METHODS OF RHETORICAL CRITICISM

A TWENTIETH-CENTURY PERSPECTIVE

Third edition, revised
Edited by
Bernard L. Brock, *Wayne State University,*
Robert L. Scott, *University of Minnesota,* and
James W. Chesebro, *Queens College and the Speech Communication Association*

Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1989

THE NEO-ARISTOTELIAN APPROACH

LINCOLN'S FIRST INAUGURAL

Marie Hochmuth Nichols

Part I

"Spring comes gently to Washington always," observed the poet-historian, Carl Sandburg. "In early March the green of the grass brightens, the magnolia softens. Elms and chestnuts burgeon. Redbud and lilac carry on preparations soon to bloom. The lovemaking and birthing in many sunny corners go on no matter what or who the blue-prints and personages behind the discreet bureau and departmental walls."[1] Spring of 1861 was little different from other springs in physical aspect. March 4th dawned as other March 4th's, no doubt, wavering between clearness and cloudiness. At daylight clouds hung dark and heavy in the sky. Early in the morning a few drops of rain fell, but scarcely enough to lay the dust. A northwest wind swept down the cross streets to Pennsylvania Avenue. The weather was cool and bracing, and on the whole, "favorable to the ceremonies of the day."[2] The sun had come out.

But if, on the whole, spring had come "gently" as usual, there was little else that bespoke the same rhythm. Out of the deep of winter had come the somewhat bewildered voice of President Buchanan asking, "Why is it . . . that discontent now so extensively prevails, and the union of the States, which is the source of all these blessings is threatened with destruction?"[3] Spiritually and morally, the city, indeed the nation, were out of tune, cacophonous, discordant.

Would there be a harmonizing voice today from the gaunt "orator of the West," about to take the helm of the nation? "Behind the cloud the sun is shining still," Abraham Lincoln had said three weeks before, as his train meandered across the Illinois prairies taking him on an "errand of national importance,

From *American Speeches* by Wayland Maxfield Parrish and Marie Hochmuth Nichols (New York: 1954) Copyright 1954 by Longmans, Green and Co., Inc. Reprinted by permission of David McKay Co., a Division of Random House, Inc.

Dr. Nichols was professor of speech at the University of Illinois.

[1]Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The War Years* (Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1939), I, 120.

[2]*New York Times*, March 5, 1861, p. 1, col. 1.

[3]James Buchanan, "Fourth Annual Message, December 3, 1860," *The Works of James Buchanan*, collected and edited by John Bassett Moore (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Co., 1910), XI, 7.

attended . . . with considerable difficulties."[4] Trouble had not come suddenly to the nation, of course. Only a year previously the country had been "eminently prosperous in all its material interests."[5] Harvests had been abundant, and plenty smiled throughout the land. But for forty years there had been an undercurrent of restlessness. As early as 1820, an occasional voice had urged the necessity for secession. Again in 1850, with somewhat greater vehemence, voices were raised as the distribution of newly acquired Mexican territory took place. Then came the repeal of the Missouri Compromise in 1854, the civil war in Kansas and the Sumner-Brooks combat in the Senate in 1856, the Dred Scott decision in 1857, and John Brown's spectacular raid at Harper's Ferry in 1859, all giving rise to disorder, unrest, and threats of secession as abolition sentiment mounted. Finally, came the election of 1860, and the North appeared to have "capped the mighty pyramid of unfraternal enormities by electing Abraham Lincoln to the Chief Magistracy, on a platform and by a system which indicates nothing but the subjugation of the South and the complete ruin of her social, political and industrial institutions."[6] It was not merely that Lincoln had been elected president, but the "majorities" by which he was elected were "more significant and suggestive than anything else—more so than the election itself—for they unmistakably indicate the hatred to the South which animates and controls the masses of the numerically strongest section of the Confederacy."[7] Senator Clingman of North Carolina found the election a "great, remarkable and dangerous fact that has filled my section with alarm and dread for the future," since Lincoln was elected *"because he was known to be a dangerous man,"* avowing the principle of the "irrepressible conflict."[8] Richmond observers commented that a party "founded on the single sentiment, the exclusive feeling of hatred of African slavery," was "now the controlling power in this Confederacy," and noted that the question "What is to be done . . . presses on every man."[9] In Charleston, South Carolina, the news of Lincoln's election was met with great rejoicing and "long continued cheering for a Southern Confederacy."[10]

