with him when he goes wrong" (*Collected Works*, Vol. II, p. 273). But Lincoln's Illinois supporters did not stand with Douglas when he opposed Lecompton.

Certain questions about the famous debates have persisted in the historical milieu. Guelzo asks and answers four of them:

1. Was Lincoln's House Divided speech a mistake that cost him the election in 1858?

2. When Lincoln posed the Freeport Question, did he know that it would keep Douglas from winning the nomination for President and did he think it would open up that possibility for himself?

3. Was the Illinois senatorial election close or a landslide?

4. Did the debates reveal Lincoln to be a racist interested solely in keeping the western territories open to whites?

To answer these questions, the author reconstructs the intricacies of the political and cultural landscape in Illinois. He presents facts and figures as well as personalities.

#1. Lincoln's anti-abolitionist friends were horrified by his speech on June 16, 1858. Accepting the nomination as the Republican candidate for the U.S. Senate, Lincoln declared, "A house divided against itself cannot stand." Was that prophesy? Was Lincoln predicting civil war? The language scared moderates and had an influence on Lincoln's chances. Douglas loved the ammunition this speech provided to him in his fight against Lincoln. Simply put, why not? The Founding Fathers created the nation as half slave and half free. Moreover, it had already stood the test of time and should continue to do so—if abolitionists would sit down and shut up. Lincoln proved to the contrary that the Founding Fathers had not in fact created the nation half slave/half free; they had merely dealt with the reality of the situation as it was. Furthermore, Lincoln showed how they never saw slavery as "a positive good" and actively worked, slowly but surely, to eliminate it by enacting the Northwest Ordinance and banning the slave trade at a date certain. Lincoln liked to point out that Douglas opposed the House Divided speech in the same way the Devil opposed the Bible. According to Guelzo, since the House Divided image is from the Bible, audiences of the day knew that put Douglas in very bad company. Guelzo's analysis of this speech, its religious imagery, cultural context, and political implications ramifications for both Lincoln and Douglas, is comprehensive and interesting and clear.

#2. Lincoln made sure at Freeport that Douglas's attempt to placate both northerners and southerners with the ambiguous term "popular sovereignty" would no longer be acceptable. When Congress passed the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854, it thereby repealed the Missouri Compromise outlawing slavery in the North. It was this bill that compelled Abraham Lincoln to re-enter politics. Relying on a concept of "popular sovereignty," Douglas suggested that henceforth the question of slavery in territories requesting admission to the Union would be left to democratic process. Popular sovereignty sounds very much like the essence of liberty and republicanism, but Lincoln called it "a mere deceitful pretense for the benefit of slavery" (*Collected Works*, Vol. II, p. 399). In his exalted moments, Douglas called popular sovereignty "the sacred right of self-government;" in his franker ones, he said it was to make sure government was "made by white men, on the white basis, for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever" (Ottawa debate). Abraham Lincoln was equally blunt in his appraisal: "I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world" (*Collected Works*, Vol. II, p. 255).

Lincoln pinned Douglas on inconsistency and on the relationship of popular sovereignty to the Supreme Court's *Dred Scott* decision. The historical memory of the Freeport debate is that Lincoln sacrificed his own aspirations for the Senate in 1858 because he was looking ahead to 1860. Guelzo proves otherwise. Any "larger game" that Lincoln was gunning for was not the presidency for himself, was not even to stymie Douglas's ambition for the Democratic nomination in 1860. Democrats had already turned against Douglas when he opposed Buchanan's Kansas strategy and the Lecompton Constitution. Lincoln wanted to shoot down, at point blank range, the idea that Douglas could be the Republican nominee for president in 1860.

Years later when Lincoln offered his opinion about the debates with Stephen Douglas, he thought that the publication of the debates brought his name into prominence and began a process whereby he was "accidentally selected" to run for president (p. 311). He did not envision that future possibility in 1858.

#3. Guelzo's conclusion on the Senate race was that "It was by no means a rout" (p. 284), and that in fact Lincoln's success with the popular vote led party leaders to consider him for the presidential bid in 1860. With solid political science, he counts the number of votes cast by district. With solid historical irony, he contrasts apportionment versus the popular voting and the reversal of those functions in the Electoral College count to come. Guelzo also takes on the complicated question of whether the debates actually changed the minds of people in the audience. His chart of districts and tendencies offers intriguing evidence.

#4. Racism was at the heart of the debates. Was Douglas racist? Yes, very much so. Douglas denounced Lincoln's appeal to the Declaration of Independence, calling it "a monstrous heresy" that the negro and the white man are created equal by God. Was Lincoln racist? According to Guelzo, yes, but…Lincoln's racism was less ugly, less nasty than Douglas's. Lincoln needed white votes, and sometimes he took the low road of pandering to white fears of African Americans, but he seemed to hedge as often as he could. Lincoln had no use for virulent-white-supremacist Democrats. Anti-slavery Republicans liked Lincoln. It was the Whigs he had to appeal to, and their views on race were complicated.

A point that even excellent historians miss is Lincoln's belief in the people's ability to comprehend complicated issues. Differences between civil rights and natural rights were not quibbling. One involves morality; the other political process. Guelzo explains them well, and so did Lincoln. Of course, Douglas made good use of confusing the issue to the voters of the day. As Guelzo puts it, Lincoln's "fine points of consistency" did not weigh much against Douglas's "thrill of accusation" (p. 86), but there were many who did pay attention and came to agree with Lincoln.

Lincoln was a lover of technology (and even had his own patent for lifting boats over shoals, the only president to ever have a patent), and he saw the use he could make of technological developments of his day to spread his message. Guelzo illuminates the role of technology in the debates. Not digital, but technology just the same were the printing press, newspapers, and telegraph. A new Associated Press and shorthand transcribers covered the debates. Lincoln quickly grasped that the debates offered the opportunity for immense press coverage and that news accounts reached a wider audience for his ideas. Many historians have found the debates repetitious, but Guelzo shows that Douglas was the more so. Because Lincoln assumed that much of the audience at any given debate had read about the former debates, he saw the debates as cumulative texts and was willing to introduce new material more often than Douglas, who saw the debates as solely oratory. Lincoln reached further yet. He saw the potential of using the debates as published in the press as a book manuscript, evidence of his genius in using information technology of the day. By mid-March 1860, such a book was selling very well: *Political Debates Between Hon. Abraham Lincoln and Hon. Stephen A. Douglas in the Celebrated Campaign of 1858, in Illinois.*"

Who "won" the debates? Readers can see for themselves the results of Guelzo's assessment, "based purely on impression," about the winner in each debate. Thick in details, his grids on each debate include the issues, the accusations and defenses. He does conclude that Lincoln's ability to stand up against Douglas and score points against him was important because people expected that Douglas would demolish Lincoln in debate. Douglas won that election, but Lincoln increased in national stature. So what is failure? What is success? Allen Guelzo's nuanced story merges magnificent rhetoric with shrewd political calculations to give his readers substance to wrestle with and poetry to delight in.

An Interview with Vernon Burton

(Editor's note: The questions for this interview are based upon my reading of Vernon Burton's newest book, The Age of Lincoln, *published by Hill and Wang, 2007.)*

Q: The title of your book is *The Age of Lincoln*. You cover seventy years in this category, from 1830 to 1900. Please explain why you chose that time span for your focus.

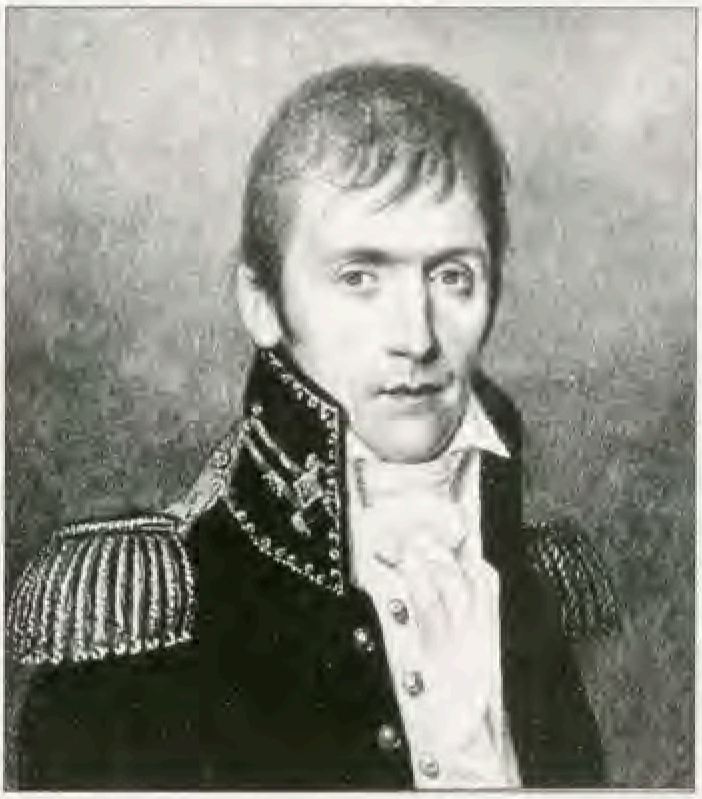
A: I have received a good bit of teasing about this. They say that, as an old quantifier, I have forgotten how to count, that Lincoln was assassinated in spring 1865 and yet my book carries the narrative into the twentieth century. Just as Schlesinger's *The Age of Jackson* was about much more than the life of Andrew Jackson (historians now call that period the Market Revolution), the *Age of Lincoln* is a history of the nineteenth century. The age of Lincoln continues because of the influence that Lincoln had on the making of modern American society.

It matters profoundly when a period of history is said to begin and end, a professional historian's truism particularly evident when discussing America's nineteenth century, Sectional Conflict, Civil War, and Reconstruction. We have separated out a story that has to be seen together as a whole, especially to understand its influence on today, and to learn some lessons from the past. Even in our teaching in colleges and universities, we divide the period. We have book-ended American history so that the Civil War closes out one era of our history and Reconstruction begins the next period, or second half of American History. *The Age of Lincoln* uses Abraham Lincoln as a fulcrum to put this period back together as a whole, the formation of his ideas before the Civil War, his leadership and the development of his thinking during the Civil War, and how those ideas played out in the years following the Civil War into our own time.

The age of Lincoln was a time of defining and expanding the meaning of liberty in the United States. Lincoln expanded freedom and the suffrage, and, after his death, that legacy was continued. It was not until the close of the century that the Supreme Court (*Plessey v. Ferguson* and others) and state constitutions in the former Confederate states legally restricted democracy and suffrage for African Americans. Moreover, during the age of Lincoln there was a faith that common people could understand the responsibilities of citizenship as well as the complexities of governing. I have centered religion in *The Age of Lincoln* because to understand democratic forces in the nineteenth century one has to understand the millennial fervor in the country. The prologue begins with Lincoln's benediction, the Gettysburg Address. The first chapter begins with the Baptist minister William Miller's prediction of the return of Christ on October 22, 1844. The final chapter begins with the failed 1896 election of the Populists, which was the last time that serious millennial impulses drove a political party calling for the heavenly perfection of American society. I call the Populists the last of Lincoln's people because their millennialism and world view centered on a belief in the efficacy of the common man's common sense. Altogether, the expansions of freedoms and the millennial impulses converged to define the Age of Lincoln.

Q: What effect, if any, did Jacksonian policies have on Abraham Lincoln's political philosophy?

A: In Illinois politics, Andrew Jackson's Democratic Party was the crowd pleaser, but Lincoln went his own way, first as a Whig and then as a Republican. Lincoln's belief in equal opportunity, meritocracy, and particularly an expansion of freedom was related to the revolutionary tradition of both Jefferson and Jackson. One of my favorite stories, which I could only touch on in *The Age of Lincoln*, is from Lincoln's April 6, 1859 letter responding to an invitation to speak at a Jefferson Day celebration in Boston. He compared the principles of his own Republican Party and his Democratic rivals with the original Jeffersonian Democratic Republicans as they battled the Federalist Party of John Adams. Lincoln proffered a parable of two Springfield drunks in long trench coats, each of whom in a drunken brawl "fought himself *out* of his own coat and *into* that of the other."



Andrew Jackson. Printed by J. F. Vallee *MuClure's Magazine* July 1897. (TLM # 2574)

One can see a direct influence of Jackson on Lincoln because Lincoln expanded Andrew Jackson's vision. Jackson's time saw a major shift from limited voting for property owners to universal white male suffrage, and that democratic impulse shouldered incredible implications for what democracy meant in the emerging republic. Lincoln's time saw another major increase in voting rights—this time for African American men. It was Lincoln's understanding of liberty that became the greatest legacy of the age. Lincoln enshrined the principle of personal liberty protected by a body of law by bringing personal rights protected by law into the Constitution. Basically, he incorporated his beloved Declaration of Independence into his revered Constitution of the United States.

In 1836, Lincoln explained to the *Sangamo Journal* that his belief in "sharing the privileges of the government" focused his political conduct. With social responsibilities went political rights, he declared, a sentiment derived as surely from the common sense of Jacksonian democracy as from the philosophy of classical Athens. "Consequently I go for admitting all whites to the right of suffrage, who pay taxes or bear arms…." This letter suggests his agreement with Jackson on the limits racial prejudice imposed. Lincoln's restricting the extension of voting rights to whites alone reflected the cultural prejudices of his day, to be sure, but it was also born of practical fact: since Illinois state law barred free African Americans from settling there, blacks could neither hold property nor wield the franchise. Lincoln believed that slavery made it difficult for African Americans to reach their potential; without education, it seemed unlikely that they could demonstrate equality with whites. Lincoln's Whiggery was thorough-going here, too, and just as the

Whig desired to rise to a station of independence and honor by his own labors, Lincoln would not—indeed, with any honesty, could not -withhold that opportunity from others. Whether races were socially equal was not the issue for Lincoln; what he came to insist upon was a new understanding of liberty; equality of opportunity in the race of life. His belief in equal opportunity would continue to evolve until he was ready to make a distinct break with Jacksonian ideals of white supremacy, to assert the still astonishing claim that race was politically inconsequential, that African Americans were citizens and entitled to the suffrage and equal protection under the rule of law. Whatever private prejudices he may have harbored, Lincoln loathed the artificial bonds society and government placed on an individual's ability to work hard, accumulate property, and rise upward. If it was government's task to promote the common good through banks, railroads, and tariffs, why limit that assistance along racial lines?

In that same 1836 letter, Lincoln added a parenthetical phrase: "(by no means excluding females.)" At this time, women attended and participated in Whig campaign rallies, to the horror of Democrats, and Lincoln here demonstrated himself as among the most radical exponents of a fundamentally conservative contemporary notion—that political rights derive from defending the country and from paying taxes, and that if women contributed, political citizenship ought to extend across gender lines on that basis. While many historians argue that Lincoln was simply joking or teasing about women, I believe that this was his emerging philosophy. The Homestead Act, which he signed in 1862, underscored his commitment across gender lines when it provided a quarter-section (160 acres) of farmland to any household head, male or female!

While going beyond Jackson in broadening democracy's boundaries, Lincoln was not one of those Whigs who sharply criticized Jackson's policies. He had a certain affection for Jackson, and his early writing had relatively few negative comments about Jackson. When Lincoln referenced developments that wavered from the revolutionary tradition, the target was nearly always Van Buren, not Jackson. Jacksonism resonated with the West and with the southern yeomanry, and it was that mingling of the southern yeoman culture and the old Northwest communities that helped to form Lincoln's early political identity in 1809-1836. With all the problems of William Herndon's biography of Lincoln, his idea that Lincoln was a product of the frontier is valuable, particularly when understood with my argument that Lincoln had a southern yeoman heritage and background. He was a product of this pioneer experience where working whites, in his case southern whites, expanded into the new west, built homes, and created new lives for themselves. Lincoln lived in a democratic political environment; no established elites dominated. He emerged from an environment in which new governments were just being created or were almost completely fresh. People had confidence that they themselves could determine the structure of their lives. He grew up in places with a strong Jacksonian political milieu.

I also argue that Lincoln shared with Jackson an important cultural trait, a southerner's sense of honor. It was during the secession crisis and the Civil War that we see Lincoln most notably calling on the example of Jackson, nationalism, and nullification. When others argued that he should let the South go in peace, Lincoln retorted, "You would have me have me break my oath and surrender the government without a blow. There is no Washington in that—no Jackson in that—no manhood nor honor in that."

The history profession's current critique of Jackson is a reaction to the hero worship that saw Jackson as democracy personified. Now we deplore his policies toward Native Americans and slavery, but that does not negate a major point. Arthur Schlesinger's *The Age of Jackson*, while dated, holds up fairly well in portraying Jackson and Van Buren as leaders in a broader reform movement. With all his personal baggage, Jackson had a democratic reform agenda that involved a real shifting of power from elites to the people, at least to white adult men. He was very much a laissez faire liberal of his era, believing that sovereign individuals had the ability to make choices about their lives. While the Jacksonians believed in strict construction of the constitution at the national level, at the state level they were just as eager for state governments to support internal improvements as anyone else. Even John C. Calhoun believed road building and railroad construction were proper government functions, insisting only that they be handled at the state level. The Democratic Party in the antebellum period became increasingly conservative over time, but Jackson genuinely believed that part of living a free life was the ability to make choices, and he favored economic expansion that allowed large numbers of people to participate in the market. Although he could be callous about the plight of the unemployed, Jackson tended to be sympathetic to the concerns of labor. Jacksonian political culture included commitment to the ideal of equal rights for all adult white males and special privileges to no elite group, an analysis of which is the strongest part of Schlesinger's book. And this commitment certainly was shared by Lincoln, whether from the Declaration, the frontier experience, or Jackson.

Q: Your book contains a marvelous graphic: *The Two Railroads to Eternity*. Please explain African American religious movements during the time under discussion.

A: It was a tough choice between that graphic and a second one which showed a railroad station as a cathedral with all the millennial imagery. (This second image is on the website www.AgeofLincoln.com.)

The train was a powerful symbol for nineteenth century America and the age of industrialization. Trains standardized time across four zones in America. Trains changed the nature of rural life as farmers shipped their crops to market from towns that grew up around the railroads. Trains facilitated great migrations of southern blacks and whites, particularly from the rural and small towns to southern cities and to the North. The railroad depot offered a spot downtown for friends to gather, to gossip, to listen to music, to gamble. But the train also had a spiritual meaning for southern African Americans: one of liberation from the oppression of the South and finally the ultimate liberation of the spirit.

During the nineteenth century, religion for blacks, as well as for whites, was interwoven into the culture and thinking of the time. The antebellum period was defined by millennialism: the radical belief that Americans, God's chosen people, could expedite the reign of Christ on Earth by living piously and remaking society according to His will. Because doing the Will of God lent little room for compromise, the millennialism spirit in both North and South led to war. While the Civil War ultimately caused a theological crisis for both white northerners and southerners, it did not do so for African Americans. Instead, the Civil War and the early developments of Reconstruction were the fulfilling of God's plan to free His people from slavery in the United States and to punish the Pharaohs of the South. Lincoln shared some of these ideas. When Lincoln read the Bible, he tried to understand God and people in a corporate sense, much as in the Jewish tradition, rather than the individual salvation of the dominant Protestant evangelicals which had grown out of the second Great Awakening. This corporate understanding of God using his people to work out His will in History is also the African American theological perspective. From this perspective, the Civil War was proof of God's providence for his children. In April 1867, African American minister Simeon Beard interpreted the meaning of the war for fellow former slaves; "God intended, through this war, that, like the Red Sea, while the nation rendered itself asunder, you should pass through free. This was God's work." AME minister Andrew Brown drew upon a millennial imagery of Revelations: "God's horse was tied to the iron stake. The day the first fire was made at Sumter, I saw the Gospel Horse begin to paw. He continued to paw until he finally broke loose and came tearing through Georgia. The colored man mounted him and intends to ride him."

I have written extensively on black religion in other places, and especially my book, *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina*. Religion and the Christian Church served both a compensatory other-worldly function, but also pointed to more revolutionary vistas, toward a new radical egalitarian society. A theme in music and sermons throughout slavery and the nineteenth century is the apocalypse, the world coming to an end with Christ's triumphant return! Spirituals arising from the book of Revelations abound: "Aint no grave can hold my body down," "Lead Me to the Rock," "On that Great Gettin' up Morning." Many great African American novelists also lean heavily on the book of Revelations and apocalyptical themes: Johnny Williams, *The Man Who Cried I Am*, Ralph Ellison, *The Invisible Man*, Alice Walker, *The Color Purple*, and of course James Baldwin in his collection of essays, *The Fire Next Time*. The book of Revelations is an interpretation by the apostle John who was a prisoner on the island of Patmos in the time of Nero. John's revelations are coded messages to the faithful on the outside and that message is basically—Keep the Faith— because it is all going to turn out well. The book of Revelations abounds in elaborate and provocative imagery, but it is a revolutionary message because it is a chance for an apolitical people to pass judgment on a society from beyond their own frame of reference and mindset. It is an expression of dissatisfaction with the social order. And like the train which reflects this millennium theme, it offers a journey toward hope and an eternal reward for a life well lived.

Q: Did the Transcendentalist Movement affect Lincoln? If yes, how? If no, why not?

A: William Herndon said of Lincoln, "Mr. Lincoln read *less* and thought *more* than any man in his sphere in America." Herndon is correct that Lincoln thought more, but he, in fact, also read a great deal; indeed, he was a voracious reader. Lincoln's concentration on legal texts after 1836 doubtless influenced his later law partner's observation. But Lincoln always read newspapers and books, and even while in the White House with the heavy duties of a besieged war president, he borrowed 125 reading materials from the Library of Congress. Because he had a wide range of interest in terms of his readings, it is hard to believe that Lincoln did not read the Transcendentalists. Transcendentalism was one of the two dissenting intellectual wings to the dominant "American ideology" in the antebellum United States. It might have interested Lincoln that both the Transcendentalists and the southern proslavery theorists like George Fitzhugh, John C. Calhoun, and James Henry Hammond critiqued bourgeois democracy and capitalism. The Transcendentalists in the North wrote about spiritual direct communication with the essence of nature, and like Lincoln, were committed to "freedom." The Transcendentalists were very interested in the individual and freedom, and they were anti-slavery, as was Lincoln, but many of the Transcendentalists were abolitionists, and Lincoln was not.

I greatly admire the work of Garry Wills who in *Lincoln at Gettysburg* argues that Lincoln had to be influenced by the Transcendentalists who were so important in shaping the intellectual culture. Wills cites Unitarian minister Theodore Parker, essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, and historian George Bancroft, all of whose works were known to Lincoln. Transcendentalism is especially important, according to Wills, in how Lincoln revered the Declaration and interpreted the practical Constitution of the United States as an attempt to move toward the ideals of the Declaration. Parker suggested the theological analogy, according to Wills, "as Jesus is to the Bible…so is the Declaration to the Constitution." Lincoln would certainly have agreed with this. When his law partner, William Herndon, presented Lincoln a set of Theodore Parker's books, Herndon hoped that Lincoln would be influenced by the Transcendentalists. Herndon attempted to place Lincoln in the transcendental/age of reason camp, as Herndon himself was, but Lincoln did not go that far.

In my own research, however, I have not found a direct link between the Transcendentalists and Lincoln. Lincoln considered what he read and learned, but he had an independent mind and put everything together in a practical, coherent, "rule of law" format, not the ethereal format of the Transcendentalist. The lack of practicality and the removal from the political arena for the Transcendentalists did not fit well with Lincoln. As you know, Thoreau is a major character in *The Age of Lincoln*, but while Thoreau adored John Brown, Lincoln disavowed Brown's methods and emphasized that Brown was no Republican.

I believe that this question could be explored much more and deserves further research. It is hard to say how much Transcendentalists influenced Lincoln, but I am inclined to think less so than his southern yeoman heritage, his frontier experiences, and his legal training.

Q: Please explain the "rise and fall" of the Whig Party. Was the fall inevitable?

A: Your question is especially pertinent in a study of the coming of the Civil War because until the collapse of the Whig Party and the concomitant rise of a sectional Republican Party, the conflict between North and South was either compromised or effectively submerged. Religious denominations had already divided in the 1840s over the slavery issue, and the last institutions holding the Union together were the political parties.

