Presidential Inaugural Addresses

The More things Change, the More they Stay the Same
The Rhetorical Moment

- Janus moment
  - Past and future
- *Talk about* that
  - Celebrates comty
  - Names response to now
- Managing continuity and change
  - Continuity still responds to moment
  - Chg restores familiarity of comty
Talk ties events together in web of

- **description**: What happened? Why it happened?
- **evaluation**: What is good or bad about the moment? Do you accept or reject?
- **response**: How should cmtty respond? What does it support? What does it oppose?
Talk responds to events two ways

Acceptance:
- Motive embraces the event; approp
- Response coordinates per-form-ance
- DP: Little sense of disorder; order maps event

Rejection:
- Motivates fighting r/t embracing event
- DP: Names disorder & coord resistance; seeks restoration
- Per-form-ance is for chg
### Dialectic of Permanence and Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acceptance</th>
<th>Rejection</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Celebrates <em>continuity</em> of values</td>
<td>• In naming disorder, celebrates order</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Assures that disorder req <em>only chgs</em> consistent w/ values (order)</td>
<td>• Thus, <em>affirms</em> ctrl values of comty</td>
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<td>• <em>Chg</em> restores values</td>
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Nations do this as well

In a given moment

• Leaders lead by framing our situation to motivate action
• Celebrate the continuity
• Name the disorder to per-form chg
Inaugural Addresses

Quadrennial *rituals* where national comty
- Celebrates its identity
- Affirms defining values
- Defines situation of its moment
- Coordinates response to its moment

Per-form-ing their role, Prsdts use IA to
- describe their ideal society (Order)
- point to probs and causes (Pollution & Guilt)
- suggest direction of society’s movement (Remedy)
- describe government’s role in society (Restore order)
Dialectic of Permanence & Change

Inaugurals are rituals managing this dialectic

• In times of crisis and change: identifying continuity

• In normal times: reassuring of change
Inaugurals examined

• **Thomas Jefferson** -- 1801. Described as second American revolution.

• **Benjamin Harrison** -- 1888. Era when US becomes industrial.

• **Woodrow Wilson** -- 1913. Coming to terms with the industrial age.

• **Franklin Roosevelt** -- 1933. Great Depression.

We look for

• **values**: What do they praise about the situation? About their country? What do they value about the American experience?

• **causality**: Why do they see their situation occurring?

• **explanation**: What do they see as important in explaining their society?

• **response**: What do they believe is a proper reaction by government?
Themes to watch for in Inaugurals

• **<Progress>**: A lang of action
• **<frontier>**: A conceptualization of the Amer experience
• **tension between individual and community**: *The Amer struggle*
• **supremacy of Amer**: What makes Amer special? Exceptionalism
Thomas Jefferson, 1801

- The Election of 1800
- Ind freedom: Free from Inst
- Freedom in geographic frontier
- American Purity: Threat from Europe
- Prophylactic Government
Benjamin Harrison, 1889

- Weak Presidents & Robber Barrons
- America: Land of Businessmen
- New Frontier: geographic to business
- American Purity: Threat from Europe
- Individual freedom: needed for business?
- Government: Enforcer of Laws
Pres lead in their moment

If you are asking

- Which of these guys is *right* abt the revolution?
- They *make* history *up*!?  
- Something besides *reality* at stake.

**Stuck in referential**

Instead:

- Responding to cdtns (*reality*) of moment
- w/ resources of national character.
- Precedents in history give reassurance.
- Restoration hrt of task.

**Enacting env’ment:**  
Def/ing moment
Woodrow Wilson, 1913

• A progressive
• Rejective Frame: Restoration
• Restore to the frontier
• Europe: Source of markets
• Government: Referee for fairness
Franklin Roosevelt, 1933

- The Great Depression
- Military metaphor dominant
- Individual lives in human system
- Advance into frontier: by army
- Government: Leader of advance
Ronald Reagan, 1981

- The end of the New Deal
- World dominated by economy
- Freedom is: Individual in economy
- Economic institutions: Disappear
- Government: unleash individualism
Over two centuries

- American national motivation still in frontier
- Americans had to come to terms with institutions
- Freedom constant: language changes
- Motivation in govt changed
- Changes in our Americanism
What about Obama?

- **<Progress>**: A language of action
- **<frontier>**: A conceptualization of the American experience
- **tension between individual and community**: The American struggle
- **supremacy of Americans**: What makes Americans special
Leadership

• Conditions and demands change over time

• Leadership uses discourse to:
  – Coordinate response to those changes
  – Thru identifying the familiar (history/values)
  – To name the change in manageable ways

• Leadership uses discourse to inspire