Scarcely more than a month had passed when South Carolina led off in the secession movement. Her two senators resigned their seats in the United States Senate on November 10, 1860, and on December 20 an Ordinance of Secession was adopted,[11] bringing in its wake secessionist demonstrations throughout the South.[12] By the first of February of the new year, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama,

[4]Speech at Tolono, Illinois, February 11, 1861, as reported in *New York Daily Tribune*, February 12, 1861, p. 5, col. 3.

[5]Buchanan, *loc. cit.*

[6]*New Orleans Daily Crescent*, November 13, 1860, as quoted in *Southern Editorials on Secession*, edited by Dwight Lowell Dumond (New York and London: The Century Co., 1931), p. 237.

[7]*New Orleans Daily Crescent*, November 12, 1860, as quoted in *Southern Editorials on Secession*, p. 228.

[8]Speech of Senator Thomas L. Clingman of North Carolina in the Senate, December 3, 1860, *The Congressional Globe*, Second Session, 36th Congress, Vol. 30, p. 3.

[9]*Richmond Semi-Weekly Examiner*, November 9, 1860, as quoted in *Southern Editorials on Secession*, p. 223.

[10]*The Daily Herald*, Wilmington, N.C., November 9, 1860, as quoted in *Southern Editorials on Secession*, p. 226.

[11]Daniel Wait Howe, *Political History of Secession* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1914), p. 449.

[12]J. G. Randall, *Lincoln the President* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1945), I, 215.

Louisiana, Texas, and Georgia had "repealed, rescinded, and abrogated" their membership in the Union by adopting secession ordinances, standing "prepared to resist by force any attempt to maintain the supremacy of the Constitution of the United States."[13] The other slaveholding states held a position of "quasi neutrality," declaring that their adhesion to the Union could be secured only by affording guarantees against wrongs of which they complained, and dangers which they apprehended.[14] Already by the end of 1860, secessionists at Charleston were in possession of the post office, the federal courts, the customhouses, and forts Castle Pinckney and Moultrie.[15]

It was not without clamor and fanfare that senators took their leave from familiar places. When, on December 31, Senator Judah Benjamin of Louisiana reported that he would make a parting secession speech, "every corner was crowded"[16] in the Senate galleries. His closing declaration that "you can never subjugate us; you never can convert the free sons of the soil into vassals . . . never, never can degrade them to the level of an inferior and servile race. Never! Never!"[17] was greeted by the galleries with "disgraceful applause, screams and uproar."[18] As the galleries were cleared because of misbehavior, people murmured in departing, "Now we will have war," "D—n the Abolitionists," "Abe Lincoln will never come here."[19] Critics observing the national scene remarked, "The President . . . enters upon one of the most momentous and difficult duties ever devolved upon any man, in this country or any other. No one of his predecessors was ever called upon to confront dangers half as great, or to render a public service half as difficult, as those which will challenge his attention at the very outset of his Administration."[20]

January of 1861 came without hope, and with little possibility of the cessation of unrest. Occasionally the newspapers scoffed at the recommendation of the *Richmond Inquirer* that an armed force proceeding from Virginia or Maryland should invade the District of Columbia and prevent the peaceful inauguration of Abraham Lincoln, dismissing it as the "exaggeration of political rhetoric."[21] The capital of the nation was beset by rumor, clamor, occasional attempts at compromise, and general misbehavior. "I passed a part of last week in Washington," observed a Baltimore reporter, "and never, since the days of Jerico [sic], has there been such a blowing of rams' horns as may now be heard in that distracted city. If sound and clamor could overthrow the Constitution, one might well expect to see it go down before the windy suspirations of forced breath that shock and vibrate on all sides." Almost everywhere he met "intemperate and alarming disciples of discord and confusion." "War, secession, and disunion are on every lip; and no hope of compromise or adjustment is held out by any one. The prevailing sentiment in Washington is with the South."[22]