Whigs were always a disparate group, unified more on their disapproval of Andrew Jackson's political, what they called "tyrannical," power than on a coherent platform of their own. The Whigs had their roots in the Jeffersonian Republican tradition that saw a role for the government in an expanding national economy. It is true that in New England and in New York many former Federalists migrated into the Whig party, but it is a mistake to think of Whigs as essentially the defunct Federalist Party reborn. Throughout the Monroe administration, Jeffersonian Republicans quarreled among themselves over the role of government in an expanding market economy. For the most part, Whigs preferred to keep legislative initiative in Congress rather than with the president, but at the same time they supported a national economic policy, the "American System" of Henry Clay. Sometimes those issues seemed incongruent. Democrats, on the other hand, remained united by white supremacy and fears of central governmental power, whether it be congressional or presidential. Democrats also had an extraordinarily talented leader in Congress, the Illinois wizard Stephen A. Douglas, Lincoln's principal political foe.

The Whig Party had its successes, and Whigs were as competitive in the South as elsewhere in the nation. Between 1836 and 1848, in the South as a whole, the Whig Party had a 2.4% cumulative majority; in other words it did 2.4% better in presidential elections in the South than did the Democratic Party. Nationwide, Whigs won the presidency with military heroes General William Henry Harrison in 1840 and General Zachary Taylor in 1848. Nevertheless, these were not clear-cut victories. Harrison was elected more as a repudiation of Van Buren, while Taylor ran as a non-partisan popular general. In 1852, General Winfield Scott lost to Democrat Franklin Pierce, and by 1856, the Whig candidate Millard Fillmore ran behind the new Republican Party's John C. Frémont for president, Buchanan defeating both easily. The year 1856 portended 1860, when James Buchanan carried every slave state but Maryland; Frémont won every free state except New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, and California. Traditionally, historians have explained that the Whig Party collapsed under the weight of its aristocratic symbolism in an increasingly democratic age. Even today many historians stress that Whigs were out of step with the common man, forgetting that both Davy Crockett and Abraham Lincoln, both of humble origins, were Whig Congressmen. My research suggests a much deeper problem for the Whigs than symbolism. Ultimately, Whigs could not reconcile the issue of slavery as it tore apart their party. In the aftermath of the Mexican War, which Whigs opposed for varying reasons, territorial questions became the essential political questions. Whigs faced the reality that the two parts of the party went in different directions: in the North, toward eventual abolition; in the South, trying to hold the Union together against Democratic moves toward disunion to protect slavery. These two parts of the equation simply could not add up.

While the Kansas-Nebraska bill of Stephen Douglas precipitated the break-up, the roots of the difficulties began in the early 1840s when the Liberty Party and anti-slavery political groups formed single-issue coalitions. Whigs in the North were moving to an anti-slavery nexus: a union of interest that bound together anti-slavery Whigs, Democrats, and Free Soilers. Lincoln, with his antislavery views, felt comfortable with the issues and policies of the Whig party. When a growing number of northern Whigs, such as William Seward, Thaddeus Stevens, Benjamin Wade, and Joshua Giddings, became more radical on slavery questions, the more moderate faction, which wanted to keep the Union together and which blamed abolitionism for causing sectional conflict, became a distinct minority in the Whig Party. More work needs to be done on southern Whigs, and we have almost no studies of southern Know Nothings, but it looks as though southern Whigs, concerned about separate southern identity, gradually oriented into the Democratic Party. By 1840, that left only southern Whigs who were remarkably devoted to the Union. In the upper regions of the South were Whigs willing to accept, at least in principle, Henry Clay's position that slavery might come to a gradual end? Southern Whigs were hostile to secession and willing to go a lot further than Southern Democrats to preserve the national Union, even as late as 1861. Abraham Lincoln, influenced by these southern Whigs, believed the South would not leave the Union.

Although in retrospect we see that the Whig's eventual falling apart has the air of inevitability about it, it could have been otherwise. A different outcome was entirely possible had some of the Republican Party leaders in the east controlled events. Horace Greeley and William Seward, knowing little about Illinois and even less about Abraham Lincoln, seriously considered persuading Stephen Douglas, alienated from the Democratic Party because of President Buchanan's policies in Kansas, to stand as the Republican candidate for the U. S. Senate from Illinois. As a contingency point in American history, one can only imagine the results if Illinois had followed their suggestions. Then we would be asking about the inevitable demise of the Republican Party, or if Douglas were on the Republican ticket in 1860 whether there would have been a Civil War. There is seldom inevitability; intervening events play roles in the way that history unfolds.

Q: From the standpoint of a historian, please comment on Reconstruction and its legacy.

A: While historians have done a respectable job in dismantling the antebellum plantation myth, the myth of the "happy slave," Reconstruction in the popular imagination still relies on *Gone with the Wind* and "Birth of a Nation," in other words, an inevitable failure. This common view is simply wrong.

One problem alluded to in questioning one on the time span encompassed by *The Age of Lincoln* is how we have book-ended American history with the Civil War. As important as Reconstruction is, classes often do not even get to Reconstruction in the first half of the history survey, and teachers skip over it altogether in the second half of the survey because they assume it was covered in the first half. Undergraduates are left with no historical understanding of Reconstruction.

At stake during the Civil War was the existence and character of the United States, and the meaning of America and what we have become is found in Reconstruction. The successes of Reconstruction, the establishment of an interracial democracy in the South, the emergence of racial idealism in the North, Reconstruction's ramifications in the West, and the conflict across America about the meaning of freedom in the development of capitalism are stories scholars know but the general public is not hearing. I have tried to reframe Reconstruction as an essential piece of the Civil War. By ending most of our studies of the Civil War with Appomattox, we historians have obscured important consequences that can only be understood as part of "the long Civil War." For one thing, the focus on the "Great Salutation," of the noble Robert E. Lee being saluted by Union troops at the surrender, suggests a greater, more patriotic nation emerging from a heroic (on both sides) holocaust. This happy vision has obscured the hatred wrought by war, hatred on both sides. Lee was saluted, it's true, but he was also cursed and jeered; some demanded that Lee be hanged, as well as Jefferson Davis. Just as Lee contravened Davis's order to keep on fighting, some Confederate troops ignored Lee's orders and refused to surrender. These die-hard Confederates kept fighting in the South, now in a terrorist campaign against their African American neighbors, and some white Republican allies.

Civil War scholarship now includes contingency, and after decades of historical argument that northern victory was inevitable, most now understand that at several turning points it could have gone either way. Yet, hardly anyone sees the possibilities of Reconstruction. My treatment of Reconstruction includes contingency. I highlight its successes as an interracial democracy on the local level, where new grass-roots alliances flourished. I ask why, if Reconstruction was such a failure, did southern white terrorist groups, many led by former Confederate leaders with Confederates in their ranks, have to use fraud and violence to overthrow an interracial legal government. In South Carolina, men who were too young to fight in the Civil War but who fought in these terrorist paramilitary groups even applied for the state's Confederate War pension! Historians have labeled the overthrow of Reconstruction "Redemption," and with that term they inadvertently celebrate the fraud, violence, and terrorism at the heart of the defeat of Reconstruction. I have called on historians to forego the name "Redemption," a beautiful term of religious faith that would be a better label for the promising years from the mid 1860s through the mid-1870s than so grossly to misconstrue the decades that followed. While most whites in the South were not part of these counterrevolutionary terrorist organizations like the Ku Klux Klan or the later paramilitary groups, the tragedy was that most good people just did nothing. They did not stand up for a bedrock of Lincoln's philosophy, the rule of law. But that should not obscure just how many white southerners actually supported interracial democracy and the Republicans during Reconstruction. A number of former Confederate heroes and prominent white southerners championed black rights: Longstreet, Beauregard, Mosby (The Gray Ghost), and Governor Henry Wise of Virginia, who had hung John Brown and was a Confederate officer. Wise's son, also a Confederate officer, became one of the great Civil Rights attorneys of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Finally, I think it is significant to see Lincoln not only as the southerner he was, but also the role of many southerners, white and black, who supported the Union and Reconstruction.

The ideals of Reconstruction inspired the North as well, especially in the Midwest which had been extraordinarily racist before the Civil War. A call on "Lincoln's legacy" was used to persuade northern states to pass suffrage laws for African Americans, and Iowa, that "Bright and Radical Star," was the first to do so. While idealism faded, it did not totally die out. When the Supreme Court in 1883 struck down the Civil Rights Act of 1875, and when the Court ruled in *Hurtado v. California* (1884) that the Federal government could not guarantee enforcement of the Bill of Rights, states in the North passed their own state civil rights statutes: Iowa and Ohio 1884; Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Nebraska in 1885, Pennsylvania in 1889.

As readers of *The Age of Lincoln* can tell, my interpretation of the timing of the end of Reconstruction differs from other historians. I do not conclude the story of Reconstruction in 1877 with the withdrawal of the few U.S. troops guarding legislative assemblies in South Carolina and Louisiana. I conclude it at the turn of the century when former Confederates rewrote state constitutions to disfranchise African American men and with *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896, touting "separate but equal" while severely limiting African-African freedom.

Early in 1865, Lincoln proclaimed that the Emancipation Proclamation was "the central act of my administration and the great event of the nineteenth century." Rather than focusing on emancipation as Lincoln's greatest legacy, however, I place emancipation as one point on a long continuum of freedoms. Thus Lincoln's crowning achievement was inscribing personal liberty into the nation's Constitution with the Thirteenth Amendment, and, after his death, the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments.

Reconstruction and its legacy is one of the most misunderstood periods in American history, and still needs thoughtful historical research. Basically, the centrality of Lincoln can only be understood if one evaluates Reconstruction and its aftermath within the Civil War period.

Q: What is your current Lincoln-related project?

A: My next project is on the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I presented the Stice Lectures at the University of Washington and expect to publish the revised lectures. This act, and the Civil Rights Movement of which it is a major part, are direct outcomes of Lincoln's legacy. Reconstruction showed the necessity of having a meaningful vote in a democracy. Even as the darkness of Jim Crow began to settle over the land, Lincoln's people—a handful of believing blacks, and a smaller number still of trusting whites—put their faith in the law and continued to work on redrawing freedom's boundaries. "Determine that the thing can and shall be done," wrote Lincoln, "and then we shall find the way."

On Lincoln specifically, I am looking at the court case where Lincoln defended Duff Armstrong in 1858. Although there is already a book on the trial, I take a very different approach. Known more generally as the "Almanac Trial," this case provides a window into politics at the time, especially how legal and political cultures intermingle. I will use this case as a "Hinge of Character" for Lincoln, showing how his attitude toward law and fairness developed.

Rhetoric in Lincoln's Time

By David Zarefsky
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Titles of recent books and articles are revealing. Ronald C. White referred to him as "the eloquent President." For James McPherson, he "won the Civil War with metaphors." Douglas L. Wilson identified the products of his pen as "Lincoln's sword."[1] These and other Lincoln scholars recognize our sixteenth President's ability to articulate goals and to inspire others to strive to reach them. He was able to give voice to previously inchoate ideas. In a phrase, Abraham Lincoln displayed what Richard Neustadt a century later would identify as the President's chief power: the power to persuade.[2]

The ability to persuade is the essence of an art that has been known for more than two thousand years as rhetoric. Americans today are ambivalent about rhetoric. They occasionally expect it of their leaders, especially in times of crisis. In normal times, however, we are suspicious if not disdainful of rhetorical prowess. We set words in opposition to deeds, preferring the latter. We preface the word "rhetoric" with adjectives such as "empty" or "mere." We share the revulsion expressed by Richard Nixon for "bombastic rhetoric that postures rather than persuading."[3] Rather than viewing rhetoric as an essential skill for democratic deliberation and governance, we often see it instead as a set of techniques for pandering to an audience, seducing it to accept the false rather than the true.

It was not always this way. To be sure, even Plato attacked the excesses of the Sophists, itinerant teachers whose instruction enabled citizens to argue their own cases in court. But the dominant voice in the classical period was Aristotle's. He defined rhetoric as "the faculty of discovering in the particular case what are the available means of persuasion."[4] Exercising this faculty required knowing how to find relevant proofs and to select the strongest; it required awareness of the emotions of an audience and how these might be appealed to; and it required understanding how audiences form judgments about a speaker's character that affect that speaker's ability to persuade.

The Aristotelian conception of rhetoric was elaborated and codified during the first-century Roman period. To Aristotle's three genres of rhetoric—deliberative, forensic (judicial), and epideictic (ceremonial), the Romans added a focus on the discrete parts of an oration (from its exordium or introduction to its peroration or conclusion), the levels of style (plain, middle, and grand), and the possible focal points that a controversy might have. Rhetoric was one of the original seven liberal arts. It was regularly studied in schools and was seen as an essential skill for the competent citizen. Moreover, rhetorical theory was linked to the dominant social interest of the age. During the Greek period (fourth-century BCE) rhetoric was the theory of civic discourse, in the Roman era it was the theory of pedagogy, in the medieval world it was a theory of preaching, and during the early modern age it was the analogue of scientific empiricism.

Alongside rhetorical theory, specific rhetorical texts were worthy of study. Cicero was not just a theorist; he was one of the most powerful orators of the Roman era. Fragments remain of other classical orations, and far more complete documentation is available of speeches from more recent eras. Around 1900, several multi-volume anthologies of great speeches were published, and in 1999 a panel of scholars identified the top 100 American speeches of the twentieth century.

Since rhetoric is an art and not a science, successful speeches do not follow a fixed pattern or template. Rather, the orator makes strategic and artistic choices in an attempt to engage the audience and to meet the needs of a particular situation. Students examine these texts in order better to appreciate unique speakers and situations, to expand their awareness of the repertoire of available choices, to assess what makes choices better or worse in particular situations, and to improve their own skills as persuasive speakers.

Although the Ciceronian and then the Aristotelian traditions were recovered during the early Renaissance and although the study of rhetoric flourished during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the common understanding of rhetoric had undergone a profound transformation that would affect how it was studied and practiced during Lincoln's time. The scope of rhetoric had been narrowed by comparison to its classical past. In ancient Greece and Rome, it had been understood as an art for making collective decisions in the face of uncertainty. It encouraged discovering possible appeals and selecting from among them, arranging them in the most effective manner, presenting them in an appropriate style, remembering them and facilitating their recollection by others, and delivering them effectively. But under the influence of Peter Ramus in the sixteenth century, the first two of these divisions—invention and arrangement—had been removed from the province of rhetoric and assigned to philosophy. This left rhetoric seemingly concerned with matters of presentation alone. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, theorists would begin to push back against this bifurcation of the subject, but the popular view of rhetoric as ornamentation would survive in Lincoln's time and possibly even today.

The most influential *theorist* of rhetoric during the early nineteenth century was the Scotsman Hugh Blair. The Philadelphia edition of his *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* went through 37 printings between 1784 and 1853. These lectures were published in 1783 on the eve of Blair's retirement from the University of Edinburgh, where he had taught since 1759. There were 47 lectures in all, touching on taste, style in language, and eloquence in presentation; the last dozen of the lectures were devoted to types of writing: historical, philosophical, dramatic, and poetic.

Blair believed that success as a speaker, writer, or critic required familiarity with the insights of the classical age, including those of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian. He repeatedly inserted quotations from Quintilian in his lectures and referred to classical conceptions of the modes of proof, the characteristic of well-organized discourse, and the components of style.[5] He also shared the classical belief that persuasion was grounded in understanding.

For the most part, though, Blair was concerned with rhetoric in its more aesthetic sense—with taste and style. At its very best, rhetoric was the means to inspire and to redeem audiences from their degenerate state. Blair's lectures contain practical advice for religious speakers. They are not limited to any particular line of thought, and they sometimes subordinate decorum and propriety to the emerging romanticism that would dominate much of the nineteenth century.

Blair's work illustrates one response to the intellectual ferment of the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, marked by sensitivity to language, respect for the classics, belief in rationalism, and appreciation for persuasion. Perhaps a more practical response to this ferment, and certainly a more popular one, was the elocutionary movement. It was concerned straightforwardly with delivery. Although it found support in classical texts, it was prompted more by contemporary speakers' carelessness regarding articulation and pronunciation. Courses devoted to the delivery of speeches could be found in American universities beginning in the early 1800s. In 1806, John Quincy Adams was appointed to the Boylston Chair in Rhetoric at Harvard. In addition to completing formal course work, students often were required to demonstrate their competence through speaking exercises. In the infant American republic, special emphasis was placed on a leader's ability to gain voters' confidence and to sway their beliefs.

In 1827, Dr. James Rush published *Philosophy of the Human Voice*, which discussed scientific aspects of vocal production.[6] This gave rise to categorization of vocal effects and the physiological steps involved in their production. The next step was to match a specific vocal characteristic with a desired audience response and to train students to produce that characteristic.

What Rush and his sympathizers accomplished with voice training, François Delsarte and his disciples matched with regard to gesture and movement. Unlike Rush, however, Delsarte's "science" was speculative, grounded in the conviction that all things, reflecting the Holy Trinity, have a three-part character. For example, movement in a speech was of three types: about a center, away from a center, and toward a center. The first expresses life; the second, mind; the third, soul. As with the work on voice, various movements could be linked to the reactions sought from the audience, and then tied to specific words in a text to be performed aloud. Students were trained to read aloud, producing the desired vocal behavior or movement at just the right place, and thereby stimulating the audience's emotional response.

The elocutionary movement had a substantial influence on American education. Perhaps the most popular college English textbooks at the beginning of the nineteenth century were John Walker's *Elements of Elocution*, Thomas Sheridan's *Course of Lectures on Elocution*, and Gilbert Austin's *Chironomia*. The McGuffey readers, which dominated elementary education, gave credit to Walker for the principles of elocution that they recommended for teachers and students alike. Rush's system for vocal analysis and performance prompted some American teachers to devise their own textbooks. The Delsarte system had a similar effect on the study of gesture and movement, especially since he saw movement as the expression of the soul, emanating from the Holy Spirit.

Two other rhetorical works popular in the United States during Lincoln's time were concerned more with writing than with elocution: Thomas Dilworth's *A New Guide to the English Tongue* and Samuel Kirkham's *English Grammar in Familiar Literature*. Dilworth's book, first published in 1740, borrowed heavily from Thomas Dycke's 1707 *A Guide to the English Tongue*. It was regarded as a book on spelling, but that term was used broadly to refer to the ability to read—to "spell out" a word. It therefore emphasized the sounds of words, and it also included some of the rudiments of grammar. First printed outside London by Benjamin Franklin in 1747, Dilworth's *Guide* quickly became the most widely used book on spelling both in England and in the American Colonies, and it influenced Noah Webster's view about the American dictionary.

Kirkham's *Grammar*, published in 1834, enjoyed widespread circulation on the frontier, where it often was one of the first books a household would acquire. It is a compendium of basic rules of English grammar. It disdains the grand style of prose composition and emphasizes precise phrasing and adherence to grammatical rules. Lincoln is reported to have read Kirkham at the suggestion of Mentor Graham, his tutor in New Salem. It is reported that when he finished with the book, Lincoln passed it along to Ann Rutledge.

In addition to the belletristic and elocutionary movements and the study of writing, a fourth emphasis of rhetorical study in Lincoln's time was the oral reading and emulation of models of oratory. Examples of great orations could be studied with profit, both for appreciation of the rhetorical genius of their writers and for imitation in speeches that students themselves would write. The underlying premise of this approach was that rhetoric had no universally applicable principles and rules that could be abstracted from particular cases. The way to learn, therefore, was to study recognized exemplars in order to model their best practices in one's own composition. Imitation as a means of rhetorical study went back to the classical era, but it enjoyed new life in the early-nineteenth-century United States.

One of the books that proved most useful was *The Columbian Orator*, written by Caleb Brigham and first published in 1807. It is a compilation of addresses ranging from ancient Rome to the founding of the United States, together with advice that young boys could use to practice oratory. The book's orations cohere around themes of freedom, patriotism, and republican virtues. The book was widely used in classrooms during the 1800-1825 period. Along with similar readers and magazine articles, it helped even young children to recognize the importance of giving speeches effectively

It is unlikely, however, that any of these currents in the study and teaching of rhetoric had any direct influence on Lincoln. In the absence of formal education, reading would be the primary means by which he would be exposed to ideas. Recently, Robert Bray has published an evaluative inventory of what Lincoln read. Bray regards it as "very unlikely" that Lincoln read *The Columbian Orator*; Dennis Hanks's statement to the contrary is a possible confusion with a work having a different title.[7] On the other hand, it is "very likely" that Lincoln read Dilworth, since he acknowledged doing so himself.[8] Yet he did so as a youth in Indiana; what he remembered and how it influenced his later writing are unknown. Similarly, it is "very likely" that Lincoln read Kirkham while he was in New Salem,[9] but there is no way to know whether or how it influenced his mature style years later. As for more theoretical works, it is "very unlikely" that Lincoln read Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric*; testimony to the contrary comes from an unreliable informant and is not corroborated.[10] The only other textbooks that Bray even lists among the books that Lincoln might have read were James N. McElligott's *The American Debater* and Lindley Murray's *The English Reader*. Murray's book was published in 1799 and Bray finds it "very likely" that Lincoln studied this work while a boy in Indiana.[11] As with Dilworth, it is unclear how this early reading affected Lincoln's own later composition, although Herndon reports that Lincoln told him that Murray's book "was the best ever put into the hands of an American youth."[12] It is "somewhat likely" that Lincoln read McElligott and may have used it in preparation for his 1858 debates with Douglas.[13] Taken together, the evidence that Lincoln was influenced by these popular works on rhetoric is thin.

Where, then, *did* Lincoln find his views on rhetoric? For one thing, he studied models. Oratorical accomplishment was especially prized in the early republic,[14] and Lincoln acquainted himself with some of the exemplars of the time. He "all but incontestably" read collected speeches of Henry Clay and Daniel Webster, as well as Jonathan Elliott's collection of debates on the U.S. Constitution.[15] He "very likely" also read collected speeches of William Henry Seward, Joshua Giddings, and Theodore Parker, and it is "somewhat likely" that he read those of Patrick Henry.[16] Lincoln frequently referred to Clay and Webster, and he read some of these model speeches in the course of preparing his own.

Second, Lincoln frequently read aloud, believing that the ear could grasp meaning at least as well as, if not better than, the eye. Herndon has recounted how Lincoln sometimes would disrupt work in his law office to read something aloud, and Douglas Wilson has noted that this practice sensitized him to the rhythm and cadence of words. Far more than most authors, Lincoln "wrote for the ear." His own reading practices and his reliance on model speeches substituted for formal study or careful reading of the textbooks.

Lincoln probably thought about rhetoric. He seemed to share his own theory during a speech he gave fairly early in his career, to the Washington Temperance Society of Springfield in 1842.[17] The speech ostensibly is about the most effective strategies to use in persuading people to the temperance cause, but it can be understood as Lincoln's theory about the effectiveness of persuasion in general. Lincoln's implicit theory does not reflect the aesthetic emphasis of Blair and the elocutionists, but reaches back to the classical understanding of rhetoric as the discovery of available means of persuasion. His concern was not with artistry in itself but with making his message acceptable to his audience.

During the early 1840s, Washington Temperance Societies were established in many areas of the country. Named for George Washington as part of the widespread veneration of the first president, they differed in persuasive methods from the earlier stages of the temperance movement. Their leaders were reformed drunkards rather than professional reformers. Their own experience gave the Washington temperance speakers added credibility. Not only did they know whereof they spoke, but their very presence suggested to their listeners that gaining control over alcoholism was possible: "if I can do it, so can you" was their message.

Lincoln was invited to address the Springfield society on Washington's birthday in 1842. Rather than offering a eulogy to this great man, he suggested in his conclusion that it was not possible to enlarge upon Washington's self-evident virtues. Instead, therefore, he used the occasion to praise the Washington movement and to predict that it would enjoy greater success than had other temperance reformers. Earlier efforts, he believed, had been entrusted to the wrong advocates—"preachers, lawyers, and hired agents"—who were distant from the people they sought to persuade. Because they did not acknowledge human nature, the solutions they championed were not likely to gain supporters. Moreover, the appeals they made were both impolitic (because they denounced the failures of their audiences) and unjust (because they failed to recognize that, until recently, public opinion had condoned heavy drinking). Elaborating on the first of these points, Lincoln noted that few people react positively to being called to account for their moral failings; they are far more likely to become defensive or to criticize the speaker. In contrast, the Washington Temperance Society advocates recognized that "a drop of honey catches more flies than a gallon of gall."