[13]*New York Times*, February 11, 1861, p. 4, col. 2.
[14]Ibid.
[15]Randall, loc. cit.
[16]*New York Times*, January 1,, 1861, p. 1, col. 1.
[17]*Congressional Globe*, Second Session, 36th Congress, Vol. 30, p. 217.
[18]*New York Times*, January 1, 1861, p. 1, col. 1.
[19]Ibid.
[20]*New York Times*, February 11, 1861, p. 4, col. 2.
[21]*The National Intelligencer* (Washington), January 3, 1861, p. 3, col. 2.
[22]*New York Times*, January 15, 1861, p. 1, col. 5.

As secession went on apace in the South, Wendell Phillips declared in Boston's Music Hall that he hoped that all the slave states would leave the Union.[23] Horace Greeley, impatient after forty years of Southern threat, disclaimed a "union of force,—a union held together by bayonets," and would interpose "no obstacle to their peaceful withdrawal."[24] Meanwhile, however, a few held out for compromise. On December 18, Senator Crittenden of Kentucky introduced a series of compromises in the Senate,[25] but action seemed unlikely. And when, on January 7, Senator Toombs of Georgia made a "noisy and ranting secession speech, and at the close was greeted with a storm of hisses and applause, which was continued some time," Crittenden's "appeal to save the country," presented in "good taste," created "little or no additional favor for his compromise measure."[26] While Crittenden appealed in the Senate, a peace conference met in Washington at the invitation of Virginia, with its announced purpose "to afford to the people of the slaveholding States adequate guarantees for the security of their rights."[27] Although delegates assembled and conducted business, ultimately submitting to the Senate a series of resolutions, it appeared from the beginning that "no substantial results would be gained."[28] It was clear that the sympathies of the border states which had not yet seceded "were with those which had already done so."[29] Ultimately, the propositions were rejected by the Senate, just as were the Crittenden resolutions, in the closing days of the Congress. In all, it appeared to be an era of "much talk and small performance," a dreary season of debate, with "clouds of dusty and sheety showers of rhetoric," a nation trying to live by "prattle alone," a "miserably betalked nation."[30]

When Lincoln left Springfield, February 11, to wend his way toward Washington, another President, Jefferson Davis, elected on February 9 to head the newly organized Southern Confederacy, was traveling from Mississippi to the Montgomery Convention of slaveholding states to help complete the act of secession, his trip being "one continuous ovation."[31] "The time for compromise is past," observed Davis, as he paused at the depot at Montgomery to address the crowd, "and we are now determined to maintain our position, and make all who oppose us smell Southern powder, feel Southern steel."[32] Clearly, people could agree that Lincoln was to inherit "a thorny wilderness of perplexities."[33] Would he "coerce" the seceded states and ask for the restoration of federal properties in possession of the secessionists? Would he respond to pressure "from all sides" and from a "fraction of his own party" to consent to "extension" of slavery, particularly below the line 36° 30′? Would he listen to "compromise" Republicans in Congress and only *"seem"* to compromise, "so as not to appear

[23]*New York Times*, January 21, 1861, p. 1, col. 4; see also, complete text of speech in ibid., p. 8, cols. 5, 6, and p. 5, cols. 1, 2.
[24]Horace Greeley, *Recollections of a Busy Life* (New York: J. B. Ford and Co., 1868), p. 398.
[25]*Congressional Globe*, Second Session, 36th Congress, Part I, Vol. 30, pp. 112–14.
[26]*New York Times*, January 8, 1861, p. 1, col. 1; see also, *Congressional Globe*, Second Session, 36th Congress, Part 1, Vol. 30, pp. 264–71.
[27]Howe, op. cit., p. 465.
[28]Ibid., p. 467.
[29]Ibid., p. 467.
[30]*New York Daily Tribune*, March 13, 1861, p. 4, col. 4.
[31]*New York Daily Tribune, February 18, 1861, p. 5, col. 6.*
[32]Ibid., p. 5, col. 6.
[33]Ibid., March 4, 1861, p. 4, col. 2.