The appeal of the professional reformers, Lincoln believed, was unjust as well as impolitic. Until very recently, public opinion had supported the very thing that they were denouncing as evil. Perhaps for this reason, the Washingtonians made no moral judgments about their listeners. Rather than holding that drunkards were incorrigible, they optimistically believed that people could change if given the encouragement and support to do so.

On the surface, this is clearly a speech about alcohol. Based on Lincoln's characterization of moral reformers, one additionally might see it as a satire about them. But it can also be understood as presenting Lincoln's view not just about persuasion in the temperance cause but about the nature of effective rhetoric in general. The comparison between "a drop of honey" and "a gallon of gall" suggests the importance of identifying with audience members rather than confronting or challenging them. Lincoln's approach made a virtue of moderation and stands in stark contrast to the moral condemnation of slaveowners by abolitionists such as Wendell Phillips or William Lloyd Garrison. For Lincoln, slaveowners were seen not as villains but as victims, captives of their situation. If we were in their shoes, he would tell listeners, we might well think and feel as they do, just as they would see matters differently if they could change places with us.

Lincoln also praised the Washingtonians because they were able to adapt their appeals to their audience, yet could do so without abandoning their principles. They knew the lived reality of their listeners, who after all were just like themselves. "Those whom *they* desire to convince and persuade," he said, "are their old friends and companions. They know that they are not *demons*, nor even the worst of men. *They* know that generally, they are kind, generous, and charitable, even beyond the example of their more staid and sober neighbors." This being so, they can address their neighbors in a tone of love and benevolence, acknowledging and taking into account their particular circumstances. This principle of audience adaptation became a touchstone of Lincoln's own rhetoric. A skilled raconteur, he told stories to which his listeners could relate, used vernacular forms of address that they would recognize easily, employed analogies that were drawn from their own experience, and spoke usually with simple and straightforward arguments and style.

In the temperance speech, Lincoln also revealed his preferences for reason over passion as the basis for appealing to others. He likened the "preachers, lawyers, and hired agents" to demagogues who sought to evoke passions of outrage and fury. Not only was their approach less in keeping with human nature, but it was less likely to work. And when it did succeed, as in the case of the American Revolution, it nevertheless left misery and ruin in its wake: "It breathed forth famine, swam in blood and rode on fire; and long, long after, the orphan's cry, and the widow's wail, continued to break the sad silence that ensued."[18] Passions once unleashed were not easily contained, and destruction followed in the wake of even a righteous cause. But the temperance movement, under the influence of the Washingtonians, could anticipate a happier success: "By *it* no orphans starving, no widows weeping. By *it* none wounded in feeling, none injured in interest." Even the dram seller, he went on to say, would escape ruin by moving into another occupation "so gradually, as never to have felt the shock of change."

The preference for reason over passion, and for gradualism over radical change, would inform Lincoln's own rhetoric. His case against the Mexican war, delivered in the House of Representatives, was a hard-hitting but closely reasoned argument against the veracity of President James K. Polk.[19] His eulogies of Zachary Taylor and Henry Clay[20] went beyond blind admiration to derive lessons for the living from the facts of their lives. Even his improbable claim that there was a conspiracy to nationalize slavery was based on a sequence of causal arguments, none of which is unreasonable in itself. And his attempt in 1858 to tie Stephen A. Douglas to support a hypothetical second *Dred Scott* decision was made through the device of a syllogism in the fifth debate at Galesburg.[21]

Finally, in the temperance speech, Lincoln makes clear his preference for practical over abstract questions. Audiences who responded defensively to the professional reformers were only reflecting human nature, "which is God's decree, and never can be reversed."[22] It was idle, therefore, to preach that alcohol was evil as though that abstract moral judgment settled the matter. Lincoln instead praised the Washingtonians for eschewing abstraction and addressing the practical ways in which renouncing alcohol could improve people's lives. He took a similar approach in his own discourse. His response to the South's attempt to secede was not to invoke abstract theories of sovereignty but to argue that secession was physically impossible and that the principle used to justify it would lead to anarchy. When considering proposals for reconstruction, he deliberately refused to address the question of whether or not the Southern states had left the Union. The point was that the Confederate States were "out of their proper practical relation"[23] to the Union and the urgent question was how to get them back in.

These touchstones from the temperance speech illustrate an implicit theory of rhetoric, derived not from the textbooks and pedagogy common at the time but from Lincoln's own instinct and experience. Not just his theory, but his own corpus of public discourse can be compared with the norms and customs of his time.

Richard Weaver has described antebellum American rhetoric as "spacious."[24] It is marked by elaboration, embellishment, adornment. It features uncontested terms of great generality, suggesting homogeneity of belief. It sought not to convey new knowledge or to alter attitudes but to remind people of what they already believed and thought. A speech was long on description and narration, depicting in words the events or people celebrated; it was long on abstract noun phrases to characterize situations—and it was often long, period. One of the most famous examples of conventional antebellum oratory was the "real" Gettysburg address, the one delivered by Edward Everett. Ridiculed today because it lasted two hours and yet was eminently forgettable, in fact it is an outstanding rhetorical depiction of the battle of Gettysburg.[25] Proceeding chronologically, Everett retells the story of each day of the battle with such vividness and clarity that the listener can imagine that he or she was there. The end result is appreciation of the tide-turning and almost miraculous nature of the moment. Daniel Webster's dedication addresses for the Bunker Hill monument, other ceremonial addresses, and even Congressional debates also illustrate the quality of "spaciousness."

But "spaciousness" hardly characterized Lincoln's greatest rhetoric, and his Gettysburg Address is the most obvious example. As numerous writers have observed, where Everett was expansive, Lincoln was terse, speaking for little over two minutes and using fewer than three hundred words. He mentioned almost no details of the battle, speaking instead of what it meant and why it justified redoubled efforts to win the war. Many antebellum orators recreated events; Lincoln transcended them. He did so in a rhetoric that was simple and direct, anticipating a rhetorical culture in which public speaking would displace formal oratory as the dominant mode of discourse.

Both Douglas L. Wilson and Ronald C. White, Jr. explicate key features of Lincoln's presidential discourse by examining recurrent aspects of the sixteenth President's public speeches. Wilson identified five key markers of Lincoln's rhetoric: concern for clarity in writing as an aid to understanding of the text; plainness of language; the use of pointedly-worded rhetorical questions as a way to make declarative statements; directness in replies to his opponents as though he were engaged in a dialogue with them; and the rhetorical use of the negative.[26]

Lincoln grew into this role, however; his earlier speeches have marks of the spacious rhetoric that Weaver identifies. The future president was less inventive and sophisticated in his understanding of rhetoric than he would become. His first major public address was delivered to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield when he was not yet thirty years old.[27] In the wake of mob attacks against abolitionists and free blacks, the speech was devoted to the perpetuation of political institutions and exalted the rule of law, so that reason might displace passion. But Lincoln is anything but dispassionate in delivering the address, and his text reveals the intensity of his own commitment. Equating obedience to law with Revolutionary fervor he admonished, "let every man remember that to violate the law, is to trample on the blood of his father, and to tear the character of his own, and his children's liberty." He went on to say:

> Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap—let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges; —let it be written in Primers, in spelling books, and in Almanacs; —let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice.[28]

This is not the simple, direct address of which Wilson speaks. It is marked by amplification, embellishment, excessive repetition—the characteristics Weaver identifies as making for a "spacious" rhetoric that celebrates what is uncontested and makes listeners cognizant of what they already know and believe. This quality of grandiloquence is found throughout the speech—in Lincoln's insistence that a mere "seat in Congress, a gubernatorial or presidential chair" would hardly satisfy the ambition of "the family of the lion, or the tribe of the eagle," because "towering genius disdains a beaten path," and in his final passionate appeal for "reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason."[29] It is his conventional rhetorical style that places him in this paradoxical position of passionately defending reason.

As he matured, Lincoln incorporated the lawyer's frame of mind into his rhetoric. His speech opposing the Mexican war, delivered during his single term in Congress, furnishes a strong example,[30] alluding to President Polk's rationale for the war and then, like a lawyer's brief, systematically refuting every element of it. Lincoln boldly challenged the President to come before Congress and identify the spot of American soil on which American blood had been shed—Polk's most vivid justification for war. He urged Polk not to dissemble, reminding him that "he sits where Washington sat." He went so far as to allege that Polk "knows not where he is. He is a bewildered, confounded, and miserably-perplexed man." These are not the appeals of a rhetor adapting to his audience; they are the pleas of an advocate who has lost a sense of proportion in an effort to defend his client vigorously. Lincoln's later speeches would continue to invoke legal concepts—he would refer to Supreme Court opinions as *obiter dicta*, he would deny Stephen Douglas the right to establish a claim upon his *ipse dixit*, and he would speak of the location of the burden of proof. But these were shorthand references contained within arguments that Lincoln carefully modulated.

By the 1850s, Lincoln departed from the convention of spacious rhetoric and achieved maturity in his discourse. His 1852 eulogy for Henry Clay fulfilled the expectations of that genre—to combine praise for the dead with advice for the living.[31] But unlike some orators, Lincoln did not apotheosize the departed. Clay, he said, must be understood as a man of his time. He still regarded Clay as a national rather than a party man and observed that grief over his death transcended partisanship. But he dealt frankly with Clay's views on slavery. The Kentuckian had opposed slavery in principle yet owned slaves himself. Clay resolved his dilemma in a way that Lincoln also recommended: by supporting colonization, freeing the slaves but returning them to Africa. The colonization movement represented a middle ground between abolitionism and the expansion of slavery, neither of which was palatable to Clay or to Lincoln.

In speeches during the latter half of the 1850s, Lincoln refined his approach to the slavery question, seeking reasoned compromise. In the "Peoria speech" of 1854, he introduced the distinction between slavery itself and its extension to new territories. He took no public position on the former topic, believing it to be a state-level issue. But on the latter he argued vigorously against any *spread* of slavery, wanting to contain it where it already existed. In the seventh debate with Douglas, he would develop the contrast by analogy, saying, "You may have a wen or a cancer upon your person and not be able to cut it out lest you bleed to death; but surely it is no way to cure it, to engraft it and spread it over your whole body."[32]

Likewise, in a June 1857 speech in the aftermath of the *Dred Scott* decision, Lincoln made a sharp distinction between the economic and the socio-political dimensions of equality. Concerning the latter, he insists that he is opposed to the physical amalgamation of the races, but he concludes that a black woman, "in her natural right to eat the bread she earns with her own hands without asking leave of any one else, she is my equal, and the equal of all others."[33] He would repeat this distinction during the first debate with Douglas. It provided him with a middle ground that enabled him, without abandoning his own position, to stress his antislavery conviction in northern Illinois and his moderation in the central and southern parts of the state.

The "House Divided" speech, despite its audacious allegations of a proslavery conspiracy including Douglas, proposed a moderate course of action: not decreeing slavery's end at once, but restricting its spread so that the institution would be set "in course of ultimate extinction." Lincoln was willing to wait as much as a century until, in God's good time, slavery would be brought to its knees, provided that we signaled now our clear determination that eventually it would end. Similarly, his unsuccessful wartime proposal to create financial incentives for states to emancipate voluntarily was designed to be sensitive to the nuances of the issue. In these and other speeches, the mature Lincoln reveals the parallels between rhetorical and political moderation, his awareness of his audience and the constraints that audiences imposed on his room to maneuver.

The Cooper Union Address of 1860 illustrates these same characteristics. Lincoln's apparent goals are political—convincing his listeners that he would be a more viable candidate than William Henry Seward and a better choice for the presidency than Stephen A. Douglas—but his method is historical analysis. Taking as his text a statement by Douglas that the founders understood the question of slavery in the territories even better than did those of his own day, Lincoln scoured the historical record and offered evidence (indirect evidence, since the founders had not spoken on the precise question) that a majority would have granted Congress's power of regulation. Lincoln's apparent reasonableness is evident in his willingness to speak directly to discontented Southerners "if they would listen—as I suppose they will not."[34] The combination of his appeals made his message more palatable to a broad audience than were the messages of the more radical Seward and Salmon P. Chase. Accordingly, this speech led Lincoln to be regarded as a potential candidate himself. In his mind, it was the speech that made him president.

The First Inaugural Address clearly reveals the maturity of Lincoln's rhetoric. The speech must both reassure anxious Southerners and announce a policy strong enough yet moderate enough to hold together the Northern coalition that elected him. These constraints could not be satisfied through the "spacious," overblown oratory of the time. Disclaiming the need to speak about uncontroversial matters, Lincoln addresses directly the "apprehension" that "seems to exist among the people of the Southern States, that by the accession of a Republican Administration, their property, and their peace, and personal security are to be endangered." He immediately reassures them, "There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension," noting that proof to the contrary can be found in his own published speeches.[35] He acknowledges that there are differences of opinion about how and by whom the fugitive slave clause is to be enforced, but avers that surely there must be a peaceful way to resolve that disagreement. Yet he states clearly his principle that the Union is perpetual; no state on its own motion can withdraw from it. But he will take the minimal necessary action to assert that principle: "to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts."[36] There will be no invasion, not even the appointment of "obnoxious strangers" to enforce Federal law when local citizens cannot be found to do so. Having explained why secession is both conceptually and physically impossible, he is willing to await the return of reason and good judgment. "In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen," he tells the South, "is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail *you*."[37]

This speech is perhaps the capstone of Lincoln's typical rhetorical method: appealing to reason rather than passion, devoted to the practical relation between the sections of the country rather than to the appeal of political abstractions, sensitive to his audience and willing to yield as much as possible to adapt to them without betraying his own convictions, simple in language, devoid of much elaboration or embellishment, direct in its address to his listeners. It did not succeed, because Southerners had come to believe that his election itself was cause for dissolving the Union. The First Inaugural nevertheless shows how Lincoln's rhetorical method might have permitted addressing even these divisive questions through appeals to reason.

Most people regard the Gettysburg Address and the Second Inaugural as Lincoln's greatest speeches. Without becoming "spacious," they embody a larger vision and a deeper spirituality than do the earlier addresses. This change reflects the impact of the war itself. Neither Lincoln nor anyone else had expected a conflict so protracted and deadly. The human and financial cost of the war was vastly disproportionate to the goal of proving only the impossibility of secession. The war must have some larger purpose, and in these speeches Lincoln articulates what it was. He does so in prose that is focused, simple, and terse, yet magisterial. He abandons the vernacular idiom of earlier years and grasps instead for the sublime.

The Gettysburg Address was delivered at a time of war weariness for many in the North. Beyond celebrating the dedication of the cemetery, Lincoln's remarks could inspire them to persevere. He made no references to the battle (in sharp contrast to Everett), other than to state the obvious fact that "we are met on a great battle-field of that war" and have come to dedicate part of it as a cemetery. Instead he emphasized the purpose of the war—testing whether a nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to equality could survive. Taking advantage of the multiple meanings of "dedicate," he notes that those present really cannot dedicate the battlefield, since it already has been hallowed by those who died. Instead, those present should dedicate *themselves* to complete the unfinished task. Lincoln transcends the particulars of the moment and moves beyond the pragmatism of his earlier addresses to imply that the war goals are worthy of attainment notwithstanding momentary fatigue.

Even so, the Gettysburg Address lacks the spiritual depth of the Second Inaugural, perhaps Lincoln's greatest rhetorical accomplishment. There he tries to give meaning to the war, and especially to its length and its sacrifice, by interpreting it as Divine punishment of both North and South for the sin of slavery. It would seem presumptuous to claim to know the will of God, but Lincoln avoids this problem by casting his discussion in conditional form: "If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those offences" against God, and that "He gives to both North and South, this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offence came," there would be no cause to question God's judgment.[38] This is not a plea for passivity; Lincoln fondly hopes and fervently prays that the war will soon end, and he calls on his listeners to "strive on to finish the work we are in." Still, he is ready to leave the final judgment in Divine hands. He is driven to a spiritual understanding of the war because it simply cannot make sense in human terms. Its original goals are largely moot, yet damage and death go on.

This speech, more than any other, marks Lincoln as "the eloquent president." His eloquence is the product both of a lifetime of experience and of the crisis posed by the war. It does not reflect the teaching of Hugh Blair, the precepts of Dilworth or Kirkham, or the models of the *Columbian Orator*. But it draws upon the habit of writing for the ear, the experience of clear and precise expression, the sense of history as unfolding drama, the widespread reverence for the founding generation, the ability to see transcendent meaning in worldly events, and a growing sense of the need to submit to the Divine plan. These elements, and their special combination, allowed Lincoln to surpass the rhetorical conventions of his time and to grow into the role in which history casts him, as the rhetorically most gifted of all the American Presidents

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Endnotes

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[4] Aristotle, *Rhetoric* 1355b.

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[9] Bray, p. 60.

[10] Bray, p. 39.

[11] Bray, p. 67.

[12] *Herndon's Life of Lincoln* (1942; rpt. New York: Da Capo Press, 1983), p. 34.

[13] Wayne C. Temple, "Herndon on Lincoln: An Unknown Interview with a List of Books in the Lincoln & Herndon Law Office," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 98 (Spring-Summer 2005), 46.

[14] See Robert Alexander Kraig, "The Second Oratorical Renaissance," *Rhetoric and Reform in the Progressive Era*, ed. J. Michael Hogan (vol. 6 of *A Rhetorical History of the United States*) (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2003), 7.

[15] Bray, pp. 45, 78, 48.

[16] Bray, pp. 73, 50, 69, 54.

[17] The text of the speech can be found in *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, ed. Roy P. Basler (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 1: 271-279.

[18] *Collected Works*, 1: 278.

[19] The text may be found in *Collected Works*, 1: 431-442.

[20] The texts can be found in *Collected Works*, 2: 83-90 and 2: 121-132, respectively.

[21] *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858*, ed. Paul M. Angle (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 308.

[22] *Collected Works*, 1: 273.

[23] Lincoln used this phrase in his last public address, replying to a serenade on April 11, 1865. See *Collected Works*, 8: 403.

[24] Richard Weaver, *The Ethics of Rhetoric* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1953), 164-185.

[25] The text of Everett's address is conveniently available in an appendix to Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 213-247.

[26] Douglas L. Wilson, "Lincoln's Rhetoric," paper presented at the Abraham Lincoln Symposium, Old State Capitol, Springfield, Illinois, February 11, 2008.

[27] The text can be found in *Collected Works*, 1: 108-115.

[28] *Collected Works*, 1: 112.

[29] *Collected Works*, 1: 114, 115.

[30] The text can be found in *Collected Works*, 1: 431-442.

[31] The text can be found in *Collected Works*, 2: 121-132.

[32] *The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858*, ed. Angle, 391.

[33] The text can be found in *Collected Works*, 2: 398-410.

[34] The text can be found in *Collected Works*, 3: 522-550. The quotation is on p. 535.

[35] The text can be found in *Collected Works*, 4: 262-271. The quotation is on p. 262.

[36] *Collected Works*, 4: 266.

[37] *Collected Works*, 4: 271.

[38] *Collected Works*, 8: 333

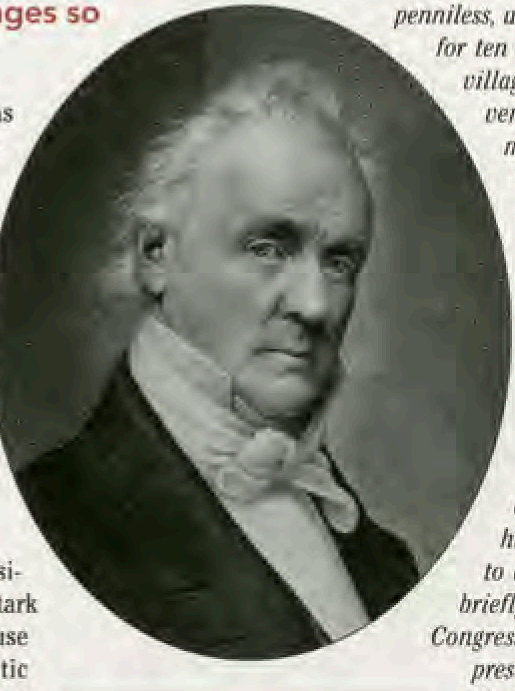
An Interview with William Lee Miller

(*Editor's note: The questions for this interview are based upon my reading of William Lee Miller's newest book,* President Lincoln: The Duty of a Statesman, *published by Knopf, 2008.)*

Q: During the current primary contests, we hear so much about a candidate "being ready on Day One." When I hear that phrase, I invariably think of Abraham Lincoln, secession, and Fort Sumter. What other presidents faced similar challenges so early in a first term?

A: No president faced as dire a situation as Lincoln did, but Franklin Roosevelt, with the depression deepening and the Bank panic spreading certainly faced a severe national crisis. Harry Truman came into the presidency in a way, as he wrote home, that no other president has: suddenly, in an April afternoon, the moon, the sun, and all the stars fell on his shoulders. And there were huge decisions to make right away as the war in Europe was ending and the issue of the use of the bomb was still to be decided.

But neither of these men, nor any other president, faced a set of immediate decisions so stark in their consequences as Lincoln did, because he dealt with a "clear, flagrant, and gigantic rebellion" that threatened the United States itself with "destruction" "ruin;" "overthrow;" "surrender"; "immediate dissolution."



James Buchanan. Engraving by J. C. Buttre. (TLM # 4225)

Q: How do you rate Lincoln's response to these initial challenges?

A: Since I agree with Lincoln's appraisal both of the factual situation (the depth of the threat to the nation) and of the values (a disaster not only for Americans but for the "whole family of man"), I think he responded superbly well. In the tight pinch specifically of the Sumter crisis, facing a stark conflict between his sworn duty to preserve the United States (symbolized by defending the outpost at Sumter) and his politically necessary pledge in the Inaugural not to initiate coercive action, he came up with the masterful plan, to send provisions only, in daylight, letting all the world know he was sending bread only, and notifying the governor of South Carolina in time for him to react—putting the ball in the rebels' court. When the rebels "reduced" the fort, he led, for a time, a united North as the war began. He defined the situation accurately, and evoked in the nation the response that was needed.

Q: In regard to experience and preparation for the presidency, please compare Lincoln and James Buchanan.

A: On paper there is no comparison. Please pardon my quoting from my book *President Lincoln*:

Buchanan had already been a member of the Pennsylvania State legislature when this new man had been a barefoot lad making his way with his sister through the Kentucky woods to a one-room schoolhouse. Buchanan had been an important member of Congress and chairman of the Judiciary Committee when young Lincoln, by his own later description, had been a "strange, penniless, uneducated, friendless boy working on a raft for ten dollars a month." When out in a frontier village of 300 souls young Lincoln made his first venture into politics, and on the second try managed to be elected to the lower house of the legislature of his prairie state, and borrowed sixty dollars to buy a new suit in which he made his way to Vandalia, Illinois—Buchanan was making his way to the court in St. Petersburg as Minister of the United States to Russia, where he would negotiate an important commercial treaty. While Lincoln served in the lower house of a distant western state legislature, Buchanan was an important United States Senator. When Lincoln, in his third try, obtained the Whig nomination to a congressional seat, and finally appeared briefly in national politics for his one term in Congress, and had as a freshman member rather presumptuously attacked President Polk about the Mexican War, Buchanan had been serving as Secretary of State in the cabinet of the president that young Congressman Lincoln was attacking. Buchanan had in 1848 been a serious candidate for his party's nomination for President of the United States, while Congressman Lincoln, even though an early supporter of the winning candidate Zachary Taylor, was unable to get any satisfactory appointment from the Taylor administration, and had to subside into comparative obscurity.

When in 1853 the Democrats came back into power, the eminent Party statesman James Buchanan was given the most important diplomatic post, Minister to Great Britain, and in 1856 his impressive public career reached its climax as he was nominated and elected President of the United States. Buchanan was, by measure of offices held, one of the best qualified men ever to be elected president. The Illinois lawyer, meanwhile, had for eleven years never held political office again after his one term in Congress. If *the measure be a formal one of offices held, then on the day the executive authority in the United States government would pass from James Buchanan to Abraham Lincoln it would pass from one of the most experienced hands in American political history to one of the least experienced.*

But simply holding lesser offices is not all one needs to prepare for supreme national leadership. A fool or knave can rise through many eminent positions and still be a fool or knave. A thoughtful person can gain wisdom from the daily round of ordinary life; a superficial person can learn little from commanding armies or being king. It depends upon what happens in the depths of one's mind and inner being while one fills those roles, whether high or low.