obstinate or insensible to the complaints of the Slaveholders"?[34] Would he stand by the Chicago Republican platform, severe in its strictures on the incumbent Democratic administration's acceptance of the principle that the personal relation between master and slave involved "an unqualified property in persons"?[35] Would he stand by the part of the platform which pledged "the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively"?[36] Was the belief that he had so often uttered representative of the true Lincoln: "A house divided against itself cannot stand"?[37]

On March 4 as the newspapers gave advance notice of what was to transpire during the day, there was a note of fear and uncertainty in regard to the safety of the President-elect, along with the general eagerness about the outlines of Lincoln's course of action to be announced in the inaugural. "The great event to which so many have been looking forward with anxiety—which has excited the hopes and fears of the country to an extent unparalleled in its comparatively brief history—will take place to-day," observed the *New York Times*. "The occasion has drawn to the Federal Capital a greater crowd, probably, than has ever been assembled there on any similar occasion. . . . Whether the ceremonies will be marred by any untoward event is, of course, a matter of conjecture, though grave fears are expressed on the subject."[38] While visitors to Washington were seeking to get a glimpse of the tumultuous Senate in all-night session, General Scott and his advisers were together planning to take the "greatest precaution" for preventing "any attack upon the procession or demonstration against Mr. Lincoln's person."[39] Rumors of the presence of a "large gang of 'Plug Uglies' who are here from Baltimore,"[40] circulated freely. Whether they were in Washington to make an attack on the person of the President or to "create a disturbance, and plunder private persons"[41] was a matter for general speculation. Whatever the purpose, General Scott and his advisers had decided to leave nothing undone to secure the safety of the President-elect. Riflemen in squads were to be placed in hiding on the roofs commanding buildings along Pennsylvania Avenue. Orders were given to fire in the event of a threat to the presidential carriages. There were cavalry regulars to guard the side-street crossings, moving from one to another as the procession passed. From the windows of the Capitol wings riflemen were to watch the inauguration platform. General Scott would oversee the ceremonies from the top of a slope commanding the north entrance to the Capitol, ready to take personal charge of a battery of flying artillery stationed

[34]*New York Daily Tribune*, February 18, 1861, p. 6, col. 1.
[35]M. Halstead, *A History of the National Political Conventions of the Current Presidential Campaign* (Columbus, Ohio: Follett, Foster and Co., 1860); p. 138.
[36]Ibid.
[37]"A House Divided: Speech Delivered at Springfield, Illinois, at the Close of the Republican State Convention, June 16, 1858," in *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, edited with critical and analytical notes by Roy P. Basler (Cleveland, Ohio: The World Publishing Co., 1946), p. 372.
[38]*New York Times*, March 4, 1861, p. 4, col. 1.
[39]*New York Times*, March 4, 1861, p. 1, col. 2.
[40]Ibid.
[41]Ibid.

there. District militia in three ranks were to surround the platform to keep back the crowd. Armed detectives in citizen's clothing were to be scattered through the great audience.[42]

The occasion must have seemed strange to the man who had been accustomed to being carried on the shoulders of admirers on speaking occasions in his years as a stump orator in the West, and to being the idol of many a torchlight procession during the combats with the "Little Giant" in the tumultuous debates of 1858. Even the Capitol grounds where the crowds had begun to assemble had a strangely unfamiliar look in contrast to its fixity during his years as congressman in 1847 and 1848. "The old dome familiar to Congressman Lincoln in 1848 had been knocked loose and hauled down," noted Sandburg. "The iron-wrought material on the Capitol grounds, the hammers, jacks, screws, scaffolds, derricks, ladders, props, ropes, told that they were rebuilding, extending, embellishing the structure on March 4, 1861." "On the slope of lawn fronting the Capitol building stood a bronze statue of Liberty shaped as a massive, fertile woman holding a sword in one hand for power and a wreath of flowers in the other hand for glory. Not yet raised to her pedestal, she looked out of place. She was to be lifted and set on top of the Capitol dome, overlooking the Potomac Valley, when the dome itself should be prepared for her."[43] The carpenters had set up a temporary platform fronting the Senate wing for the occasion, with a small wooden canopy covering the speaker's table.[44] "The crowd swarmed about all the approaches leading to the capitol grounds," observed a witness, "while the spacious level extending from the east front of the capitol was one vast black sea of heads."[45] There were between 25,000 and 50,000 people there, waiting with expectancy.[46] "Every window in the north front of the Capitol was filled with ladies. Every tree top bore its burden of eager eyes. Every fence and staging, and pile of building material, for the Capitol extension was made a 'coyn of vantage' for its full complement of spectators."[47] It was noticeable that "scarce a Southern face is to be seen"[48] in the crowd, "judging from the lack of long-haired men."[49] While the crowd waited for the administration of the oath of the Vice-President, which took place in the Senate chambers, it was entertained with martial music, and "by the antics of a lunatic, who had climbed a tall tree in front of the capitol and made a long political speech, claiming to be the rightful President of the United States." Policemen were detached to bring him down, but he merely climbed higher and "stood rocking in the wind, and made another

[42]Ibid.; see also, Sandburg, *The War Years*, I, 120–21; Randall, *Lincoln the President*, I, 293, 294; William E. Baringer, *A House Dividing* (Springfield, Ill.: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1945), pp. 331–34; *The Diary of a Public Man*, Prefatory notes by F. Lauriston Bullard, Foreword by Carl Sandburg (Chicago: Privately printed for Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, 1945), pp. 73, 74; Clark E. Carr, *Stephen A. Douglas, His Life and Public Services, Speeches and Patriotism* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg and Co., 1909), p. 123.
[43]Sandburg, *The War Years*, I, 120.
[44]Baringer, op. cit., p. 333.
[45]Correspondence of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, as quoted in *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1861, p. 2, col. 4.
[46]*New York Daily Tribune*, March 5, 1861, p. 5, col. 4.
[47]*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 9, 1861, p. 3, col. 2.
[48]*New York Times*, March 4, 1861, p. 1, col. 2.
[49]*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 5, 1861, p. 1, col. 2.

speech."[50] The ceremonies over indoors, the major figures of the occasion were seen emerging, Abraham Lincoln with James Buchanan by his side.

As Lincoln and Buchanan took places on the right side of the speaker's stand, Chief Justice Taney, who soon would administer the oath of office, took a seat upon the left. Many in the audience were seeing Lincoln for the first time. "Honest Abe Lincoln," the folks back home called him, or just "Old Abe" was the affectionate cry at the Chicago "Wigwam" as thousands cheered and shook the rafters "like the rush of a great wind, in the van of a storm,"[51] when he was nominated. Walt Whitman thought "four sorts of genius, four mighty and primal hands, will be needed to the complete limning of this man's future portrait—the eyes and brains and finger-touch of Plutarch and Eschylus and Michel Angelo, assisted by Rabelais."[52] "If any personal description of me is thought desirable," Lincoln had written two years before, "it may be said I am, in height, six feet four inches, nearly; lean in flesh, weighing on an average one hundred and eighty pounds; dark complexion, with coarse black hair and gray eyes. No other marks or brands recollected."[53] He was "not a pretty man," his law partner, Herndon, thought, "nor was he an ugly one: he was a homely man, careless of his looks, plain looking and plain acting." But he had that "inner quality which distinguishes one person from another."[54] "I never saw a more thoughtful face," observed David Locke, "I never saw a more dignified face, I never saw so sad a face."[55] Emerson had found in him the "grandeur and strength of absolute simplicity," when, on occasion, he had heard him speak, seen his small gray eyes kindle, heard his voice ring, and observed his face shine and seem "to light up a whole assembly."[56] "Abraham Lincoln: one of nature's noblemen," he was sometimes toasted.[57]

"It was unfortunate," says the noted Lincoln scholar, J. G. Randall, "that Lincoln was not better known, North and South, in March of 1861. Had people more fully understood his pondering on government, reverence for law, peaceful intent and complete lack of sectional bitterness, much tragedy might have been avoided."[58] "Gentle, and merciful and just!"[59] William Cullen Bryant was eventually to write. But now, in 1861, there was something unknown about Lincoln to many. It is true that after the Lincoln-Douglas debates he had gained recognition beyond the limits of his state. The Chicago *Democrat* called attention to the