Q: The word magnanimity is frequently used in political philosophy. The beliefs of Abraham Lincoln appear to have been influenced by this concept. How did he develop it? How did he use it?

A: William Seward wrote to his wife Frances after serving with Lincoln through the first months, that Lincoln was almost inhumanly magnanimous—and Seward should know, because he was one whose early actions tested Lincoln's forbearance severely. There is a golden thread of magnanimity woven through Lincoln's career that is the greatest of his virtues—all the more so, because another great virtue—his executive strength and resolve—made magnanimity the more difficult.

Not many great commanders and heads of state across history who hold in their hands the power to turn the wheel of history would exercise that power with the grace and humane consideration that he did.

On the other hand, not many tender-hearted human beings, who have shown unusual sympathy with lost cats, mired down hogs, birds fallen out of the nest, and human beings in trouble as well, would in the event prove to be a decisive, steadfast, resilient, resolute commander of armies in battle, and a master of power-wielding statecraft.

Lincoln's magnanimity was both inborn and a consciously adopted and intellectually defended virtue. See his gently worded reprimand to James Cutts (October 26, 1863) as one example of his explicit statement. He did not hold grudges and he was not vindictive. He even did not want the Confederate leaders punished after the war. His profound Second Inaugural Address includes, in just 703 words, along with much else, the most extraordinary generosity toward those who had rejected his pleas and plunged the nation into the mighty scourge of war. How many war leaders in that situation could have left aside any note of triumph or of vengeance?

Q: I love your use of the term "constitutional alchemy." Please define this term for our readers. Also, please comment on the reason that you use it to describe Lincoln's presidency.

A: This is a figure of speech dramatizing the transformation of Abraham Lincoln from private citizen (in the Willard Hotel, on the morning of March 4, 1861) into President Lincoln, at noon on that day, when all the powers of Article Two of the Constitution suddenly settled upon his shoulders and made him a new and different figure. The analogy is, the medieval belief in the transforming of dross into gold.

Q: What does the relationship between Abraham Lincoln and George McClellan say to you about both men?

A: The young, privileged, intelligent and able McClellan showed himself to be ineffectual as a general and narcissistic as a man, incapable of self-criticism or the bravery of risk-taking decision. Lincoln showed himself to be magnanimous, perhaps even to a fault, but also fiercely resolute—overlooking a long series of slights, snubs, affronts, and offenses against himself on McClellan's part, keeping his eye on the prize. "I will hold McClellan's horse if he will bring us victories," he said after one snub.

Q: You begin your book with Lincoln's First Inaugural Address. What do you believe he considered to be his primary purpose for the Address? Was he successful in articulating that purpose?

A: Lincoln's purpose was to lay out his argument against what the "dissatisfied countrymen" were doing—"secession is the essence of anarchy"— and to plead with them not to do it. He was not successful in persuading the main body of the rebels: No better angels had touched the mystic chords of memory in Charleston Harbor; there had been no swelling of the chorus of the Union in Montgomery, Alabama. But in this address and his message to the special session on July 4, 1861, Lincoln laid out the case for his defense of the United States of America—to all the people of this nation, and to the "whole family of man", and not only to the present hour but to "the vast future also." In this larger sense he was successful.

Q: Today, discussions are held and books are written about the concept of a "just war." Can you gauge Lincoln's thoughts about war in general and morality? About the Civil War?

A: Lincoln had dealt with the issue of just war before he was president, before there was a civil war—back when he was a congressman, in the last days of the Mexican War. Lincoln condemned what President Polk had done in beginning that war, both in some resolutions he offered and a speech he gave, and a vote on an anti-war motion, in the House. He also explained his position to Herndon and others in letters back home. He regarded that war as unjust because it was a war of choice with no just object. It was a war of conquest. He wrote to Herndon:

> *Allow the President to invade a neighboring nation, whenever he shall deem it necessary to repel an invasion, and you allow him to do so, whenever he may choose to say he deems it necessary for such purpose--and you allow him to make war at pleasure. . .*
>
> *This, our Convention understood to be the most oppressive of all Kingly oppressions; and they resolved to so frame the Constitution that no one man should hold the power of bringing this oppression upon us.*

He wrote that resolutions endorsing Polk on the war "make the direct question of the justice of the war, and no man can be silent if he would." Lincoln was not silent, and gave his answer: it was an unjust war.

But the war he faced thirteen years later, when he himself was president, was radically different: a war of necessity, for the just cause of defending the nation's very existence against a gigantic insurrection.

Q: Please discuss the inclusion of the Trent Affair in your book—and how the incident helped to define the "Duty of a Statesman."

A: The Trent affair was the moment when the American Civil War almost took on an international dimension, when a swashbuckling American ship captain stopped a British mail carrier and removed from the ship two Confederates on their way to England and France as emissaries, to the excessive delight of the victory-starved Americans in the first year of the war. When the British learned of this insult to the crown—as they saw it—they were as furious as the Americans had been delighted. It took prudence, skill, and statesmanship to emerge from this crisis without a war—one war at a time, said Lincoln—and with a certain gain in the understanding of such international incidents, along with relief on both sides.

Q: This probably isn't a fair question, but why does the legacy of Abraham Lincoln continue to resonate today? What does his status in American history say about him? About us?

A: There is a perfect storm of reasons: the greatest crisis in our history, involving the deepest sin of our nation, bringing on the longest and most destructive war in our history; Lincoln, coping with this unique situation, proved to be the best writer ever to occupy the presidency, and he combined "executive skill" (as Seward came to see) and the magnanimity discussed above. His life story, also, makes him a perfect fit for ideals of equality and upward mobility. We are at our best when this nation reflects the generous and humane qualities exemplified by Lincoln.

Q: What projects are you currently undertaking?

A: I have a short backburner book that I have brought up to the front burner (swiftly comparing and contrasting "Two Americans" from the hinterland—Harry Truman and Dwight Eisenhower, whose lives were intertwined) and I am doing occasional pieces about Lincoln and current events, for example this historical coincidence that I used as the introduction to a talk at the Abraham Lincoln Institute Symposium in March:

An Introductory Historical coincidence

I picture a supporter of a senator from New York and odds-on favorite to the win a party's presidential nomination, sputtering in exasperation at the upstart from Illinois who suddenly appeared to be stealing the nomination…

"Who is this guy? What has he done? He is a talker, not a doer."

In the run-up to the party convention, the New York Senator had seemed inevitable—but then came this Illinois speech-maker, gathering up delegates.

The New York Senator would be ready to be president from Day One, this supporter might say—

The New York Senator, could pass the Commander in Chief test—

The New York Senator has experience: And the Illinois challenger? He made a speech.

"What experience does he have?" the supporter of the New Yorker might have asked.

The New York Senator had more than 35 years of experience—as lawyer for fugitive slaves, Governor of New York, Senator from New York, leader first of the Whigs and then of the Republicans nationally.

This novice who challenged that Senator had never held any high office. He had never been in command of anything except a straggling company of volunteers in the state militia when he was 23—a group who, it was reported, when he issued his first command, told him to go to hell.

He had served six years in the Illinois state legislature. His only service in national government had been one short and unimpressive term as a congressman 11 years earlier. He had not been the "executive" of anything more than a two-man law firm; he had never in his life fired anyone. He had emerged on the national scene just by making speeches.

The New York senator's supporter might grant, with a touch of condescension, that the Illinois threat delivered a good speech. But although that address at Cooper Union might be "beautifully expressed and passionately felt," it was not action. "Words are not actions. What we have to do is to translate talk into reality."

A supporter of the more experienced man might have argued that the presidency was no place for on-the-job training and he might have said, "Nominating that Illinois fellow would be a roll of the dice."

Nevertheless, the Republicans in 1860 did nominate, in spite of his alleged lack of "experience," the eloquent speaker from Illinois.

President Lincoln: The Duty of a Statesman

By William Lee Miller
(Alfred A. Knopf, 2008)

Reviewed by Joseph R. Fornieri, Rochester Institute of Technology

Our political discourse today is dominated by rights talk: human rights, civil rights, property rights, women's rights, reproductive rights, gay rights, children's rights, student's rights, worker's rights, patient's rights, environmental rights, animal rights. Some even posit an alleged "right to die." To be sure, the invocation of rights against government encroachment is an American tradition dating back to the founding and the Declaration of Independence. However, unlike the Founders, and Lincoln for that matter, we have increasingly come to view rights in terms of entitlements that are divorced from commensurate responsibilities. Our modern tendency is to frame each and every political issue in terms of a government entitlement that is owed to a particular individual or interest. This, in turn, has impaired our ability to recognize the importance of duty as a binding moral and legal obligation to serve the greater, public good. In his latest work, *President Lincoln: The Duty of A Statesman*, William Lee Miller reveals the centrality of duty to Lincoln's statesmanship by considering his "moral performance" as President. For those who seek a clear and profound articulation of statesmanship and its concrete embodiment in the character and actions of our Sixteenth President this superb book is an indispensable guide.

Miller continues to address the important theme of virtue—those qualities of character that define a great leader, so deftly considered in his preceding volume, *Lincoln's Virtues*. Readers who enjoyed this earlier work will not be disappointed with this latest installment, which explores the theme of virtue from the standpoint of Lincoln's duties and responsibilities as the nation's highest public official who was bound by "a solemn oath registered in Heaven" "to preserve, protect, and defend" the Union in its greatest crisis. Miller correctly emphasizes that "the moral situation of Abraham Lincoln was abruptly transformed" with his accession to the presidency. No longer a private citizen, on March 4, 1861, Lincoln became "an oath-bound head of state" with "an awesome new battery of powers and an immense new layer of responsibility, obligating, constraining, and empowering him (3)."

It is often said that a person's character is revealed by the sum of his or her decisions. Miller adopts this principle in his study of Lincoln's presidency. He chronologically analyzes the series of crucial moral judgments Lincoln made during the Civil War. These include: his resolution to preserve the Union; his decisive response to the crisis in suspending habeas corpus, erecting a blockade and borrowing money without congressional authorization; his prudence in dealing with the border states; his negotiations with foreign powers; his issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation; his direction of the military and cabinet; his tenacity in waging war; his honoring of his promise to African-Americans; his clemency towards deserters; and his magnanimity towards the defeated. In each case, Miller richly chronicles and recreates through a stirring narrative the moral dilemmas faced by Lincoln. The book is written in a conversational style that draws the reader into events as a silent witness, compelling him or her to ask: "what would I do under such circumstances?" The sympathetic reader is led to marvel at how Lincoln endured the crushing weight of responsibility that continually bore down upon him. Throughout the book, Miller never allows us to lose sight of the momentous decisions, real constraints and unique circumstances that Lincoln confronted each day while in office. He explains, "Citizens—including scholars—or a later time have the advantage (and, again, disadvantage) of knowing that although there would be a terribly destructive war, the outcome would be that the Union was preserved. They therefore can ignore the frightful contingency of the situation as Lincoln faced it: he did not know what the ultimate outcomes would be….Lincoln was faced not with a tabula rasa on which to play out graceful alternatives but with fierce realities and narrow choices (23 & 138)."

In terms of a genre, the book defies simple classification: it seamlessly weaves together biography, ethics, politics, and history, including military history, which is all too often ignored in spite of Lincoln's realistic understanding that the success of the Union cause depended upon its battlefield success. Each chapter and subchapter of Miller's book can stand alone as a rich case study of Lincoln's moral performance as president. In effect, the book guides the reader through key moral episodes in the political drama of Lincoln and the Civil War. In what follows, I can only highlight a few specific examples.

Miller begins his work by distinguishing the character and leadership of Lincoln and Buchanan in response to the secession crisis. While Buchanan had made a "declaration of impotence," claiming that although secession was illegal he had no authority to put it down, Lincoln understood that his oath of office imposed a moral obligation upon him to preserve the Union. Miller concisely summarizes the differences between the two men in these terms, "Where Buchanan had sought avoidance and found restriction and therefore excuse, this new president would accept responsibility and find necessity and therefore empowerment (12)." Lincoln's foresight as a statesman enabled him to see the issue of secession in much wider terms than his cabinet. What was at stake was the very survival of the nation. Fort Sumter was an important symbol testing the resolve of the national government. In insisting upon "the bread bringing" mission to Fort Sumter, Lincoln, the presidential novice, refused to appease the South, and he did so in defiance of the advice of his more experienced advisors like Winfield Scott. According to Lincoln, such appeasement would only embolden the South and demoralize the Union. The "bread bringing" mission, which pledged to resupply the besieged Fort only with food rather than weapons, not only permitted Lincoln to uphold his promise in the *First Inaugural Address*, it also proceeded from his sense of duty to fulfill his oath as Chief Executive "to preserve, protect and defend the Union."

We are all familiar with Lincoln's well-deserved reputation for tenderheartedness and for clemency. Miller provides poignant details of how Judge Advocate General Holt became exacerbated with the Commander-in-Chief over the granting of so many pardons. Lincoln would sometimes spend six hours a day reviewing executions. Contrary to the wishes of both generals in the field and the citizens of Minnesota, he pardoned a tribe of Sioux Indians who had revolted against whites. Roughly 300 braves were spared. Lincoln reserved execution only for the small minority of those who committed heinous crimes.

Miller, however, reveals an important exception to Lincoln's tenderheartedness, one that is a telling example of his equally important demand for justice: his sustaining of the execution of the notorious slave trader Nathaniel Gordon who had been apprehended in August of 1860 on the Congo River with 897 Africans on board the ship Erie. Although the law of the United States punished slave trading with the death penalty, it was never enforced—that is, prior to the Lincoln administration. In 1857, President Buchanan had granted a full pardon to the infamous slave trader James Smith. Once again, Lincoln, who had condemned the utter inhumanity of the slave trade in his Peoria Address of 1854, displayed an altogether different character than Buchanan. Despite a petition signed by 11,000 New Yorkers urging him to pardon Gordon, Lincoln sustained the execution, saying: "it becomes my painful duty to admonish the prisoner that, relinquishing all expectations of pardon by human authority, he refer himself alone to the common God and Father of all men (250)."

Indeed, throughout his book, Miller shows how Lincoln's statesmanship combined the seemingly contrary qualities of ferocious determination and tenderheartedness, and of "profound charity and relentless coercive action." The combination of these qualities ensured Union victory within moral boundaries. As psychohistorian Michael Burlingame has likewise observed about the pairing of opposites in the Sixteenth President's character: "Lincoln was moral without being moralistic; righteous without being self-righteous; strong willed without being willful." For those who questioned his active determination to preserve the Union, Lincoln asked: "What would you do in my position? Would you drop the war where it is? Or, would you prosecute it in future, with elder-stalk squirts, charged with rose water? Would you deal lighter blows rather than heavier ones? Would you give up the contest, leaving any available means unapplied. I am in no boastful mood. I shall not do more than I can, and I shall do all I can to save the government, which is my sworn duty, as well as my personal inclination. I shall do nothing in malice. What I deal with is too vast for malicious dealing." Here we see Lincoln's resolution to prosecute the war coupled with his renunciation of malice. Under similar circumstances in history, few leaders have been able to strike this precarious balance. Miller further contends that the term "total war" is mistakenly applied to the Civil War, even in regard to Sherman's March. Though military casualties were horrendous, civilians were not targeted, rape was rare, and war was mostly limited to combatants or property used by combatants.

Perhaps, most significantly, Miller forcefully and clearly explains the moral meaning of the Union and war. This gets to the very core of what Lincoln stood for as a statesman. Miller rejects the "common modern view" that the American Civil War finds moral meaning only with the Emancipation Proclamation. He describes "two deep errors in this view. In the first place, vindicating the Union was for Lincoln no mere power-political struggle but an undertaking with vast and universal moral significance—showing that free, popular constitutional government could maintain itself, a project that, as Lincoln on one occasion said goes down about as deep as anything. In the second place, the moral principles that Lincoln understood to define the Union placed slavery under condemnation from the start." Indeed, it would be difficult to find a more cogent articulation of the moral meaning of the Civil War and Lincoln's view of it.

It should be noted that Miller's moral biography of Lincoln's presidency is by no means hagiographic and uncritical. He reveals not a plaster saint, but a flesh and blood human being, one who made mistakes. For example, he raises questions about Lincoln's ultimate responsibility in evacuating the civilian populations of four Missouri counties in an effort to thwart guerilla raiders. And he devotes a rather humorous chapter to what he calls "the comedy of the Powhatan"—a case study of how Lincoln failed to have his subordinates observe the chain of command, thereby resulting in confusing and contradictory orders that might have proven disastrous in another situation. The Powhatan was a ship that Seward dispatched to Charleston from Brooklyn, New York, without consulting Secretary of the Navy Welles. The competing orders between Seward and Welles led to a botched and senseless expedition. Miller shows, however, that Lincoln was not defeated by his mistakes. On the contrary, he was a remarkable self-educator who learned and grew from his errors. The reader can more easily identify with this human Lincoln who likewise had to struggle to overcome his deficiencies—a struggle from which no imperfect human being is ever free.

In conclusion, Miller's book is a must for anyone who would wish to understand the overlooked, yet crucial, connection between duty and statesmanship. It is hoped that someday the United States will produce its own version of Plutarch's lives, which were moral biographies of ancient statesman like Pericles, Alexander, Caesar and Cicero. Plutarch's portraits exerted a millennial influence that reached from antiquity to the Founders and Lincoln. He inspired generations of future leaders to dwell upon virtue and to imitate it. If the United States ever produces a collection of great moral biographies to inspire future generations of citizens, William Lee Miller's moral biography of Lincoln's duty as a president would be an outstanding candidate for inclusion.

An Interview with Harold Holzer

(Editor's note: The questions for this interview are based upon my reading of Harold Holzer's newest book, Lincoln: President-Elect, *published by Simon & Schuster, 2008.)*

Q: So many books have been written about presidential elections. Other than occasional comments, historians then seem to "skip" to books about inaugurations and the early days of a presidency, e.g. the "First Hundred Days." Why has the critically important transitional period been overlooked?

A: Because it's an awkward period in the best of circumstances, even for great presidential candidates who become great presidents. The long interregnum between the election and the swearing-in—and it was longer in Lincoln's day, four months in all—brings the victor praise without power, attention without official responsibility. I think the Buchanan-Lincoln interregnum has been overlooked because on the surface it seemed as if neither Buchanan *nor* Lincoln did much to prevent secession and rebellion. In fact, Lincoln did a great deal behind the scenes—perhaps not to keep the states together, but to keep slavery from spreading, which may have doomed the Union as it was, but also made possible freedom as it is. From another perspective, I'm always thrilled to find a subject that has been somewhat overlooked—it means it's ripe for new research and interpretation. I should conclude by acknowledging that William Baringer did write a fine book on this subject in 1945, and William C. Harris, Russell McClintock, William Marvel, and others have explored some of the same themes only recently. I hope that by keeping my focus relentlessly on Lincoln, I might shed some light on the challenges this tense period invariably brings to American life, especially as we endure yet another presidential transition before our next inauguration day, January 20, 2009. The challenges, the expectations, the awkwardness, remain much the same for any president-elect, and perhaps Lincoln's example can again prove helpful. It always is.

Q: We refer today to a president-elect's "transition team." Did Abraham Lincoln have such a group of advisers?

A: After his election, Lincoln sought counsel from a number of advisers, and got a good deal of unsolicited advice from visitors and correspondents alike, but there was no such thing as an official transition team in Lincoln's America. His Illinois-based campaign group—Norman Judd, David Davis, and others—never got an official role during the interregnum, and Davis later complained rather bitterly that Lincoln never sought or took his advice anyway. Mary Lincoln tried to influence him—and who knows, she may well have helped convince him to deny Norman Judd a cabinet portfolio. On his own, Lincoln also attempted to reach out to Southern leaders in a vain effort to keep as much of the country united as possible. But as always, Lincoln pulled the strings himself. One looks back at all the President-elect had to face between election and inauguration, and comes away with renewed respect for his energy, curiosity, political skills, and both a willingness to take risks and an unshakeable commitment to core beliefs.

Q: How have historians differed regarding Lincoln's conduct as president-elect? Could any action on his part have, for instance, prevented secession?

A: Historians have generally regarded the transition—as I put it in my introduction to the book—as the Achilles heel in his otherwise sterling reputation. They have, for example, suggested that Lincoln wore rose-colored glasses when it came to assessing Union sentiment in the slave-holding South—believing for far too long that he could squeeze loyalty out of states where he had won almost no votes. And some have criticized him for doing too little to appease the secessionists in order to prevent armed rebellion.

My own research indicates to me that, on the first count, he did what was prudent in fighting for every ounce of pro-Union sentiment in the Upper South; such positive perseverance in fact may have helped keep some of the Border States from joining the Confederacy. He certainly risked nothing but, bravely, his own prestige by expressing confidence in Union loyalty. As far as compromise is concerned, my conclusion is that Lincoln might indeed have averted war by recognizing secession, but at the expense of losing the country whose inviolable union he correctly judged to be perpetual. True, he might have averted or reversed secession by agreeing to let slavery—and the pernicious political dominance it required—expand exponentially into the southwest and, perhaps, the Caribbean. But as he succinctly put it, "the tug has to come." So the shorthand answer is: yes, he might have prevented secession, or at least further secession, but at unacceptable cost to the presidency, the nation, and democracy's influence on the world.

Q: Has anyone ever assumed the presidency with a lower percentage of the popular vote than Abraham Lincoln?

A: Lincoln won the smallest, and most lopsided, plurality in American electoral history: less than 40% of the popular vote, and all of it from the North. In the Southern states, that is, in those where his name was permitted to appear on the ballot at all, he typically won only an embarrassing 1% or 2% of the vote. In Missouri, his only substantial support came from the Germans in St. Louis. It was a recipe for disaster, in that the results—the regionally lopsided numbers more than the unimpressive total—emboldened the losers to challenge its legitimacy. And they did. That Lincoln still made the case that his electoral majority was unchallengeable required gall, guile, and an unshakeable confidence in both history and the future.

Q: Given the common reference to the period under discussion as the Great Secession Winter, has any president-elect faced such a crisis before his inauguration?

A: I think there were only three truly dramatic, deeply dangerous presidential transitions in American history: the handoff between John Adams and his political enemy (and vice president!) Thomas Jefferson between 1800 and 1801; the interregnum between Herbert Hoover and Franklin D. Roosevelt during the economic crisis of 1932-1933; and of course the Buchanan-Lincoln transition. Of the three, the secession winter was by all measurements the most dangerous—because it not only arrayed the forces favoring freedom against the forces supporting slavery, not only because it represented the arrival of an entirely new political party and required a clean sweep of the federal bureaucracy, but of course because it triggered a threat to the very survival of the country itself. A less visionary leader might have surrendered to his challengers even before taking office, to beg for the right to take the oath. A less skilful and self-confident politician might have said something that might have triggered rage among his enemies or disappointment among his friends. That Lincoln inherited any government at all, albeit a fractured one, is in large sense a tribute to his talents.

Q: Please comment on the extemporaneous speeches Lincoln made during the 1861 trip from Springfield to Washington.

A: Lincoln was enormously frustrated during the so-called presidential campaign of 1860, because the great debater and stump speaker said and did nothing—by tradition, and on the advice of his key advisors—between the convention and the election. He maintained his silence and "masterly inactivity" for the entire four months of the transition, saying little, and issuing most of his declarations privately and confidentially, behind the scenes. So it came as no surprise that, feeling liberated, Lincoln decided that he would use the long journey between Illinois and Washington to break his long, uncharacteristic silence, and to reintroduce himself (and his new image as a bearded statesman) to the Northern electorate that needed reassurance that the government would be in good hands during the percolating crisis. Again, historians have criticized some of the results, and there is no question that some of Lincoln's off-hand remarks were too jocular and did little to impress pro-Democratic newspapers eager for him to put his big foot in his mouth. But considering how many speeches Lincoln made along the way—dozens and dozens of them—he actually performed remarkably well. Not every talk was extemporaneous—never his strong suit. He carefully prepared several of his more important policy statements in advance, determined to try damping down the crisis (however unconvincingly). Along the way, he worked continually to revise and refine his inaugural address, meanwhile managing successfully to amuse and excite many of his admirers with his charming spontaneous greetings, jokes about his appearance, and repeated vows to do nothing to justify disunion or revolution. Moreover, Lincoln improved as he neared his destination—he actually did some of his best speaking in places where he had won the least support. His talk in Trenton, for example, was thrilling. His speech at Independence Hall in Philadelphia was brave and inspiring. Exhausted, anxious about the nation's future and his own, buffeted by huge crowds, brutally over-scheduled, Lincoln nonetheless managed to make himself better known than any President-elect in history by the time he reached Washington. And by the time he arrived, America understood that its incoming chief executive was amusing, modest, accessible, and irreversibly committed to the Union. Perhaps most important of all, Lincoln had cleverly reminded his listeners—and the hundreds of thousands who read his speeches in the press—that he was not a dangerous radical, or a frontier boor, but the legitimate heir to the tradition of George Washington and Andrew Jackson. Not every American was convinced, but in sum, Lincoln's inaugural journey talks were an unappreciated triumph.

Q: What role did William H. Seward play during the transition period?

A: Seward played a less important role than he would have liked. Both Seward and his admirers—most of whom remained convinced that the New York senator, not Lincoln, should have been the President-elect—wanted him to be anointed the "premier" as early as November. He hoped his political machine would influence other Cabinet appointments and play a key role in doling out patronage for the new administration as well. But when Lincoln did offer him the most important appointment within his power—Secretary of State—Seward hesitated a bit, when a prompt acceptance could have increased his influence exponentially. Moreover, resuming his Senate chores in Washington, Seward championed compromise even as his future boss was drawing a line in the sand and instructing other capital Republicans to resist making deals before he took office. I find it ironic that the Eastern anti-slavery champion who had once cited a "higher law" in resisting the spread of slavery, grew willing to make concessions on slavery when push came to shove—or, more precisely, *before push* came to shove—when he should have waited for Lincoln to take office. Of course, no one had Lincoln's sure political instincts. He remarkably seemed to have a better sense of what was going on in Washington than the veteran senators and congressmen whose wires he manipulated so brilliantly.

I will say this for Seward: he was deeply and sincerely worried about threats to Lincoln's life, and he did everything in his power to protect the future President, to the point of sending his son to Philadelphia to warn him of the plot awaiting him in Baltimore. And once Lincoln arrived safely, Seward usefully became chief counselor, escort, and introducer-in-chief, ushering the president-elect to visit the White House, Congress, and the Supreme Court, and providing key advice on restructuring and improving the inaugural address. He helped heal the scars Lincoln had inflicted on himself by avoiding Baltimore. Yet at the same time, petulant about other appointees, Seward later threatened to withdraw from the Cabinet, and made himself appear foolish and selfish before Lincoln wooed him back.

Hannibal Hamlin. (TLM # 2517)

What a fascinating political marriage these two somehow managed to forge.

Q: Did Vice President-elect Hamlin come into the "transitional picture" at all?

A: Hamlin was a far more important advisor at the beginning of the transition than Seward, yet a far less important advisor at the end. I was surprised by both of these extremes. When Lincoln made his first post-election trip to Chicago to talk about the future, he summoned Hamlin, not Seward, and the two appeared together at a public reception and spent several days discussing Cabinet appointments and policy issues. (Seward had wanted to join them but Lincoln rebuffed him.) Lincoln even sent Hamlin to Washington to proffer Seward the official offer of the State Department—a role Hamlin was a bit shy about accepting. Later, Hamlin joined Lincoln in New York, dined with him, resumed discussions, and traveled with him part of the way to Washington. But then, Hamlin seems to vanish abruptly from the inner circle—soon after he convinces Lincoln that Gideon Welles should join the Cabinet as the representative of New England. Maybe Lincoln decided that one was enough—but in any case, the man from Maine disappeared. By 1862, Hamlin is reduced to writing a letter to Lincoln to congratulate him over emancipation—as if he is a total stranger. Why the change? Well, Lincoln played it rather by the book. From May 1860 when they were nominated for first and second spots on the Republican ticket, to March 1861, when they were sworn into office, they were a team on every Republican electoral ballot and nearly every campaign print in the country. Lincoln respected the symbolic importance of the regionally balanced ticket. But once Hamlin took the oath inside the Capitol he became, in a very real sense, part of the legislative, not the executive, branch—the presiding officer of the Senate, and not a day-to-day participant in presidential decisions. In those days, vice presidents did not have an office in the White House or a seat at the Cabinet table. This was not Clinton-Gore or Bush-Cheney. This was Lincoln and more Lincoln. So by 1864 the President did not even object (and perhaps participated in the decision) when the party dropped Hamlin from the ticket standing for re-election. By then the vice president had totally outlived his political usefulness, and Republicans looked south, not northeast, for regional balance.

Q: Was the "Baltimore Plot" a credible possibility?

A: I don't think the plot was a fiction. Assassination authority Edward Steers's recent research confirming the plot is most convincing. There is sufficient credible evidence to suggest that at the very least, some evasive tactic was required. Whether or not Lincoln should have crept out of Harrisburg, worn a disguise, snuck onto a night train, and hidden in a sleeper car as he passed through the hostile city, are different questions. I think in the end, he wasn't absolutely sure about what awaited him in Maryland, but prudently chose to err on the side of caution—to offer little resistance when his aides talked him into changing his travel plans. He did fail to realize that the embedded journalists who had been covering his every move and word all along the trip would criticize his detour—if for no other reason than pique over being left behind. But what was Lincoln to do? He received the same warnings about danger in Baltimore from two different and independent sources, and after questioning these informants like a trial lawyer, had no recourse but to follow advice about protecting himself. On the other hand, he inexplicably left his wife and children (and poor Hamlin) to follow the allegedly dangerous route he abandoned, exposing them to the same dangers he had dodged. And he traveled with only one of the many bodyguards who had accompanied him from Springfield—along with a private detective he had never met—as if he didn't think the danger was very real. Strange indeed. Lincoln later came to regret his decision to travel incognito, and told more than one person that he should never have changed his plans. In that sense, he tried to have it both ways—and in a large sense, he did. He used his first week in Washington to restore his reputation, lived to take the oath and deliver his inaugural, and managed to leave a record of his macho regrets for the history books. But let's never forget that just a few weeks later, pro-secessionist mobs in Baltimore *did* attack a symbol of the North: Massachusetts troops en route to Washington to defend the city. Besides, where did John Wilkes Booth hatch his own assassination plot? Baltimore!

Q: What is your next Lincoln-related project?

A: Of course I want to spend as much time as possible promoting the Lincoln Bicentennial and generating as much national attention as possible for this once-in-a-lifetime milestone. It has been an honor to work as co-chairman of the national commission. Now come the rewards all Americans can share: newly minted pennies, commemorative stamps, a joint secession of Congress, symposiums, performances, exhibitions, and more new books than we've seen in publishers' catalogues in a century. What a renaissance.

For myself, I have two new book projects scheduled for February, too. One is a Library of America compendium of great writing by great writers on the subject of Lincoln—from 1865 to the 21st century. It will be a nice companion piece to the two-volume LOA edition of Lincoln's writings edited years ago by Don Fehrenbacher. I only wish Don had lived to see us bound together in a boxed set—what an honor for me. I'm also co-editing with the brilliant young scholar and writer Joshua Wolf Shenk a book called *In Lincoln's Hand*, a companion volume to the 2009 Library of Congress exhibition of Lincoln manuscripts. The book will feature gorgeous, high-tech scans of Lincoln's great letters and speeches, together with commentary by American politicians and artists. So far we have Toni Morrison, John Updike, John Hope Franklin, Mario Cuomo, Sam Waterston, Liam Neeson, Drew Gilpin Faust, James McPherson, Newt Gingrich, and others. We expect former presidents too—and Sandra Day O'Connor has just joined the roster. What an extraordinary thing to see what a unifying force Lincoln remains—for men and women, Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals—ever the touchstone, always the ideal. We could not have a better example to light the way to the future.

Finally—well, finally for now—I've been invited by the New-York Historical Society to serve as curator, chief historian, and catalogue editor for a fall 2009 exhibition we're calling "Lincoln and New York"—in which we hope to show how big a role my hometown played in introducing, sustaining, opposing, and ultimately enshrining Abraham Lincoln. I think it will offer some real surprises, and we hope it will be a fitting capstone to the Bicentennial.

Lincoln wasn't exactly made in New York, but he was in a sense re-made in New York, and between newspaper criticism, early Secession Winter plots for the city's secession, bloody draft riots, and a campaign to defeat him for re-election, he was nearly *unmade* in New York. As a born and bred New Yorker, I love the idea of telling Lincoln's story through the local lens. Oh, yes: Lincoln came through New York as president-elect, too. One can still visit our City Hall, beautifully restored by our great mayor, Mike Bloomberg, and stand on one particular spot that summarizes the entire sweep of Lincoln's changing reputation as a national figure. On one side of the doors atop the stairway from the rotunda, is the spot where Lincoln shook hands at an awkward reception in his honor in 1861—along with a mayor who was secretly plotting to align the city with the Confederacy. But on the other side of the same doors is the spot where Lincoln lay in state in an open coffin in 1865, viewed by hundreds of thousands of mourners. In four years of time—and less than forty feet of space—Lincoln achieves nothing less than transfiguration. Only in New York.

The Madness of Mary Lincoln

by Jason Emerson
Southern Illinois University Press, 2007

Reviewed by Myron A. Marty (Professor of History Emeritus, Drake University)

Mary Todd Lincoln's symptoms of psychiatric illness were widely known long before they became so serious that, following her "insanity trial" in 1875, she was institutionalized for treatment and care. Her son Robert, by arranging for this trial and testifying in it, and by actions he took during her confinement of almost four months and in subsequent years, became the object of her unrelenting hostility.

Attempting to identify the sources of her psychiatric illness, especially a century and a half after it became evident, is speculative. It is reasonable, however, to speculate that in Mary Lincoln's case, her illness may have been aggravated by the cumulative effect of traumas she experienced. Four of her brothers served in the Confederate army and two were killed, as was a brother-in-law; two sons died at early ages; and she was tragically widowed at age 46.[1] Seven months after the assassination of her husband, Mary Lincoln wrote to a friend, "When I reflect, as I am always doing, upon the overwhelming loss of that *most* idolized boy [her son Willie in 1862], and the crushing blow, that deprived me, of my *all in all* of this life [Abraham], I wonder that I retain my reason & live."(7) Her second son, Eddie, had died in 1850, shortly before his fourth birthday. Thomas, known as Tad, died at eighteen in 1871.

If Mary Todd Lincoln had a genetic disposition to psychiatric disorders, as her family's history plausibly suggests, these traumatic experiences made it predictable. Hers was not a happy childhood. Born to privilege in Lexington, Kentucky, in December 1818, the fourth of six children, she was motherless at age five and stepsister to six more siblings born to her father's second wife. At odds with her stepmother, she moved to Springfield to live with her sister Elizabeth in 1840. When she married Abraham Lincoln, she was seen as "intelligent, witty, vivacious, and cultured," according to Emerson, but also as "spoiled, petulant, selfish, nervous, and excitable." (9) Once when he was teased about her tantrums, Mr. Lincoln replied, "If you knew how little harm it does me, and how much good it does her, you wouldn't wonder that I am meek."(11)

Stories about Mrs. Lincoln have been told many times, but Emerson, focusing on Mary Lincoln's illness and demise, has reasons for telling them again, and from a different perspective. One reason is that in recent years medical professionals and the general public have gained new understandings of psychiatric disorders. Such terms as madness, insanity, and lunacy have been euphemized with words like troubled, unbalanced, and disturbed, or by more specific terms: manic depression, schizophrenia, paranoia, and bipolar are widely used. Jean H. Baker, author of the authoritative biography of Mrs. Lincoln, asserts that she suffered from "the personality disorder of narcissism."[2]

Another reason is that Emerson discovered, by coincidence and creative sleuthing, twenty-five revealing letters, known as the "insanity letters," written by Mrs. Lincoln between 1872 and 1878. He devotes an entire chapter to an account of finding them while conducting research for a book on Robert Lincoln. They were useful at key points as he traced the course of Mrs. Lincoln's illness from the moment of Mr. Lincoln's assassination to her death. Symptoms of her anxieties, he says, were most evident in her turning to spiritualism and in her purchasing large quantities of clothes and other items for which she had no need.

Robert's attempts to help his mother through her difficulties frayed their relationship to the point of total deterioration. Unlike other authors, who portray Robert as hard-hearted, guilty of filial treachery, and a self-serving conservator of Mrs. Lincoln's estate, Emerson places him in the context of his times, trying, while yet in his late twenties and throughout his thirties, to honor his duties to her as he understood them. He may not have displayed admirable interpersonal skills, but the circumstances he had to deal with would have tested the limits of a saint.

The "insanity letters" help to explain how Mrs. Lincoln extricated herself from Bellevue Place Sanitarium in Batavia, Illinois. In the middle months of the span treated in the letters, during her involuntary confinement, she wrote five letters to Mrs. Myra Bradwell and two to her husband, Judge James Bradwell.[3] Mrs. Bradwell had passed the bar exam but, as a married woman, was denied a license to practice law in Illinois. In these letters she reveals details of her experiences, particularly at Bellevue, and the depth of her antagonism toward Robert. Specifically, the letters expose the crucial role the Bradwells, who shared Mrs. Lincoln's interest in spiritualism, played in gaining Mrs. Lincoln's release from Bellevue.

Throughout the book Emerson portrays Mrs. Lincoln's behavior as bizarre, but he shows that she could pull herself together to achieve her goals as she did in extricating herself from her involuntary confinement. By the 1880s, though, she was losing the capacity to fend for herself, and she died on July 16, 1882, in the home of her sister, where she and Abraham had been married forty years earlier.

Mary Todd Lincoln. (TLM # 97)

In telling a fresh story, Emerson necessarily draws conclusions that differ from those of earlier writers, not out of a desire to be contentious, but because he had evidence that compelled him to tell a different story. The case he makes concerning Mrs. Lincoln's psychiatric illness and his treatment of Robert Lincoln are persuasive contributions to our understanding of a gifted woman whose promising life went uncontrollably awry.

Emerson concludes his book with an essay, in an appendix, by James S. Brust, a psychiatrist. After outlining the reservations persons in his profession must express in dealing with the psychiatric condition of subjects long deceased—and even with those he sees in his practice today—Brust states that, although "it cannot be 'proved' that Mary Todd Lincoln had Bipolar Disorder, …the evidence presented in this book makes it seem very possible." Because "modern psychiatric thought sees Bipolar Disorder as biologically based," there was more to Mary Lincoln's psychiatric illness than the tragic deaths she endured." She could not "bring the symptoms on, nor make them go away, just by her own conscious will."

Studies like this one by Jason Emerson, thoroughly researched and well written, are always welcome in the study of history, or at least they ought to be.

(Editor's note: Jason Emerson's new book, Lincoln the Inventor, will be published by Southern Illinois University Press, January 2009.)

[1] For details on Mrs. Lincoln's family, see Stephen Berry, *House of Abraham: Lincoln and the Todds, A Family Divided by War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2007).

[2] *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987) 330.

[3] The transcribed letters appear in Appendix I, 159-178.

Lincoln's *Alma Mater*: The Lyceum and the Making of a Self-Made Man

By Stewart Winger

Even casual students of Lincoln are at least dimly aware of the Lyceum in America because the word "lyceum" occurs in the title of a much-discussed and perhaps over-analyzed address Lincoln gave before the "Young Men's Lyceum" of Springfield in 1838 on "the Perpetuation of our Political Institutions." Intriguingly allusive, that address has been used by scholars in a number of ways; in particular, both psycho-biographers and political theorists have made much of it.[1] Lincoln's ultimate destiny seemed prefigured in his suggestion that an ambitious man might emancipate the slaves to achieve glory. Questions about the lyceum itself, however, have been asked less often. Notably, Thomas Schwartz wrote on the local lyceums and their role in Springfield.[2] Based on the history of the local lyceums, Schwartz argued that the basic themes of Lincoln's lecture were commonplace in the two lyceums of antebellum Springfield: "local political orators had a longstanding fear of mobocracy and lawlessness."[3] Schwartz thus crisply but persuasively argued against reading too much into the speech either about Lincoln's oedipal impulses toward the founding "fathers" or about an emergent yearning to free the slaves and re-found the nation on renewed principles of liberty. Finally, Schwartz even questioned whether it was best to view Lincoln's Lyceum Address as a reaction to the murder of Elijah P. Lovejoy. "Instead of viewing Lincoln's speech as a reaction to events, it might be more fruitful to see it as a speech carefully crafted to impress his peers. After all, Lincoln was still new to Springfield."[4]

Schwartz's basic point was an important one: the themes of Lincoln's address were commonplace in Springfield and among Whigs. And the lyceum was indeed a place for aspiring professional men to credential themselves in a society of geographic mobility and "self-made men." Donald Scott notes that the lyceum was a vehicle for young men trying to enter the professional classes. "An attorney's lecture on moral character might suggest that he possessed qualities one desired in the person to whom he trusted his affairs."[5] Life for professionals in this period was "less a matter of settling into an established niche than a process of continuing self-construction."[6] This of course generally accords with Lincoln's biography and makes it entirely unsurprising that he stopped at the lyceum on his legendary course of upward mobility.

Strictly speaking, there may be no need to choose between these several options after all. Lincoln may have been credentialing himself to the Springfield elite; he may also have been ruminating on the murder of Lovejoy and the violence inherent in slavery; he may have been expressing "conservative" Whig fears of mobocracy, as well as "progressive" Whig longings to re-found the nation on more egalitarian principles; he may even have been half-consciously dreaming about surpassing his oedipal father figures. Michael Burlingame has suggested that one possible target of Lincoln's irony was Stephen Douglas, while Major Wilson finds reference also to Martin Van Buren, and Mark Neely suggests we look to Lincoln's immediate political situation.[7] Any number of these interpretations can be true at the same time.

But the 1838 lecture to the Young Men's Lyceum was not Lincoln's only encounter with the lyceum. Lincoln had a long and consistent involvement with this somewhat forgotten institution of popular learning. He gave an Address before the Springfield Washington Temperance Society in 1842 that was essentially in the same genre, and he helped organize at least two other temperance lectures in the 1840s. His "Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions" was delivered on four occasions, once each in Bloomington and Jacksonville, and twice in Springfield.[8] He delivered an address before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society in Milwaukee on Sept. 39, 1859, and his Cooper Institute Address might be seen as his fifth lecture. It was initially termed a lecture and was delivered in a Hall designed for the lecture circuit.[9] There also exist a number of fragments which Lincoln seems to have intended for lectures of some sort, including a "Fragment on Niagara Falls," "Notes for a Law lecture," and a "Fragment on Government."[10] These four or five extant lectures and several surviving scraps reveal a Lincoln eagerly participating in the lyceum, not merely passively, but actively.

Lincoln attended at least nine lectures we know about, and probably many more. Evidence we have suggests at the very least five more before he was president. He attended seven we know about while he was president. While president, he also granted an audience to at least two visiting lecturers and suggested a lecture topic to a third; on Christmas Day, 1863, Lincoln requested a good lecture or two on "Serfs, Serfdom, and Emancipation in Russia" of Bayard Taylor, recently returned from his post as secretary of legation at St. Petersburg.[11]

What explains Lincoln's evident passion for the lyceum? Nationally speaking, what was the lyceum exactly, and what does it have to tell us about the making of Abraham Lincoln? And finally, what can we learn from Lincoln's specific attempts to address the lyceum?

Gabor Boritt, Olivier Frayssé, and Kenneth J. Winkle have emphasized the importance of the emerging market economy in our understanding of the young Abraham Lincoln. The Lincoln that emerges from this scholarship is not so much a Lincoln of the frontier, if by frontier one means a subsistence economy in which people were content to eke out a comfortable subsistence on their own, in the full enjoyment of relative independence from the world economy. Rather the rail-splitter myth of a homespun, folksy Lincoln has instead been replaced in these now-standard accounts by a Lincoln sometimes running from and at other times at outright war with pre-modern economic life.[12]

In *Lincoln and the Economics of the American Dream*, Boritt drew our attention to the importance of economic development in

Lincoln's life-long political stances. Lincoln consistently pushed a "right to rise" agenda that Boritt extended even into Lincoln's antislavery stance. Boritt recovered the Whig in Lincoln, a man who identified with new commercial economy and its meritocratic power to foster self-made men. Here the new market economy represented the opportunity for Lincoln to escape what even Marx in "The Communist Manifesto" termed "the idiocy of rural life." Writing from the academic left, Frayssé essentially seconded Boritt's findings, seeing them instead as tragedy rather than as triumph. Lincoln helped usher in a Gilded Age in which unmerited wealth crushed labor under its heel. For Frayssé, Lincoln in identifying fully with the new commercial economy, identified also with the new ruling classes. Finally, Winkle has given us a Lincoln who was neither hero nor villain in the coming of the new market economy, but rather one more typical for his age, a product of his time rather than a shaper of events. Winkle saw Lincoln's transition away from a pre-market economy and towards the market economy as the typical trajectory of many young men of his generation caught up in a profound economic transformation. As production was increasingly located outside of the household, men responded to economic imperatives, left the household behind, and sought their fortunes apart from their women in a new commercial economy. Victorian "separate spheres" were the familiar result. Lincoln's conflict with his father, for instance, was not at all unusual for two men who would live their lives in radically different economic circumstances. Thomas Lincoln sought comfortable, independent subsistence. Abraham's ambitions were unbounded. Thus, Lincoln and his father did not just play the game differently, they played entirely different games, and this not only explains their personal inability to communicate, it reveals a society in profound transition.

Somewhat lost in these accounts, however, is the role played by the lyceums in the economic transformation of the early 19th century. In the first instance, the lyceum was the training and proving ground for professionals prior to modern public schools, public universities and other bureaucratic structures such as the American Medical Association and the American Bar Association. A forerunner to the modern university, the lyceum was an extra-denominational institution for the aspiring elite in a pluralistic setting. Not only was the lyceum an opportunity for display, a chance to prove to potential clients that one was or was not a trustworthy professional lawyer or doctor; but somewhat lost to us has been the fact that basic science and literary education was also provided by the lyceums. Lincoln famously taught himself Euclid, but even in this he was probably not entirely without a network of intellectual support. The modern scientific textbook grew out of lecture courses in basic science that were then written up and published with illustrations. The lyceum was even a locus of basic scientific research. The gathering and initial re-classification of biological and mineral specimens that made Darwin possible was done by the lyceums, which routinely maintained extensive collections and passed puzzling new discoveries on to state lyceums and the Smithsonian.[13]

In an editorial on the need for higher education in Illinois in 1856, the *Bloomington Pantagraph* closed "by quoting the remarks of a humorous American physiognomist: "Men are not born, and, peradventure, we are not men when we come to 'man's estate.' Man is the result of education. [H]e is self-made, if he be made at all."[14] The antebellum period is noted for the belief in the "self-made" man, but this passage should prompt us to reconsider just what was meant by "self-made." Though there is a good bit of self-reliance embedded in the phrase, it would be a mistake to read "self-made" as equivalent to "entirely self-reliant." Rather the passage from the *Pantagraph* suggests another meaning. "Self-made" referred to the lack of reliance on family name and connections and instead, a reliance on education, which in some sense, is always self-education. After the American Revolution and the demise of the deference to hereditary elites, being "self-made" became a republican badge of honor. America was to be a meritocracy.

Winkle has suggested that Lincoln was not a man entirely without a past; he was ultimately of New England descent; and some attitudes of New England may have survived the generations of Lincolns in the border South.[15] Be that as it may, like many of this "self-made" generation, Lincoln left his family behind, because for this generation, family was no longer as crucial or reliable for success. Rather than attempting to provide and extend a landed patrimony, notes Winkle, fathers did better to provide an education to their sons as a means of guaranteeing success in the new economy.[16] For those whose fathers could not provide extensive education, the lyceum existed to fill the gap. Like many of his generation, Lincoln was in this sense self-made: he left the family farm behind to pursue education in one of the professions. But while many in this generation were "self-made," they were not entirely without help. Rather, they participated in what appears in retrospect to have been a huge, communal self-education project that linked small towns across the expanding United States, in what had become, for the time being at least, an economy of commercial small towns. For this generation, the lyceum was both an intellectual and economic lifeline.