[50]Correspondence of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, as quoted in *The Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1861, p. 2, col. 4.
[51]Halstead, op. cit., pp. 149–51.
[52]*The Complete Writings of Walt Whitman* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1902), II, 244.
[53]Lincoln to J. W. Fell, Springfield, Illinois, December 20, 1859. *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, edited by John G. Nicolay and John Hay (New York: The Tandy-Thomas Co., 1905), V, 288, 289.
[54]Herndon MS fragment, quoted in Randall, op. cit., p. 28.
[55]*Remembrances of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time*, collected and edited by Allen Thorndike Rice (8th ed.; New York: Published by the North American Review, 1889), p. 442.
[56]John Wesley Hill, Abraham Lincoln, *Man of God* (4th ed.: New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1930), p. 306.
[57]Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln, The Prairie Years* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1926), 1, 199, 200.
[58]*New York Times Magazine*, February 6, 1949, p. 11.
[59]"Abraham Lincoln," in *The Poetical Works of William Cullen Bryant*, edited by Parke Godwin (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1883), II, 151.

fact that "Mr. Lincoln's name has been used by newspapers and public meetings outside the State in connection with the Presidency and Vice Presidency, so that it is not only in his own State that Honest Old Abe is respected." "Even his opponents profess to love the man, though they hate his principles," it observed.[60] Again the *Illinois State Journal* took pride in reporting his growing fame. In "other states," it said, he had been found "not only . . . an unrivalled orator, strong in debate, keen in his logic and wit, with admirable powers of statement, and a fertility of resources which are equal to every occasion; but his truthfulness, his candor, his honesty of purpose, his magnanimity . . . have stamped him as a statesman whom the Republicans throughout the Union may be proud of."[61] In 1860, in New York, the "announcement that Hon. Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, would deliver an address in Cooper Institute . . . drew thither a large and enthusiastic assemblage," and William Cullen Bryant thought that he had only "to pronounce the name of Abraham Lincoln" who had previously been known "only by fame" in order to secure the "profoundest attention."[62] Lincoln had faced thousands of people along the way to Washington, at Indianapolis, Cleveland, Philadelphia, Albany, Harrisburg, and elsewhere, being greeted enthusiastically. Still, "in general," observed Randall, "it cannot be said that he had a 'good press' at the threshold of office. Showmanship failed to make capital of his rugged origin, and there faced the country a strange man from Illinois who was dubbed a 'Simple Susan,' a 'baboon,' or a 'gorilla.' "[63] "Our Presidential Merryman," *Harper's Weekly* had labeled him,[64] later carrying a caricature recounting the fabricated story of his incognito entry into Washington. "He wore a Scotch plaid Cap and a very long Military Cloak, so that he was entirely unrecognizable," the caption read.[65] Men like Stanton thought of him as a "low, cunning clown."[66] And the Associated Press reporter, Henry Villard, remembered his "fondness for low talk," and could not have persuaded himself "that the man might possibly possess true greatness of mind and nobility of heart," admitting to a feeling of "disgust and humiliation that such a person should have been called upon to direct the destinies of a great nation."[67]

In the South, there had been little willingness to know the Lincoln they "should have known," the Lincoln who "intended to be fair to the Southern people, and, as he had said at the Cooper Union in February of 1860, 'do nothing through passion and ill-temper,' 'calmly consider their demands, and yield to them' where possible."[68] The South had made up its mind that whatever the North did to ingratiate Lincoln with them was done in deceit. "Since the election of Lincoln most of the leading Northern Abolition papers have essayed the herculean task of reconciling the Southern People to his Presidential rule," observed the *New Orleans Daily Crescent*. "Having succeeded to their heart's content in electing him—having vilified and maligned the South through a long