The prevalence of the lyceum is one oddly neglected fact of the antebellum period. The Lyceum Movement in its American form is generally dated from Josiah Holbrook's call for an American Lyceum in the American Journal of Education in 1826.[17] Two years later, Daniel Webster and Edward Everett lent their names to a call for an American Lyceum.[18] The movement caught on very rapidly. Beginning in Millbury Massachusetts as "a society organized by thirty or forty farmers and mechanics, under the title of the Millbury Branch of the American Lyceum," soon several towns had organized the Worcester County Lyceum and a similar set of institutions had sprung up in Windham, Connecticut. Soon there was a system of monthly and quarterly journals, pamphlets and circulars publicizing the new lyceums. In 1831, the American Lyceum held a national organizing convention in New York City. "From this humble, but republican and dignified origin," read the convention proceedings, a truly National Institution had emerged. By 1831 the convention reported 800 to 1000 local lyceums, 50-60 county societies, and several state lyceums.[19] The movement continued to expand through the 1830s. Donald M. Scott reports that "in New York City there were more than 3,000 advertised lectures between 1840 and 1860, and in 1846 the citizens of Boston could choose from twenty-six different 'courses' of lectures." But the lecture was not simply a phenomenon of the large cities. By the early 1840s there probably were between 3,500 and 4,000 communities that contained a society sponsoring public lectures. A lecture society was frequently among the first institutions established in a newly formed town. By the early 1840s, few Northern towns of 1,000 or more people lacked at least one association sponsoring lectures."[20]

According to the National Convention Proceedings of the American Lyceum, the lyceum was essentially republican, in that "it permits, invites, and enables all who unite in its operations to think, judge, and act for themselves. It would liberate them from the slavery of a party, or a demagogue, and of their passions."[21] Thus the goals of scientific progress were linked to one of the prevailing political ideologies of the day. Educational reformers saw themselves as part of the same democratic and republican experiment that Lincoln would extol at Gettysburg: "Divine Providence intended to institute in this country the most important, perhaps the last, experiment, to decide whether the interests of a nation can be safely entrusted to their own management, or whether they need to be controlled by the strong arm of one or a few rulers."[22] In Europe, education and knowledge were limited to the few, but in republican America, the goal was to bring education to a self-governing populace.[23] And because it was more democratic, American Education was to be more practical, less oriented toward fostering "genius" than toward promoting economic prosperity. Not surprisingly, the lyceum movement was part of the transformation of republican thought from the more or less unabashed elitism of Madison's generation to the more democratic self-made ethos of those who inherited the revolution.

"By fairly conservative, estimate," writes Donald M. Scott, "attendance at public lectures in the North and West probably totaled close to 400,000 people a week at the peak in the 1850s."[25] The lyceums, therefore, provide a rich and often tantalizing glimpse into middle brow and elite culture in the antebellum period. Yet, these often curious lectures remain understudied. Relatively little has been written about the lyceum movement in America,[26] and as yet there exists no monograph on the lyceum movement in Illinois specifically. Donald Scott and other scholars identify three stages in the history of the lyceum. During the first or local stage from 1826 to about 1845, the local lyceum really was a project in self-education. Speakers came from the community to which they spoke. Lincoln's Speech to the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield in 1838 and his 1842 Temperance Address were of this character. His appearance was typical. In addition to basic education, the early lyceum provided a platform for would-be self-made men to practice public speaking in a safe, relatively friendly local context, and to make a reputation for themselves among the elite of town life. "Particular care should be taken to prevent the introduction of party feelings, either political or religious," instructed one lyceum. "To this end the officers and lecturers should be taken from all parties in politics and all denominations of religion."[27]

Typically, groups sponsoring lectures went by the names Young Men's Association or Mechanics Institute. These names connoted the way that these lectures were supposed to be practical; they were supposed to aid young men in their self-education. The lyceums were designed to provide the basic scientific background that would promote technological innovation and the market revolution. A resolution of the Massachusetts Lyceum, for instance, noted that "many of our enterprising mechanics, for want of scientific knowledge, suitable books, and proper advice, frequently incur an expense of time and money to very little profit, in endeavoring to perfect useful inventions."[28] The lyceums would remedy this problem. They also functioned as a training ground for teachers, and a place for teachers to continue their education as adults.[29] Throughout the literature on the lyceum, writers and editors extolled the benefits of a lyceum in improving instruction in the common schools.

After the Civil War, a third stage emerged in which the local societies were eclipsed by national organizations that ran highly paid celebrity speakers on organized tours across the United States. But for our purposes, Scott's first and second stages in the history of the lyceum, roughly from 1826 to1845, and 1845 to 1866 are most important. In this second stage, the new railroads connecting the small towns made it possible for local lyceums to invite paid lecturers with national reputations.[30] For instance, Abraham Lincoln delivered lectures on Discoveries and Inventions in various cities in Illinois including Bloomington, as well as at Illinois College in Jacksonville. Lincoln had made a national name for himself with the Lincoln-Douglas debates and he was something of a regional celebrity. Hence, he was invited to speak outside of his hometown at the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society in Milwaukee.[31]

Scott recognizes in the lyceum a stage in the professionalization of knowledge. "The coherence and organization that had marked most trades and professions in the eighteenth century had eroded, and the rationalized and bureaucratic professional structures of the last decades of the nineteenth century had not yet emerged."[32] This, then, was the period of highly mobile, but uncertain elites, summed up in the phrase, "self-made men." Lecturing was viewed at the time as a vehicle of advancement, particularly for the "self-made man" of Harriet Beecher Stowe's, Frederick Douglass's, and Abraham Lincoln's shared imagination and experience. Even in the early period, the lyceum sought "to supply in some degree, the place of that course of technology, involving a description of all the arts of life, which is deemed essential in the universities in Germany."[33] Particularly in science education, the Lyceum filled an important gap in the religiously dominated education of the early nineteenth century and paved a way for the secular scientific university of the twentieth.

Lyceum founders originally envisioned agricultural and geological surveys as well as state collections of minerals.[34] In 1832, the Middlesex County Lyceum published a list of its recent lectures revealing that while natural history, science, and technology were not the sole preoccupations of the lyceums, two of four "courses of lectures" and some 20 of the 59 listed occasional lectures were related to science and technology. "Full courses of lectures have been given before the Rumford Institution at Waltham 'on Chemistry and all its collateral branches,' 'Geography and History,' 'Astronomy and Natural Philosophy,' 'Political Economy and Heathen Mythology,' 'Natural History and Botany,' and occasional Lectures on almost every subject of interest at the present day."[35] This list from Massachusetts differs slightly in emphasis from one compiled for the Sangamon County Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois, from 1832 to 1842. Civics and current political topics figured larger and natural science smaller in early Springfield. Of 67 advertised lectures or debates between December 1833 and November 1842, 34 were on politics and civics, while only 18 were on natural history, science, or technology. Seven focused on philosophy or moral philosophy and six on education. (One lecture was on music and one on the utility of "sewing societies.") Probably reflecting local availability, all of the lectures on natural history and on education were delivered between 1834 and 1836. Springfield was not yet the state capital of Illinois and the emphasis on civics may have been due to the relative travel-time distance from market and scientific revolutions. And it may also have had to do with the Southern origins of the Springfield elite. Still, the Sangamon County Lyceum did announce lectures or debates "On the Structure and Formation of the Earth,"[36] "…does man constitute a distinct species of animals?"[37] and "Would it not be wise to dispense with the study of dead languages in our Schools and Colleges?"[38] Phrenology was a frequent topic in Springfield, as elsewhere, and thus the lyceum offered a venue for controversial topics that challenged conventional orthodoxies, topics that found little place in the pulpits. Though often censured, Francis Wright even had the temerity to lecture on birth control and easy divorce.[39]

With its college and with its connection to the Illinois River, Jacksonville, Illinois, may have been a better place to look for lectures on science and technology. According to the Proceedings of the American Lyceum, the first lyceum in Illinois was founded by Holbrook in Jacksonville sometime before 1832. In December 1831, the *Sangamo Journal* reported the organization of the "Illinois State Lyceum" with Edward Beecher as it first president.[40] Part of the famous Beecher family that included father Lyman, sisters Catherine and Harriet, and brother Henry Ward, Edward Beecher was then president of Illinois College in Jacksonville. Early lectures were given in "Natural Philosophy, chemistry, Botany, History, etc. Western Antiquities form[ed] a distinct subject of investigation, with the origin of the mounds, whether natural or artificial, and of the prairies."[41] The Illinois Lyceum linked remote "frontier" Illinois to a national intellectual endeavor. Entirely reflective of the national intellectual culture, the first weekly course of lectures at the Illinois Lyceum in Vandalia included an introductory lecture followed by "On Astronomy," "On the Earth and the Atmosphere," and "On the Advantages of Free labor over that derived from Slaves," and "On the Physiology of Plants."[42] Jacksonville was also the home of Illinois College and, beginning in the Spring of 1833, to the chief architect of the Illinois Natural History Society as part of the "industrial University" that was to become Illinois State Normal University, Jonathan Baldwin Turner.[43]

Thus, in spite of the emphasis on civics in some of the lecture titles, including Lincoln's lyceum address, it is important to recognize how much basic science and basic science education was carried on by the lyceums prior to the founding of the major research universities. The lyceums provided this education and promoted basic scientific research. Even in the mid-1840s, after the lyceum had become a forum for social and political controversies, as much as a place for science education, itinerant lectures on basic astronomy remained very popular. In 1847, Horace Greeley took care to take Ormby Mitchel's six lectures on astronomy down word for word so that they could be published in the *New York Tribune* as well as in pamphlet form. (Mitchel made reference to argument from design in his lectures.)[44] These lectures required very careful reading, which again reflects how hungry the public was for an accessible, but nevertheless rigorous, introduction to the natural sciences. And even the topics of controversy in the later lyceums generally had a theme relevant to "natural history" that got them in the door. Phrenology, spiritualism, and even women's rights all fit this basic pattern. It should not be surprising then, that Lincoln's later attempts and probable attempts at the lyceum lecture took on topics related to the impact of scientific discovery.

"The appeal of the public lecture as a form of intellectual theatricality lay partly in how it dealt with some of the cultural tensions of the mid-nineteenth-century America."[45] Building on that, I would like to add that for our purposes, the most important non-political cultural tension of the late antebellum period was the conflict over the meaning of discoveries in what was then appropriately termed "natural history." The recession of the falls at Niagara and other geological discoveries called into question the biblical timeline of the earth. And the existence, or rather the non-existence, of long extinct species likewise reinforced difficulties with a literal biblical account of creation.

Over time, tensions arose between the tenets of evangelicalism and the new scientific discoveries. Increasingly, nods to evangelical orthodoxy in the lyceum took on the form of an apology for a preoccupation with natural science that raised troubling challenges. After the Civil War, the rise of Darwinism would expand this incipient gulf between science and the Biblical "literalism" characteristic of American Christians in the 19th Century.[46] These tensions were driven by discoveries in the fossil record, discoveries advanced by the lyceum participants themselves, or by the recession of the falls at Niagara, which suggested that the earth was older than the biblical narrative suggested. Initially, the argument from design, which stated that the manifest design apparent in the natural world would manifestly lead students of natural history to a pious acknowledgment of a Divine Designer, became almost required in the lyceum.[47] But it was one thing to suggest that the panoply of the natural world inspired awe and wonder at creation, and quite another to reconcile a literalistic reading of the Bible with the dating of the earth based on a fossil record.[48] The argument from design might be used to defend some vague form of theism; but to careful students of nature, it was essentially irrelevant to the question of the Bible's literal veracity.

Lincoln himself addressed this intellectual crisis directly in a fragment probably intended for the lyceum. Though his friend James Smith wrote a book on the subject,[49] Lincoln never resorted to the argument from design. It seems clear he recognized its irrelevance earlier than did most of his contemporaries. In any case, the argument from design, or rather the lack thereof, is an interesting "non-barking dog" in Lincoln's writing that begs explaining. Instead, at this particularly difficult juncture in his professional life, Lincoln began to take an almost entirely unique path. Returning to Illinois between sessions of his one term in Congress, Lincoln visited Niagara. He had learned enough natural history through the lyceum and his reading to realize the profound significance of the falls. Lincoln noted that the recession of the falls suggested that the earth was at least 14,000 years old. Most educated listeners in the antebellum period would have recognized that figure as nearly three times older than the tracing of the begats in the Bible suggested. Thus the recession of Niagara Falls from the shores of Lake Ontario to their current location suggested an older earth than a "literal" interpretation of the Bible did.

When confronted with the various discrepancies between a "literal" reading of the Bible and the discoveries in natural history, Lincoln was not unique in siding with science.[50] Unique to Lincoln was the way he sought to bridge the divide between religious orthodoxy and naturalism. In this fragment, he used the same literary antithesis he would use at Gettysburg to contrast the views of the "natural philosopher" with his own sense of the transcendental significance of Nature. Both the Fragment on Niagara Falls and the Gettysburg Address first move self-consciously toward the mundane, natural "here and now," only to explode into a poetic antithesis of transcendent meaning:

> Niagara-Falls! By what mysterious power is it that millions and millions, are drawn from all parts of the world, to gaze upon Niagara Falls? There is no mystery about the thing itself. Every effect is just such as any intelligent man knowing the causes, would anticipate, without it. If the water moving onward in a great river, reaches a point where there is a perpendicular jog, of a hundred feet in descent, in the bottom of the river, – it is plain the water will have a violent and continuous plunge at that point. It is also plain the water, thus plunging, will foam, and roar, and send up a mist, continuously, in which last, during sunshine, there will be perpetual rain-bows. The mere physical of Niagara Falls is only this. Yet this is really a very small part of that world's wonder. It's power to excite reflection, and emotion, is it's great charm.

"The geologist," Lincoln continued,

> will demonstrate that the plunge, or fall, was once at Lake Ontario, and has worn it's way back to it's present position; he will ascertain how fast it is wearing now, and so get a basis for determining how long it has been wearing back from Lake Ontario, and finally demonstrate by it that this world is at least fourteen thousand years old.

Perhaps to maintain political viability, it seems Lincoln never made public use of this fragment. But more importantly, through what I call a Romantic Religious response,[51] Lincoln maintained a religious outlook in spite of the problems with a literal reading of the Bible In spite of the scientist's conclusions, there was still more to the mystery and power of Niagara. Just as the Gettysburg Address would recommence with "but in a larger sense," here in this antithesis Lincoln wrote, "but still there is more,

> Niagara Falls calls up the indefinite past. When Columbus first sought this continent—when Christ suffered on the cross—when Moses led Israel through the Red-Sea—nay, even, when Adam first came from the hand of his maker—then as now, Niagara was roaring here. The eyes of that species of extinct giants, whose bones fill the mounds of America, have gazed on Niagara, as ours do now. Co[n]temporary with the whole race of men, and older than the first man, Niagara is strong, and fresh to-day as ten thousand years ago. The Mammoth and Mastadon – now so long dead, that fragments of their monstrous bones, alone testify, that they ever lived, have gazed on Niagara. In that long – long time, never still for a single moment. Never dried, never froze, never slept, never rested,[52]

Lincoln had no difficulty understanding the scientific significance of the falls. And the lyceum's collections of specimens helped him put together his own version of natural history. Unusual was Lincoln's resort to "mystery and imagination" to reassert a Christian cosmology *in spite of the failure of biblical literalism.* This took him away from the natural sciences and toward literature and poetry. Thus, of the several intellectual options available to him, Lincoln opted for a position akin to Horace Bushnell or Samuel Taylor Coleridge. In this, Lincoln appears to have been almost unique, and it would be this creative move toward the Romantic that would make his greatest speeches, Gettysburg and the Second Inaugural, possible. At the same time, for instance, Jonathan Baldwin Turner, another Illinois lyceum participant, was moving in precisely the opposite direction, away from a career in religion and classical languages and toward a new career in natural history.[53] Headed in opposite directions, in the late 1840s the two trajectories crossed. After a long encounter with the lyceum and natural science, Lincoln was able to recover through poetry a Christian and biblical worldview. And make no mistake, this entailed rejecting the prevailing "literal" biblical hermeneutic of his age. In this fragment we see both Lincoln's moorings in the lyceum, and his own, almost entirely idiosyncratic solution to what had become the lyceum's most important intellectual problem.

Lincoln did not walk away from the lyceum at this point. Rather, he maintained his interest in the meaning of scientific developments. His lectures on Discoveries and Inventions and his address at the Wisconsin State Fair in 1859 were rooted in the question raised by the lyceum: how could technological advance and the world market best be used to promote the republican values of economic and intellectual independence.

The footprints of the lyceum can be seen in small things as well as large. Lyceum promoters sold sets of apparatus and specimens to local lyceums. The "eolopile" or perhaps, "aeolipile" was a kind of primitive toy steam engine used to illustrate the basic laws of physics, and Lincoln referred to one in the Discoveries and Inventions Lecture:

> The advantageous use of Steam-power is, unquestionably, a modern discovery. And yet, as much as two thousand years ago the power of steam was not only observed, but an ingenious toy was actually made and put in motion by it, at Alexandria in Egypt. What appears strange is, that neither the inventor of the toy, nor any one else, for so long a time afterwards, should perceive that steam would move useful machinery as well as a toy.[54]

In addition to the aeolipile, the "arithmometer" was a calculating machine that could add, subtract, multiply, and divide, and the orrery was a machine that demonstrated the relative motion of the planets and moons of the solar system in the plain of the ecliptic. Along with a simple globe, the orrery was used to teach basic astronomy and tidal movements. Cabinets often included also a set of the seven simple machines as well as some basic chemistry and even electrical equipment. Lyceums often began with a basic rock collection purchased as a set. Collections then grew as members added specimens, and the resultant jars of pickled animals seem to have been particularly memorable.[55] But in an era when the common school system was struggling into existence, these lyceums were, again, an intellectual lifeline for would-be "self-made" men and women like Lincoln, who desperately wanted to keep abreast of the profound scientific and technological transformation then taking place.

More broadly, Lincoln's purpose in the Discoveries and Inventions lectures was to explain how technology and the market economy could be a liberating force. Through a rehearsal of the history of technology for which Lincoln mined the Bible as an historical source rather than as a sacred text, he attempted to demonstrate the primacy of mind in making technological advances. His point was epistemological. Contrary to any pure empiricism, he insisted that mind had to be active in discovery and invention. Thus, freedom of mind was crucial. This reflected the concerns of the lyceum because it linked the project of self-education with the republican goal of self-government.

While this lecture has many interesting anomalies,[56] its basic argument was very familiar to anyone involved in the lyceum movement. Lyceum founders created a broad-based democratic system of education and research, rooted in the social reality of an overwhelmingly small-town America in the midst of a market revolution. In 1847 Lincoln traveled to the Chicago River and Harbor Convention held in the largest city in Illinois. Chicago had about 17,000 inhabitants at the time.[57] Discoveries and inventions would lead to increased economic activity. Technological innovations would make possible "whole new sets of exchanges,"[58] in Adam Smith's telling phrase, and this would provide ever greater economic opportunity as more and more people became linked to an economy of market-oriented farmers and interdependent small towns. Knowledge was to come from this small-town world, travel through the state, national, and eventually "Universal"[59] or international lyceum, and then be diffused back across that interconnected world of small towns, fostering innovation and economic uplift. Lyceum founders saw this education as "republican" because, unlike a stress on the classics, which elites used to justify their authority, technology fostered a meritocracy.

Lincoln's contribution, if any, was to emphasize that, while for the most part he applauded technological advances and the growing interconnectedness of a world market economy, technology was not always a progressive force. The "invention of negroes," for instance, attested to the fact that the invention of plantation slavery led not to uplift but to degradation. Lincoln's apparent point was that conscious moral deliberation would be necessary to make sure that technological progress did not result in forms of moral degradation like slavery or the Mexican War.[60] Whigs never favored surrendering the moral initiative to supposedly free markets. Champions of what we call "globalization," they were nevertheless more restrained than their "Young America" adversaries in the Democratic Party because they understood that markets required intelligent regulation to insure a moral and "republican" outcome. Especially given the creation of a large, degraded working class in the Gilded Age, Lincoln's word of caution here was a pregnant one, but Lincoln and the self-made men of the lyceum do not generally seem to have foreseen the problems of the Gilded Age.

In large ways and small, one can trace in the lyceum the transformation of American life during the antebellum period. As late as December 1833, lectures would be scheduled for "first candle light" or "early candle light." The following February, announcements were in clock time. By 1838, meetings were announced "at 7 o'clock…A punctual attendance is requested."[61] More ominously, lyceum members themselves issued the call for national institutions for gathering scientific knowledge, as well as state institutions of higher learning. Thus, the bureaucratization of knowledge and education over the course of the 19th century paralleled trends in other areas throughout American society. Whigs, and eventually Democrats as well, promoted railroads and the modern business corporation, not because they sought to create the Gilded Age of Rockefeller, Carnegie, and Vanderbilt, but because they wanted to link small towns like Bloomington, Jacksonville and Springfield with an expanding world market.

Pacem Frayssé, it is important to give the small town stage of world economic history its due. Champions of the self-made man, Republican leaders like Lincoln and Seward perhaps should have sensed that economic developments were heading in a troubling direction. Unlike Lincoln, Seward was a reader of Dickens.[62] But a commitment to progress and Victorian values was typical of lyceum participants. Small town people would be empowered, or so the lyceum seemed to promise, to take advantage of new educational and economic opportunities, and then to achieve moral, intellectual, and economic "independence." In a lecture of his own at the Wisconsin State Fair—and here the medium really was the message—Lincoln maintained it was possible for every man to educate himself and then be his own boss.[63] For this generation of Americans, a historically peculiar, non-agrarian form of "independence" was the meaning of both republicanism, and of the American Revolution. Seldom appreciated by modern readers is the startling fact that even for a moderate Whig like Lincoln, permanent wage labor was seen as degrading. While most modern Americans now work for wages or salary under a "boss," for Lincoln's generation, that kind of subordination violated the promise of "independence" given by the American Revolution. The goal of the lyceum was not to create a large, subservient, urban, working class under the watchful eye of the professionally trained classes, though that was the tragic result. The original aim was a more genuine human liberation. To its promoters, the lyceum was part of this "republican" project of "self-made" men. And just as the business corporation replaced the partnership model of the antebellum period, so, too, the modern research university became a place for the credentialing of professional classes in a highly bureaucratic society, as well as the locus of authoritative scientific research.

The lyceum was thus Lincoln's alma mater. All of the themes of discovery and invention in the service of economic uplift and human liberation so clear in the lyceum would be reflected in the thought and politics of Abraham Lincoln. Lincoln had full access to early Illinois lectures, moving to New Salem in 1831 and serving in the state legislature in Vandalia from the end of 1834 until the legislature moved to Springfield in the spring of 1837, when he began taking part in the Springfield lecture scene. Though he never became an amateur naturalist the way many other lyceum participants did—for instance, Jonathan Baldwin Turner renounced his earlier career as a classics professor to become a leading proponent of the new scientific curriculum[64]— nevertheless Lincoln was exposed to basic science education despite the self-made myth. As his "Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions" indicated, he took more than a passing interest in the scientific work going on around him. Beyond even this, the emphasis on using education to realize a republican vision of meritocracy and the right to rise were not only deeply Lincolnian themes, they were the heart and soul of the lyceum movement in America. Like many other self-made men, Lincoln's anxieties quite understandably became focused on the slavery issue rather than on the creation of a degraded working class. While certainly in retrospect the warning signs were apparent, the overwhelmingly small-town experience of this generation left them with few intellectual tools to cope with the next stage of economic history.

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Endnotes

[1] For the psychological reading, Schwartz cites George B. Forgie, *Patricide in the House Divided: A Psychological Interpretation of Lincoln and His Age* (New York: Norton, 1979); Dwight G. Anderson, *Abraham Lincoln: the Quest for Immortality* (New York: Knopf, 1982); and Charles B. Strozier, *Lincoln's Quest for Union: Public and Private Meanings* (New York: Basic, 1982). For more restrained psychological interpretations, see Michael Burlingame, *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), p. 25, 26, 253-54. For the Political Theory reading, see Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959); or more recently, Joseph R. Fornieri, "Washington's Farewell Address and Lincoln's Lyceum Address, " (White House Studies 2005) 5(3): 365-382.