[60]Quoted in *Daily Illinois State Journal*, November 15, 1858, p. 1, col. 1.
[61]Ibid., November 12, 1858, p. 2, col. 1.
[62]*New York Times*, February 28, 1860, p. 1, col. 1.
[63]Randall, op. cit., I, 292.
[64]Vol. V (March 2, 1861), p. 144.
[65]Ibid. (March 9, 1861), p. 160.
[66]*The Diary of a Public Man*, pp. 48, 49.
[67]*Memoirs of Henry Villard* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Co., 1904), I, 144.
[68]J. G. Randall, "Lincoln's Greatest Declaration of Faith," *New York Times Magazine*, February 6, 1949, p. 11.

canvass, without measure or excuse—they now tell us that Mr. Lincoln is a very good man, a very amiable man; that he is not at all violent in his prejudices or partialities; that, on the contrary, he is a moderate, kindly-tempered, conservative man, and if we will only submit to his administration for a time, we will ascertain that he will make one of the best Presidents the South or the country ever had! 'Will you walk into my parlor said the spider to the fly.' " "Mr. Lincoln may be all that these Abolition journals say he is. But, we do not believe a word they say," the *Crescent* continued. "We are clearly convinced that they are telling falsehoods to deceive the people of the South, in order to carry out their own selfish and unpatriotic purposes the more easily. They know that, although Lincoln is elected to the Presidency, he is not yet President of the United States, and they are shrewd enough to know that grave doubts exist whether he ever will be. The chances are that he will not, unless the South is quieted. . . ."[69]

The South found it easier to view Lincoln as a stereotype, a "radical Abolitionist," an "Illinois ape," a "traitor to his country." Then, too, the escape through Baltimore by night could "not fail to excite a most mischievous feeling of contempt for the personal character of Mr. Lincoln throughout the country, especially at the South."[70]

Thus appeared Lincoln, who "without mock modesty" had described himself en route to Washington as "the humblest of all individuals that have ever been elevated to the presidency."[71]

Senator Baker of Oregon advanced to the platform and announced, "Fellow-Citizens: I introduce to you Abraham Lincoln, the President-elect of the United States of America."[72]

Mr. Lincoln had the crowd "matched"[73] in sartorial perfection. He was wearing a new tall hat, new black suit of clothes and black boots, expansive white shirt bosom. He carried an ebony cane with a gold head the size of a hen's egg. He arose, "walked deliberately and composedly to the table, and bent low in honor of the repeated and enthusiastic cheering of the countless host before him. Having put on his spectacles, he arranged his manuscript on the small table, keeping the paper thereon by the aid of his cane."[74] In a clear voice he began:[75]

> Fellow-citizens of the United States:
>
> In compliance with a custom as old as the government itself, I appear before you to address you briefly, and to take, in your presence, the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United States, to be taken by the President "before he enters on the execution of his office."
>
> I do not consider it necessary at present for me to discuss those matters of administration about which there is no special anxiety or excitement.
>
> Apprehension seems to exist among the people of the Southern States, that by the accession of a Republican Administration, their property, and their peace, and

[69] *Southern Editorials on Secession,* p. 229.
[70] *The Diary of a Public Man,* p. 46.
[71] "Address to the Legislature of New York, at Albany, February 18, 1861," in *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln,* VI, 140.
[72] *New York Times,* March 5, 1861, p. 1, col. 3.
[73] Sandburg, *The War Years,* I, 122.
[74] *New York Times,* March 5, 1861, p. 1, col. 3.
[75] The text of the inaugural being used is that contained in *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings,* edited by Roy P. Basler, pp. 579–90.