[2] Thomas F. Schwartz, "Lincoln and the Springfield Lyceums," Illinois Historical Journal, 83:1 (Spring 1990), 45-49.

[3] *Ibid*, 49.

[4] *Ibid*.

[5] Donald M. Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of American History*, 1980 66(4): p. 797.

[6] *Ibid*, 801.

[7] Burlingame, p. 365-67; Major L. Wilson, "Lincoln and Van Buren in the Steps of the Fathers: Another Look at the Lyceum Address," *Civil War History*, 29:3 (1983), 197-211; Mark E. Neely, *The Fate of Liberty*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 215. See also George M. Frederickson, "The Search for Order and Community," in *The Public and the Private Lincoln: Contemporary Perspectives*, ed. Cullom Davis et al. (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1979), p. 92-94; Daniel Walker Howe, "Why Abraham Lincoln was a Whig," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 1995 16:1, p. 27-38; Major Wilson "Lincoln on the Perpetuation of Republican Institutions: Whig and Republican Strategies," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 1995, 16:1, p. 15-25.

[8] The Lincoln Log, http://www.thelincolnlog.org, accessed 12/21/2007.

[9] Abraham Lincoln, "To James A. Briggs Esq.," Danville, Ills., Nov. 13, 1859, Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953), vol. 3, p. 494.

[10] "Fragment on Niagara Falls," c. Sept. 25-30, 1848, *CWAL*, vol. 2, p. 10-11; "Notes for a Law Lecture," July 1, 1850? *CWAL*, vol. 2, p. 81-82; "Fragment on Government," July 1, 1854? *CWAL*, vol. 2, p. 220-21.

[11] The Lincoln Log, http://www.thelincolnlog.org, accessed 12/21/2007; Abraham Lincoln, "To Bayard Taylor," Dec. 25, 1863, *CWAL*, vol. 7, p. 93.

[12] Gabor S. Boritt, *Lincoln and the Economics of the American Dream*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978); Olivier Fraysse, *Lincoln, Land, and Labor*, 1809-60, Sylvia Neely tr., (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994); Kenneth J. Winkle, *The Young Eagle*, Dallas: (Taylor Trade Publishing, 2001).

[13] Stewart Winger, "High Priests of Nature: The Origins of Illinois State Normal "University" in the Antebellum Lyceum," forthcoming.

[14] "Education," *The Weekly Pantagraph*, Bloomington, February 7, 1856, (vol. xi, no. 9, p. 1 col. 5). The "comparative physiognomist" quoted was James Redfield, *Comparative Physiognomy or Resemblances between Men and Animals*, (New York: W. J. Widdleton, 1852), p. 15.

[15] Winkle, p. 1-9.

[16] *Ibid*, 70-76.

[17] *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind*, Carl Bode, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 10

[18] "Intelligence: American Lyceum," *American Journal of Education*, Boston, Dec. 1828; Vol.3, Iss.12; APS Online, p. 753-54

[19] *American Lyceum, with the Proceedings of the Convention held in New York, May 4, 1831, to organize the National Department of the Institution*, (Boston: Hiram Tupper, Printer, 1831), p. 3

[20] Scott, p. 791

[21] *American Lyceum, with the Proceedings of the Convention held in New York, May 4, 1831, to organize the National Department of the Institution*, (Boston: Hiram Tupper, Printer, 1831), p. 5.

[22] *American Annals of Education and Instruction, and Journal of literary Institutions*, Wm. C. Woodbridge ed. (Boston: Allen & Ticknor), Vol. I, No. 1, p. 1.

[23] "The General Diffusion of Knowledge," Anonymous, *The Illinois Monthly Magazine* (1820-1832); 2, 20: APS Online, p. 337.

[24] George P. Macculloch, "On the General Principles of Instruction," *American Annals of Education* (1830-1839): Nov. 1833; 3, 11; APS Online pg. 510.

[25] Donald M. Scott, "The Popular Lecture and the Creation of a Public in Mid-Nineteenth Century America," *Journal of American History*, 1980 66(4): p. 800.

[26] Angela Ray published a book on the topic in 2005. See Angela Ray, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-Century United States*, (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005). But Ray's lonely effort follows on the previous work of Carl Bode in 1956. There are articles treating the topic, and several monographs treating the Lyceum in particular local areas, such as Massachusetts, New Orleans, Mississippi, and Michigan etc. In addition, the lyceums come up in a number of specialized contexts, notably Lincoln studies, the 19th century reform movements, history of geography, and the study of rhetoric.

[27] *American Annals of Education and Instruction, and Journal of literary Institutions*, Wm. C. Woodbridge ed. (Boston: Allen & Ticknor), Vol. I, No. iii, August 1830, p. 130.

[28] "Massachusetts Lyceum," *American Annals of Education and Instruction, and Journal of Literary Institutions*, Wm. C. Woodbridge ed. (Boston: Allen & Ticknor), Vol. II, Feb. 1832, p. 120-21.

[29] "The American Lyceum," *American Annals of Education and Instruction, and Journal of Literary Institutions*, Wm. C. Woodbridge ed. (Boston: Allen & Ticknor), Vol. II, No. i, Jan. 1832, p. 40.

[30] Scott, p. 792

[31] Lincoln delivered a Lecture in 1838 to the Young Men's Lyceum on "the Perpetuation of our Political Institutions," and gave an Address before the Springfield Washington Temperance Society, on the 22d February, 1842. The Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions was delivered to at least three different audiences including once at Bloomington before the Young Men's Association on April 6, 1858. Finally, Lincoln delivered an address before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society in Milwaukee on Sept. 39, 1859. In addition to the four existing lectures by Lincoln, there exist a number of fragments which he may have intended for the Lecture Circuit, including a fragment on Niagara Falls, and Notes for a Law lecture, and a fragment on government. And Lincoln's Cooper Institute address might be seen as his fifth lecture. It was initially termed a lecture and was delivered in a Hall designed for the lecture circuit. *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 3, p. 494. To James A. Briggs James A. Briggs, Esq Danville, Ills., Nov. 13, 1859 On Christmas Day, 1863, Lincoln requested a good lecture or two on "Serfs, Serfdom, and Emancipation in Russia" of Bayard Taylor, recently returned from his post as secretary of legation at St. Petersburg. *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume 7. To Bayard Taylor p. 93. It seems Lincoln continued to hear lectures while at the White House.

[32] Scott, p. 795

[33] "The American Lyceum," *American Annals of Education and Instruction, and Journal of Literary Institutions*, Wm. C. Woodbridge ed. Boston: (Allen & Ticknor), Vol. II, No. i, Jan. 1832, p. 41.

[34] *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind*, Carl Bode, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 25-26.

[35] "Middlesex County Lyceum," *American Annals of Education*, (1830-1839), Mar 1.

1832; APS Online, p. 131.

[36] *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, IL, April 5, 1834, p. 3, col. 6.

[37] *Ibid*. Jan. 11, 1835, p. 3, col. 6.

[38] *Ibid*, Jan. 18, 1834, p. 3, col. 6. I am indebted to Thomas Schwartz for his notes to the lyceum entries of the *Sangamo Journal*.

[39] *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind*, Carl Bode, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 124-27.

[40] *Sangamo Journal*, Springfield, Dec. 22, 1831, p. 3, col. 3.

[41] *Proceedings of the American Lyceum*, no. 1, New York: Collins and Hannay, (Boson: Carter and Hendee, 1832), p. 18.

[42] "Illinois Lyceum," *American Annals of Education and Instruction, and Journal of Literary Institutions*, Wm. C. Woodbridge ed. (Boston: Allen & Ticknor), Vol. II, July 15, 1832, p. 411.

[43] *Proceedings of the American Lyceum*, no. 1, New York: Collins and Hannay, (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1832), p. 18. *The Life of Jonathan Baldwin Turner, Mary Turner Carriel*, (Urbana: University of Illinois Press [1911] 1961), p. 13.

[44] *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind*, Carl Bode, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 201-02.

[45] Scott, p. 806.

[46] On a distinctively American "literal" Biblical hermeneutic, see Mark Noll, "The Bible and Slavery," *Religion and the American Civil War*, Miller, Stout, and Wilson eds., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 43-73.

[47] Winger, forthcoming; See also James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), p. 96-98.

[48] *The Botanizers, Amateur Scientists in Nineteenth Century America*, Elizabeth B. Keeney, (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 104, 107.

[49] James Smith, *The Christian's Defense*, 2 vols. (Cincinnati: J.A. James, 1843.)

[50] Turner, passim.

[51] Stewart Winger, *Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), p. 55-58.

[52] Abraham Lincoln, "Fragment on Niagara Falls,", CW, vol. II, p. 10-11.

[53] See Winger, "High Priests of Nature."

[54] Abraham Lincoln, "First Lecture on Discoveries and Inventions," CW vol. II, p. 442.

[55] *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind*, Carl Bode, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 53, p. 186-7.

[56] On the textual problems surrounding the "First" and "Second" lectures, see Wayne C. Temple, "Lincoln as a Lecturer on 'Discoveries, Inventions, and Improvements,'" *Jacksonville Journal Courier*, 23 May 1982, pp. 1-12. See also Stewart Winger, *Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics*, (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press), Part One, p. 3-78.

[57] http://www.imsa.edu/programs/pbln/problems/bernie/chicagomortality.html, accessed 08/16/2007.

[58] Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Book IV: "On Systems of Political Economy," Chapter I: "On the Principle of the Commercial, or Mercantile System," 1776.

[59] "Universal Lyceum," *American Annals of Education*, Boston, Apr. 1837; APS Online, p. 183.

[60] See Eugene F. Miller, "Democratic Statecraft and Technological Advance: Abraham Lincoln's Reflections on 'Discoveries and Inventions,'" *Review of Politics* 2001 63(3): 485-515.

[61] Compare *Sangamo Journal*, (Springfield), December 7, 1833, p. 3, col. 5; February 1, 1834, p. 3, col. 5; October 13, 1838, p. 2, col. 7.

[62] Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln*, (Simon & Shuster: New York, 2005), p. 38.

[63] "Address before the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society, Milwaukee, Wisconsin," Sept. 30, 1859, CW, vol. III, p. 478.

[64] Winger, "High Priests of Nature."

An Interview with Harry S. Stout

(Editor's note: Questions for this interview are based upon my reading of two books by Harry Stout: The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England *(Oxford University Press, 1986) and* Upon the Altar of the Nation: A Moral History of the Civil War *(Penguin Books, 2006).*

Q: In your book *The New England Soul*, you mentioned fast days and fast day sermons. Are the same events mentioned during the Civil War "direct descendants" of the New England practices?

A: Yes. In ritual form and substance, Civil War fast days (North and South) adopted the same rhetoric heard in colonial fast day observances and sermons. They were always held on a week day, when ordinary labor was prohibited, and they brought the community to churches to hear sermons addressing the spiritual meaning of political and military events, rather than the salvation of the soul, reserved for Sunday sermons. While fast days were observed far more often in New England than in any other colony, they also appear in the Middle Colonies (later states) and the South. But in the pre-war South, fasts never assumed the cultural meaning and national significance they would assume in the Confederacy. Denominational fasts were common throughout the colonial and Old South, as were church-wide fasts in dissenting congregations and liturgical fasts in the Anglican calendar. But, with the exception of a spate of fast and thanksgiving observations surrounding the Compromise of 1850 (deplored in the North), all of these were narrowly religious and deliberately separated from politics. With rare exceptions (in South Carolina of all places!), fast sermons delivered on these occasions were not published as they were in New England or in the Confederacy, nor did they constitute a central genre of public civil discourse.

Viewed in this tradition, the ascendance of the public fast in the Confederacy is truly remarkable. Through all of American history to 1860, public, state-enforced fasts were quintessentially northern and "Puritan." Yet when secession came to war, the Confederacy would employ the public fast more frequently than the North (it helped that they also lost the big battles more frequently!). In all, Abraham Lincoln would proclaim three national fasts throughout the war while, in the same period, Jefferson Davis would proclaim ten. In addition, there were multiple state and local fasts in the Union and the Confederacy, as well as fasts in the army.

Q: Were these fast days effective as motivational tools for the public? In early New England? During the Civil War?

A: Yes, they were extremely important motivational tools to confirm the goodness of the cause and to generate hope in the midst of trial and resolution in the face of disappointment. Remember that fast days in both colonial New England and the Civil War were event-driven. And, as often as not, those "events" were violent and terrifying, whether in colonial wars with the Indians or the French (later the British), or in Civil War military catastrophes involving thousands of lives. Add into events the fact that the vast majority of colonists and Americans (on both sides of the Civil War) were "evangelicals" who believed in the doctrine of "providence," whereby God ordered events according to His sovereign will, then it made perfect sense to turn to God in humiliation and prayer because He was the only one who could help you.

Q: I realize that entire books have been written on the subject, but would you please summarize your understanding of the concept of a "Just War."

A: At least since the writings of the fourth century theologian, St. Augustine, intellectuals and churchmen have grappled with criteria for determining when a war is considered just or unjust. Over the centuries, amazingly consistent criteria have been articulated by moral arbiters who are either religious or secular. This is one of the very few areas in Western thought where Jerusalem and Athens have come together. The stakes in developing criteria for just wars are immense. War is unnatural to the human condition. War is violent. War is killing. And even for the survivors, war destroys lives. And so it's extremely important to know, before you pick up a gun and start killing people, that the cause is just. If a war is unjust, that means that the perpetrators are in effect murderers. And, as murderers, they are liable (today anyway) to "war crimes trials."

There are basically two categories of just-war theory. The first involves criteria for judging whether it is just to declare war on another people (which goes by the Latin tag *jus ad bellum*). And here, just war theorists agree that the only just wars are defensive wars or wars fought to defend other weaker powers who cannot defend themselves. Offensive wars for territory or gain, involving the deliberate subjugation of other peoples and nations, are always wrong.

The second category of just war theory, and the one most central to my book, is the question of how a war might justly be conducted, once war is declared (*jus in bello*). And here two principles are especially important. The first principle is "proportionality," requiring goals in battle to be proportional to the means employed. Granted that all soldiers at some level give up their right to life by enlisting in armed forces (a very sobering truth in its own right), even so, principles of proportionality still invoke limits to the carnage. If 15,000 marines were to be killed in an assault on Fallujah, we would say the losses were disproportional to the importance of the attack. But sadly, this level of carnage happened routinely in the Civil War and hardly anyone asked hard questions.

The second principle of just conduct goes by the term "discrimination." This addresses the question of legitimate targets in war. Non-combatants are deemed to stand outside the field of war proper; thus, it is unjust to attack them. Just war theory unanimously upholds the protection of civilians—no prudential "weighing of costs and benefits" is acceptable in deciding whether or not to target civilians or take them hostage; it is always wrong. Again, the Civil War does not provide an especially encouraging record of strict discrimination of violence inflicted strictly on soldiers as distinct from civilians.

Q: Lincoln's statement that "Both read the same Bible and pray to the same God" shows a remarkable understanding of the different paths which can be taken as people strive to find divine justification for their actions. Please comment on this need for justification as it applied to both North and South.

A: This quote by Lincoln points to the supreme irony of the Civil War in terms of its religious legacy. Indeed, it is precisely this quote and this irony that disillusioned so many northern intellectuals towards evangelical Christianity, paving the way for the "American philosophy" of pragmatism. But during the War itself, there were no cynics or disillusioned to speak of. They were all true believers, and this meant, above all else, that they had to believe that God was on their side. To accomplish this, both sides looked to prayer and scripture as the primary guarantor that their cause was just. Ministers on both sides of the conflict, in overwhelming numbers, were, in effect, held captive to the state and willingly allowed themselves to be engines of mobilization for the war effort by failing to ask hard questions about the war's unjust conduct and uncritically "praying to the same God" for legitimation and victory.

Q: How different were the appeals for public support during the Revolutionary War as compared to the Civil War? What core issues motivated the populace in each case?

A: I think, on balance, the American Revolution was a more secular event than the Civil War. Of course, Revolutionary ministers, especially in New England, preached fast sermons supporting the war, but they were not as common elsewhere in the colonies. Compounding the issues surrounding the Revolution was the fact that, outside of New England, a significant minority of colonists (as high as 40% in some places) were Loyalists who opposed the Revolution's "republican" ideology. In this sense, a case can be made that the Revolution was actually America's first civil war.

In the case of the Civil War, there was no religious or ideological divide between the two sides. Both were "republican" in ideology (hence the similarities of the two constitutions with the conspicuous exception of slavery), and both were heavily evangelical in religion. This meant that the religious divide had to be addressed directly if warring armies were to believe that God was on their side. When we speak of "core issues," we think immediately of slavery, and that is right. But there was another core issue as well: which side warranted the label of "redeemer nation?" There was a powerful millennial component on both sides of the Civil War as each assumed the designation of "chosen nation," singled out as "God's last best hope" to save a fallen world. Only with the surrender of the Confederacy, would the idea of a distinctive southern redeemer nation disappear (gradually), while in the North, Americans would continue to pursue wars of expansion and imperialism (this time overseas), again self-consciously as a righteous republic doing God's will in the world.

Q: In *Upon the Altar of a Nation* you stated: "...secession is a moral issue with no moral criterion for a sure answer." Please comment on this statement.

A: I think the question of secession inevitably involves moral dimensions, especially if it leads to a war over secession. The difficulty, for me anyway, is that I couldn't find any sure moral ground to render a decision on whether the South was morally right to secede. We face this issue constantly among nations in every landmass in the world. As a government we have sometimes supported seceders and sometimes opposed them. But it remains a contested subject.

As I'm sure you know, the first region of the country to talk seriously about secession was not the South but the North as early as "Mr. Madison's War" in 1812. Thereafter talk of secession remained in the North among abolitionists who refused to hold concourse with slaveholders. But neither of these movements generated momentum in any way like the South in the Civil War. Here you have a group of "rebels" who number in the millions, occupy territory far greater than the original thirteen states, and have absolutely no doubt that they have a "right" to secede. Did they? I think only a war would resolve this constitutional issue. Had they succeeded in seceding through force of arms they would have no doubt of their moral legitimacy. And who would judge them wrong? Of course, they didn't succeed and so the issue was settled by force of arms in favor of the Union. While I have absolutely no difficulty saying the Confederacy was wrong to fight for slavery and that slavery was the issue that occasioned secession, I have considerable difficulty saying that seven million (white) people were morally wrong in saying they wanted to leave the Union. Just keeping the union together at the cost of over a million casualties and destruction of large parts of the South was no more intrinsically moral than keeping Yugoslavia together in the 1990s. Is there anything intrinsically moral about a nation that stretches from ocean to ocean (and beyond) as opposed to one confined to just part of a continent?

Q: I thought that you showed great insight when you compared the idea of "dying in vain" to both the Civil War and the War in Vietnam. You stated that the soldiers during the Civil War did not die in vain because "they did not say" that they did. Please comment.

A: Ah yes, my afterword. I never felt comfortable writing the afterward and sometimes wished that I hadn't because I just didn't have enough distance from my book to really feel confident. And this quote is a case in point. I now see how, in almost all wars, surviving veterans are loathe to say their comrades died in vain, even if later critics dub their war unjust. So does that mean that there are no unjust wars because veterans refuse to demean their efforts? I don't think so. Were I to rewrite my afterword, I would probably employ a different language that would reiterate the main burden of the book, which is to document the many unjust behaviors on both sides that participants and subsequent historians have been loathe to dwell on. But this denial is wrong. If this book has taught me anything, it is first and foremost the lesson that war is a moral hell no less than a military hell. It forces unnatural decisions regarding the wastage of human life that we all too often wish to ignore. This means that the time to pursue moral inquiry into the cause and conduct of war is not after the shooting starts. That is virtually impossible. It has to be confronted before the next war erupts. But as long as forgotten memories and romantic stories dominate, this won't happen. By writing serious moral histories about our nation's wars, we remove some of the blinders we wear and reveal the full meaning of America that lies so close to our collective psyche in times of total war.

Q: Please comment on your statement that: "The incarnation of a national American civil religion may have been the final great legacy of the Civil War."

A: This was a realization that came to me well into the writing of the book and not one I set out "to prove." The key word in the quote is "national," because clearly there were regional civil religions before. But there was no sense of the federal nation state as the primary object of religious devotion, superior to state, region, or local community. This is illustrated in the (probably apocryphal) observation that before the Civil War, Americans would say "The United States *are* a Republic," and after the war they would come to say "The United States *is* a Republic." And for that to happen, there had to be what I elsewhere described as a "baptism in blood" that incarnated a national faith whereby patriotism itself became sacralized.

I made it a point to never mention the war in Iraq in my book (what better way to date it before its time!), but of course I had in mind the war in Iraq going on all around me even as I wrote about another American war that happened one and a half centuries ago. What I see in Iraq resembles antebellum America. No one, or hardly anyone, thinks of themselves as Iraquis over and against Shiites, or Sunni, or Kurds, or just criminals released from the jails. How are these diverse and murderous factions going to come together into some sort of collective civil religion without a substantial baptism in blood? I don't know. We fear "tens of thousands" of casualties in a full-blown civil war in Iraq. We should talk in terms of hundreds of thousands or millions. But if the United States could not achieve union without civil war, how can we expect Iraq to come together in unity?

Q: Was there a moral difference between the actions of Sherman's "march to the sea" and then into South Carolina and other battles fought during the War? Please mention the post War comments of both Grant and Sherman.

A: No. I don't believe there was a difference in kind with Sherman versus all others. Certainly, "Bleeding Kansas" was even more brutal in widespread deliberate murder on both sides. And the Civil War in the West (with Sherman as participant) anticipated the outrages of Sherman in the Carolinas and Sheridan in the Shenandoah Valley. Had the Confederates been given the opportunity, they would no doubt have responded in kind (witness Jubal Early at Chambersburg). Sherman's march was not the egregious exception but part of a very disturbing pattern that erupted in 1864 of bringing war to the footsteps of civilians and spreading its poison everywhere. What I found so amazing about all of this was the moral silence on all sides (up to the highest levels of civilian and military leadership).

After the war, Generals Sherman and Grant attempted to defend their actions in terms of bringing a speedier outcome to the war, and many hyper-patriotic historians have followed. But this "end justifies the means" argument is, in my opinion, morally bankrupt and actually encourages American governments to continue wars of unjust conduct knowing that if they shout the end of "freedom" loudly enough, they can get away with murder (literally in too many instances), and never be called to account.

Q: Until reading your book, I had not considered your statement that, in discussing Lincoln's Second Inaugural, "the last three words of this great speech were the greatest." Please comment.

A: When I wrote the last three words of Lincoln's 2nd Inaugural ("with all nations"), I was thinking explicitly about the "Iron Chancellor," Otto von Bismarck and the reunification of Germany. As I understand Bismarck's campaign, it was engaged purely for the pragmatic creation of a powerful nation state whose preservation and perpetuation was its own highest end. This mentality persisted and would drag Germany into devastating wars of national aggrandizement. Alongside this Machiavellian hypernationalism was Lincoln's engagement "with all nations." Lincoln believed passionately in the American Republic. It was his "political religion," and one that he hoped would be preached to the world. But it was not nationalism for the sake of nationalism. Lincoln's nationalism was a prudential and moral nationalism. Put simply, he would never have said "my country right or wrong." America, Lincoln believed, only deserved reverential awe to the extent that it conformed to the higher ethical imperative contained in the principle that "all men are created equal." That is why he said repeatedly that if the nation could only survive "half slave-half free" including the territories and states-in-waiting that it was a republic not worth preserving.

Q: Please expand upon your statement that: "Visibly, most believed America (North and South) to be a 'Christian nation.' Invisibly, few could see that America was incarnating a millennial nationalism as the primal religious faith."

A: As the American nation-state became sacralized, the language of statesmen no less than ministers took on increasingly millennial tones. America, rather than any particular denomination or faith, would be God's redemptive instrument for saving the world. Language like this had the effect of shifting the focus of millennial rhetoric from a pre-war emphasis on revivals and Christ's second coming on a global scale to America itself becoming messianic and a redeemer nation. The historian James Moorehead, in his outstanding book, American Apocalypse, first pointed to an emerging "post-millennial" eschatology, or theory of end times, that focused on the American nation state as somehow mystically transformative on a global scale. This rhetoric has continued right down to our present, especially in time of war.

Q: Did the clergy play a role in the 1864 election?

A: Most definitely. The Republican Party, in particular, "preached politics" in the form of sermons explicitly urging their congregations to vote Republican. Some went so far as to suggest that Democratic parishioners were unpatriotic and, perhaps, even liable to discipline. In other words, they were suggesting that voting Democratic would be a sin. When Democratic political candidates in the 1864 election spoke of an "armistice" with the Confederacy or a "compromise," seven Methodist conferences condemned the Democratic platform as "unchristian and sinful."

For their part, northern Democrats took the moral high ground, refusing to preach politics and damning the Republican clergy. But the Democratic high ground came at a tragically steep moral price, as most rejected the Emancipation Proclamation and maintained virulently racist attitudes towards African Americans. Democratic clergyman Henry J. Van Dyke ranted at the (largely Republican) Presbyterian General Assembly for passing laws that deliberately threw "the whole moral influence of the Assembly in favor of one political party."

Q: Your chapter titled "June 3. Cold Harbor. I was killed." Leaves no doubt that soldiers knew just how devastating the battles could be. Please put this extraordinary statement in context.

A: On one level, this question goes back to the point I made that soldiers give up their right to life. By 1864, that realization was tragically clear in the mind of most soldiers, especially in Grant's and Lee's armies. Nevertheless, it remains worth asking why so many would put themselves in immediate risk of their life. In his book *For Cause and Comrades*, James M. McPherson quotes an American general from the Vietnam era who noted that nobody could get American soldiers to do in Vietnam what soldiers did routinely in the Civil War. And it is worth asking why. McPherson rightly places a lot of emphasis on "comrades," noting that many soldiers came from the same towns. But I think religion also played a huge role in preparing soldiers to sacrifice their lives "on the altar of their nation." This was as true for the Confederacy as it was for the Union. When you're told from the highest authorities that it would be sinful not to sacrifice your life in a worthy cause, and when most soldiers were evangelical Protestants who believed in the reality of heaven and hell as much as the reality of the world around them, they would literally sacrifice their lives in the expectation that this would somehow render them just in the eyes of God and therefore entitled to an eternity in paradise.

As I answer this question, I realize some parallels with the rhetoric of terrorist suicide bombers who believe that in their actions, paradise waits beyond. But there remains a huge difference. Charging an enemy position "against all odds," is not, technically speaking, against all odds. There is a chance of survival. Deliberate suicide is a different matter. The whole point is to die in the act of exploding therefore denying your humanity and reducing yourself to a sub-human ontological state of being a weapon. This did not occur in the Civil War.

Q: Did Fort Wagner change minds and racial stereotypes?

A: I think for all but the most hardened racists (of which there were tragically too many) the bravery demonstrated at Fort Wagner, and many other places, by hundreds of thousands of African American soldiers transformed attitudes and made possible the widespread acceptance of the Emancipation Proclamation and subsequent Constitutional amendments. There were many points in the course of writing this book when I was literally reduced to tears. But I think the most powerful instance came when I read the words of African American soldiers explaining why, for them, the war was all about abolition—a cause they were willing to die for. Part of my emotion was directed to the bravery and resolve of so many former slaves who purportedly were inferior and cowards. But part of it also was directed at the sad reality that all of their bravery and all of their sacrifice for the cause of union and "freedom" would be betrayed by a still racist American society after the surrender of the Confederacy. "Jim Crow" was a northern invention and the systematic resubjugation of the African American race was as much a northern story as southern. And that, argues my colleague David Blight, is the real tragedy that underlies the moral legacy of the Civil War.

Q: You mentioned the lack of "restraints from the war's brutality" and stated that "fatalism became ingrained so that nothing was unacceptable; it just was." Please explain.

A: This connects to my earlier comments on fatalism in the Civil War and the devastating effect that religion would play in the struggle. Not only were most Americans evangelical in this time period, but they were evangelicals whose world view was deeply informed by a Calvinist legacy that went back to the Puritans. And here the key factor was the doctrine of "providence." Briefly stated, the doctrine of providence made room for direct divine intervention in the affairs of human kind. Calvinists not only believed that God was absolutely sovereign but that God intended to use that sovereignty to influence the course of events in nature and among His human creation. In this view God, could and did effect everything from famines and droughts to victories and defeats as a form of divine pedagogy to teach wayward Christians the errors of their ways. This doctrine, as I stated earlier, set the context for fast and thanksgiving days acknowledging God's governance of human affairs. But it also shaped what today we might call psyches. Providence prepared Americans to accept any level of suffering because, ultimately it was not human agency that governed the outcome of events, but divine strategy.

I would suggest that by 1861 Calvinist theology continued to shape and influence American culture (North and South) even as strictly Calvinist Presbyterians were waning in numbers relative to Methodists and Baptists. It even appears in the thoughts and words of Abraham Lincoln, who was anything but Calvinist in terms of his religious beliefs. Earlier I mentioned the last three words of Lincoln's 2nd Inaugural as being especially powerful and revelatory. But there is another famous phrase in that oration that reflects a fatalist perspective on the massive casualties: "Fondly do we hope—fervently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue, until all the wealth piled by the bond-man's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash, shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said 'the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'" This is pure fatalism. Lincoln is saying, in effect, we can do nothing to shorten this war because WE are not the ones orchestrating it. GOD is orchestrating it so that we dare not question gruesome casualties or endless battles. God is punishing us with war, so it is not our doing. If you really believe this, as most Civil War participants did, then you are blinded to hard questions of proportionality or discrimination and the destruction can mount geometrically.

Q: What is your next project?

A In the course of writing this book, I became acutely sensitive to the power of religion—especially fundamentalist religion—to get caught up in millennial visions that all too often lead to, or reinforce, violent conflict. With this realization in mind, I accepted an invitation from Tony Blair to commit significant time and effort to a new inter-faith foundation he is forming to promote interfaith dialogue on a global basis. Mr. Blair sees this as one of the greatest challenges facing the twenty-first century, and I agree. My particular responsibility will be to think about ways that children of diverse traditions can understand more about each other and come into collective interaction, both literally and virtually. So far a number of governments have expressed interest in supporting this, so I'm hopeful!

This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War

By Drew Gilpin Faust
(New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008)

Reviewed by John C. Rodrigue

The subject of death and the American Civil War, bloodbath that the war was, would seem at first glance to be so broad, so amorphous, as to defy fathoming. If the essence of war is that human beings deliberately kill other human beings, then how can we distinguish the study of death, as a distinct topic, from the study of war itself? "War is all hell," as Union general William Tecumseh Sherman famously noted, precisely because men, as well as women and children, die. Yet it is because war violates both the basic human instinct of self-preservation and the fundamental moral proscription against taking human life that men and women have striven to comprehend this most incomprehensible of human endeavors. The problem of death and the American Civil War has had particular salience for U.S. history, not only because the Civil War still stands far and away as the nation's deadliest conflict, but also because it belies two interrelated concepts that are often thought to be central to how Americans have understood their own past: exceptionalism, the idea that the American experience is qualitatively different from that of any other nation, especially the nations of Europe; and, consensus, the notion that Americans have traditionally been able to work out their differences through compromise, particularly since they have been in essential agreement on fundamental ideas, values, and beliefs. In her much-anticipated new book, *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War*, Drew Gilpin Faust offers a wide-ranging exploration of how Americans, North and South, black and white, soldiers and civilians, attempted to come to terms with death on an unprecedented scale, and in doing so helped to transform conceptions of individual identity, citizenship, national obligation, and the nation itself. Indeed, as a result of the war, little if anything remained unaffected concerning how Americans thought and acted on the topic of death.

The name Drew Gilpin Faust is well known to students of the American South and of the Civil War era. The author of five previous books and many scholarly articles and essays, Faust is also the president of Harvard University. She has established herself among the foremost scholars of nineteenth-century southern history, and her works are must-reading for anyone who hopes to understand that topic. Her previous books have focused in particular on the intellectual and cultural history, broadly speaking, of the antebellum and Civil War South and on the intersection of intellectual and cultural developments and the region's political history. This book, as is the case with Faust's previous works, devotes considerable attention to the intelligentsia, North and South, but it also places intellectual trends within the wider currents of popular thought and behavior. Faust shows how the sentiments and ideas prominent thinkers and writers expressed both resonated with and reflected what thousands of "average" Americans said, thought, and felt about the war's human toll. Thus, while *This Republic of Suffering* is easily Faust's most ambitious work, it also follows logically from her earlier books, and, like her others, is sure to become essential reading for anyone interested in the American Civil War.

Faust argues that mid-nineteenth-century Americans adhered to certain basic principles and beliefs and engaged in a common set of rituals and practices on the subject of death, but the realities of the Civil War rendered these beliefs and practices almost entirely untenable. Americans therefore found themselves, both during the war and for many years afterward, trying to reconcile their idealized notions of death with the grim truths they now faced. Equally troubling to the scale of death, with unprecedented numbers of casualties, was the manner in which soldiers died: bodies were annihilated or left on the field for days or even weeks before burial; soldiers died anonymously, and their bodies were dumped into mass, shallow graves; relatives were left uninformed of the fate of loved ones for weeks or months, with many never knowing how or when they died. These realities, Faust maintains, contradicted traditional American conceptions of individualism, personal autonomy, and selfhood even as they violated yet more basic, human notions of honoring and respecting the dead. As remarkable as it may seem today, at the beginning of the war neither the Union nor Confederate armies had any administrative practices to address the practical problems of war-related casualties: the armies maintained no ambulance corps to treat the wounded; no burial details; no measures for accounting for the dead, missing, and wounded after battles; and, most astoundingly, no procedures by which either government officially notified next of kin of fatalities. Faust's book traces the process by which Americans tried to reconcile the theory and reality of death, and it examines how private citizens and state and national governments responded to the logistical challenges of dealing with the war dead. Through these interrelated processes of reconceptualizing death and of developing new ways of handling (literally and figuratively) the war dead, what Faust calls in her preface the "work of death," Americans transformed both their own private lives and the nation at large. Therefore, for Faust, death—for those who died and for those who survived them—marked the Civil War's most widely shared reality and, presumably, its most significant legacy.

Faust has organized her work thematically rather than chronologically, a decision necessitated by the nature of the subject. This approach results in minor repetition, but this outcome was probably unavoidable, given the overlap among topics. Faust begins her analysis with an examination of dying—how soldiers and their loved ones prepared for it and even experienced it, as related later by friends and comrades. Central to nineteenth-century Americans' conception of dying, and to Faust's analysis, was the concept of the "Good Death," or the "art of dying" (*ars moriendi* in the Latin). According to this idea, which had been at the core of Christian belief for centuries, the person near death had prepared for his or her fate and met it willingly and gladly, in a Christ-like manner. The nineteenth-century American version of the Good Death emphasized its domestic qualities: the decedent died peacefully at home, surrounded by family, uttering last words that signified resignation to and acceptance of his or her fate. Obviously, the idealized Good Death became impossible amidst the chaos of the battlefield, and it even proved difficult to replicate within teeming hospital wards. Still, soldiers and their comrades at the front; nurses, orderlies, and doctors behind the lines; and family and friends back home did everything they could to recreate, within the limits of the possible, the Good Death—or convince themselves that their loved ones had experienced it. Although Faust does not make the point explicitly, it would not be an overstatement to say that the changes in Americans' thinking and behavior regarding death were in many respects centered around a desire to reconcile the Good Death with the carnage and uncertainty of war.

Faust employs her analysis of the Good Death to foreground her examination, in subsequent chapters, of the myriad complications that arose from Civil War soldiers' deaths. Her exploration of how soldiers learned to kill makes the case that many, if not most, of them found this task more difficult than that of preparing to die, yet the preponderance of her evidence actually seems to show how quickly soldiers overcame their aversion to killing and how readily they became inured to death's consequences. Her discussion of the practical problems of identifying and of burying the dead traces the efforts family members undertook to locate and bury loved ones. It also documents the process by which the Federal government (and to a lesser degree the Confederate government) and such northern relief organizations as the Christian Commission and the U.S. Sanitary Commission implemented procedures for identifying and burying the dead and informing next of kin. Again, for Faust, equally important to these practices and procedures is their larger meaning, for they signified the nation's obligation to individual citizens (especially to those who gave their lives in its service) and to the individual's right to selfhood, even in death. Yet these advances could not keep pace with reality—more than forty percent of deceased Federal soldiers, and a far larger proportion of Confederates, remained unidentified.

Faust's examinations of the process by which loved ones at home learned of and mourned soldiers' deaths, and of how they tried to understand and give meaning to those deaths, underscore her larger point about the interconnectedness of battlefield and home front. Again, the unprecedented scale of death overwhelmed the conventions of traditional mourning, more so in the South than in the North, but it also meant that death was not just a private, familial matter but had become a public one as well, linking the dead and their survivors on both sides to their respective nations. Faust's analysis of how Americans tried to comprehend and render meaningful the deaths of thousands of young men presents one of the more contentious points of the book. This is not owing to her insistence on Americans' ability to reconcile faith and reason in trying to understand death; nor to the contrast—albeit all too abbreviated—that she makes between northerners' and southerners' efforts to give meaning to their dead; nor even to her documenting the ironic responses to Victorian sentimentality that the Good Death exemplified. (One popular song, "Mother Would Comfort Me," was parodied by the decidedly less reverent "Mother Would Wallop Me" [p. 194].) Instead, it arises from the singular importance Faust attributes to the writings of Ambrose Bierce, Emily Dickinson, and Herman Melville (all northerners) in her analysis of Americans' efforts to understand the war. "The significance of these authors' understanding of war's destruction does not lie in their influence upon popular thought," Faust writes. "Nor can they be seen as representative of widely held views. Their writings instead provide access into one point on the spectrum of possible reactions to the crisis of belief that war presented to mid-nineteenth-century America." (p. 208) One wonders why a historian who has previously written so eloquently and intelligently about southern antebellum intellectuals has devoted almost all of her attention to but a single point on this spectrum, one occupied by northerners, to the virtual exclusion of prominent white southern intellectuals who also faced this crisis of belief and who might have provided access to other, equally important, points on the spectrum.

Faust's final two chapters examine the years immediately following the war, and they explore the myriad efforts—North and South, public and private, state and federal—to locate, identify, inter or re-inter, and try to count the thousands of war dead. With the war over, the Federal government in particular renewed the halting efforts it had made during the war to record and honor "every" deceased Union soldier. Yet, as had been the case previously, practical difficulties impeded this goal, resulting in a hodge-podge of private and federal initiatives, often improvised. Among the challenges to honoring Union fatalities were the hostility of white southerners to Federal officials' attempts to locate Union dead and the deliberate desecration of Union graves. While Faust notes that it would be years before implementation of a comprehensive national program of recording and honoring the nation's dead would be completed, the seeds of that achievement had been sown during the Civil War, when the notion of a national obligation to each and every deceased soldier, as an individual, was born.

For the Confederate dead, of course, it was a different story. The ramshackle nature of the Confederate government, not to mention the obvious reality of its defeat and disintegration, meant that its record keeping, at best, was incomplete. Further, since Confederate soldiers and their survivors could not receive Federal pensions, there was no need to count them. Even today, Faust notes, the commonly accepted figure of 258,000 Confederate military deaths is an educated guess. Nor would these dead be honored as were their Union counterparts, despite calls from a few Northerners that they should be. Faust even seems to suggest that national recognition of the Confederate dead might have facilitated regional reconciliation, though it remains doubtful whether such a policy would have helped overcome divisions over racial equality. Honoring the Confederate dead essentially became a private, grassroots concern, with private groups, often made up largely of white women, honoring the dead in private cemeteries, thus contributing to the cult of the Lost Cause.

This Republic of Suffering is deeply rooted in a wide array of primary and secondary source materials. Indeed, the breadth and depth of Faust's research are staggering. This book is elegantly written, as is true of all of Faust's work, and it brims with insightful observations on every page. The arguments put forward—including both the overall thesis and those on particular points—are largely persuasive, though one can quibble with Faust on certain matters. In a number of instances, one wishes that Faust had expanded upon her discussions, though the seemingly truncated quality of these sections is probably owing to the fact that this book was written for a general as well as an academic audience. And this is as it should be, for this book quite simply is a magisterial achievement—a monumental topic undertaken by one of the nation's foremost historians—and it deserves a wide readership.

That said, it is also possible to speculate on the larger implications of Faust's argument. First, one wishes that a renowned historian of the Civil War had taken the opportunity in such a major work to explore one of the two main questions that Civil War historians have traditionally tried to explain—that of whether the differences between the slave South and free-labor North were so fundamental as to make the Civil War, or some kind of sectional conflict, all but inevitable. (The other question being why the North won.) What Abraham Lincoln famously described in his "house-divided" speech, or what William H. Seward almost as famously labeled the "impending crisis," has occupied historians ever since, but it seems not to have been a major concern to Faust. To be sure, Faust devotes considerable attention to the different ways both sides responded to the many practical and logistical difficulties that arose from mass death, and she certainly attends to the contrasting ways northerners, African Americans, and white southerners used commemoration of the war dead for ideological and political purposes after the war. Yet in her analysis of how Americans had to rethink their notions of death and the afterlife in response to the realities of mass carnage, not only has Faust not found any important differences between northerners' and white southerners' response to death, but she has chosen not to explore the larger significance of the lack of differences—or, to put it another way, the similarities—between them. This omission is especially odd, since Faust's previous work has tended to highlight the differences between the sections and the distinctiveness of the South from the mainstream of U.S. history. The point here is not to fault Faust for the evidence she found. Instead, one wonders why she did not use this very intriguing evidence to ponder the question of the differences, or some might say the supposed differences, between North and South. The omission could not possibly have been an oversight but rather was a conscious decision. The answer may well be that death, as has been said, is the great equalizer. Nonetheless, it would have been helpful had Faust used her significant findings on one element of the war's consequences—and a supremely important one—to speculate on the war's origins, and on how those findings might force scholars to rethink their positions on those origins. What do the similar responses to death tell us about the world-view(s) of people who, by the spring of 1861, seemed to disagree on just about everything else?

If the response to death, for Faust, fostered, or even resulted from, a kind of consensus, Faust's argument on the meaning, significance, and ultimate legacy of the Civil War is somewhat perplexing. Although Faust does not make this point explicitly, her entire discourse seems to argue implicitly that the cost of the war in human lives was the war's most important legacy. But was the war's meaning, and thus its legacy, bound up in the fact that more than 600,000 soldiers and untold thousands of civilians died, or was it that the nation was preserved and slavery abolished? Faust gives voice to those contemporaries, such as Frederick Douglass, who consistently maintained that the war had always been about slavery and that those who perished did so either in the defense of it or in the campaign against it. Undoubtedly, the human cost of the war could never be divorced from the war's larger meaning, and Faust correctly notes that "[t]he meaning of the war had come to inhere in its cost." (p. 268) And yet, as James McPherson, Chandra Manning, and other scholars have demonstrated, those who experienced the war, including the soldiers from both sides who fought, killed, and died in it, were convinced that the war had a larger meaning, and that the dead had given their lives for some larger purpose. Again, Faust is aware of this fact, but it is nonetheless telling that her discussion of how Americans, North and South, tried to give meaning to the carnage devotes considerably more space to those commentators (Bierce, Dickinson, and Melville) who emphasized death and destruction as the war's primary consequences (pp. 193-210) than it does to those who attempted to understand the dead within the context of what their national governments were trying to achieve (pp. 188-93). For Faust, it almost seems as though the "reconciliationist" interpretation of the war that David Blight has documented in *Race and Reunion*—which emphasized the heroism and sacrifice of soldiers on both sides over the fight for and against slavery—emerged not many years after the war, as Blight argues, but instead during the war itself.

Alternatively, one might argue that the Civil War's ultimate legacy—and even, perhaps, what makes the American experience exceptional—was not that so many men died and that the nation was consequently compelled to adjust its thinking and practices as a result. As history has shown, other nations have mourned their "lost generations." Instead, the war's legacy—and again, what may make the American experience unique in this regard—was that so many thousands of men died for the principle of self-government, and in both the defense and ending of slavery.

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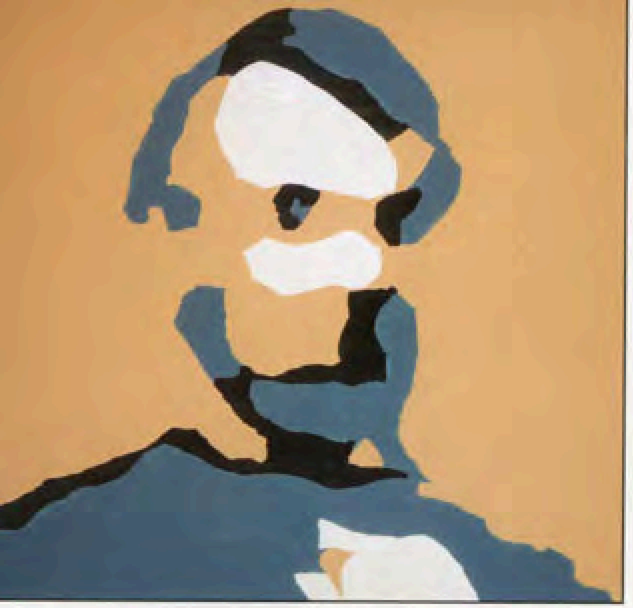

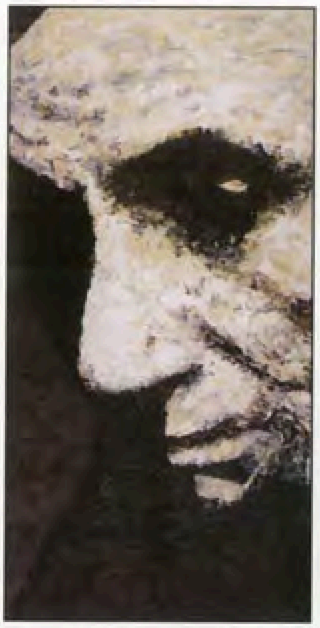

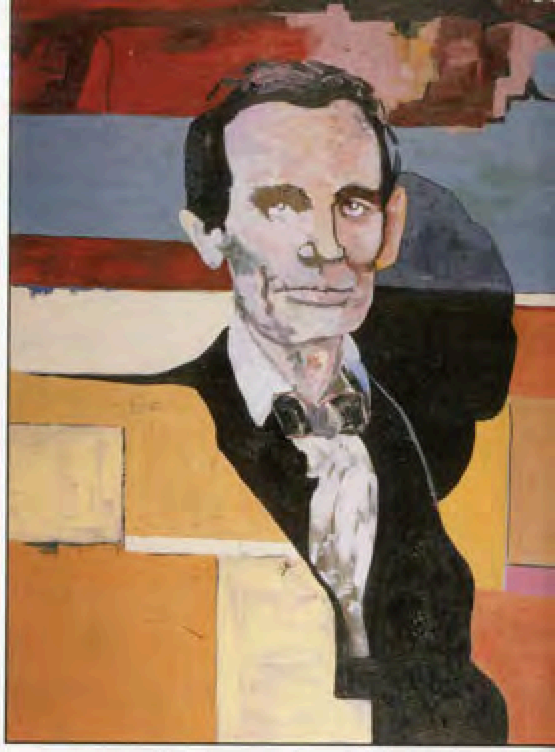

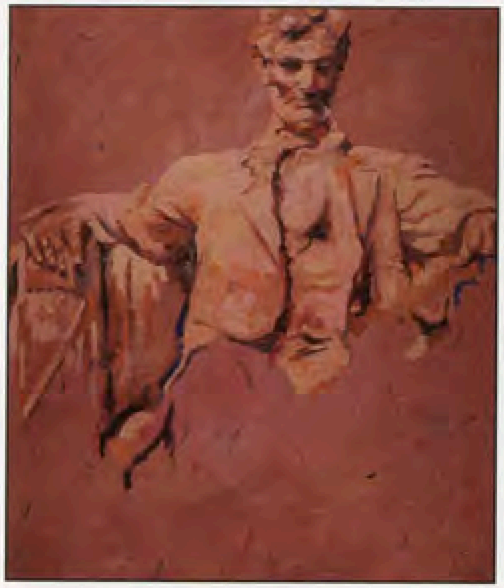

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