> personal security, are to be endangered. There has never been any reasonable cause for such apprehension. Indeed, the most ample evidence to the contrary has all the while existed, and been open to their inspection. It is found in nearly all the published speeches of him who now addresses you. I do but quote from one of those speeches when I declare that "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so." Those who nominated and elected me did so with full knowledge that I had made this, and many similar declarations, and had never recanted them. And more than this, they placed in the platform, for my acceptance, and as a law to themselves, and to me, the clear and emphatic resolution which I now read:
>
> "*Resolved,* That the maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively, is essential to that balance of power on which the perfection and endurance of our political fabric depend; and we denounce the lawless invasion by armed force of the soil of any State or Territory, no matter under what pretext, as among the gravest of crimes."
>
> I now reiterate these sentiments: and in doing so, I only press upon the public attention, the most conclusive evidence of which the case is susceptible, that the property, peace and security of no section are to be in any wise endangered by the now incoming Administration. I add too, that all the protection which, consistently with the Constitution and the laws, can be given, will be cheerfully given to all the States when lawfully demanded, for whatever cause—as cheerfully to one section as to another.
>
> There is much controversy about the delivering up of fugitives from service or labor. The clause I now read is as plainly written in the Constitution as any other of its provisions:
>
> "No person held to service or labor in one State, under the laws thereof, escaping into another, shall, in consequence of any law or regulation therein, be discharged from such service or labor, but shall be delivered up on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due."
>
> It is scarcely questioned that this provision was intended by those who made it, for the reclaiming of what we call fugitive slaves; and the intention of the law-giver is the law. All members of Congress swear their support to the whole Constitution—to this provision as much as to any other. To the proposition, then, that slaves whose cases come within the terms of this clause, "shall be delivered up," their oaths are unanimous. Now, if they would make the effort in good temper, could they not, with nearly equal unanimity, frame and pass a law, by means of which to keep good that unanimous oath?
>
> There is some difference of opinion whether this clause should be enforced by national or by state authority; but surely that difference is not a very material one. If the slave is to be surrendered, it can be of but little consequence to him, or to others, by which authority it is done. And should any one, in any case, be content that his oath shall go unkept, on a merely unsubstantial controversy as to *how* it shall be kept?
>
> Again, in any law upon this subject, ought not all the safeguards of liberty known in civilized and humane jurisprudence to be introduced, so that a free man be not, in any case, surrendered as a slave? And might it not be well, at the same time to provide by law for the enforcements of that clause in the Constitution which guarantees that "the citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States"?
>
> I take the official oath to-day, with no mental reservations, and with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws, by any hypercritical rules. And while I do not choose now to specify particular acts of Congress as proper to be enforced, I do suggest that it will be much safer for all, both in official and private stations, to

conform to, and abide by, all those acts which stand unrepealed, than to violate any of them, trusting to find impunity in having them held to be unconstitutional.

It is seventy-two years since the first inauguration of a President under our national Constitution. During that period fifteen different and greatly distinguished citizens, have, in succession, administered the executive branch of the government. They have conducted it through many perils; and, generally, with great success. Yet, with all this scope for [of] precedent, I now enter upon the same task for the brief constitutional term of four years, under great and peculiar difficulty. A disruption of the Federal Union, heretofore only menaced, is now formidably attempted.

I hold, that in contemplation of universal law, and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all national governments. It is safe to assert that no government proper, ever had a provision in its organic law for its own termination. Continue to execute all the express provisions of our national Constitution, and the Union will endure forever—it being impossible to destroy it, except by some action not provided for in the instrument itself.

Again, if the United States be not a government proper, but an association of States in the nature of contract merely, can it, as a contract, be peaceably unmade, by less than all the parties who made it? One party to a contract may violate it—break it, so to speak; but does it not require all to lawfully rescind it?

Descending from these general principles, we find the proposition that, in legal contemplation, the Union is perpetual, confirmed by the history of the Union itself. The Union is much older than the Constitution. It was formed in fact, by the Articles of Association in 1774. It was matured and continued by the Declaration of Independence in 1776. It was further matured and the faith of all the then thirteen States expressly plighted and engaged that it should be perpetual, by the Articles of Confederation in 1778. And finally, in 1787, one of the declared objects for ordaining and establishing the Constitution, was "to form a more perfect Union."

But if [the] destruction of the Union, by one, or by a part only, of the States, be lawfully possible, the Union is *less* perfect than before the Constitution, having lost the vital element of perpetuity.

It follows from these views that no State, upon its own mere motion, can lawfully get out of the Union,—that resolves and ordinances to that effect are legally void, and that acts of violence, within any State or States, against the authority of the United States, are insurrectionary or revolutionary, according to the circumstances.

I therefore consider that in view of the Constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken; and to the extent of my ability I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States. Doing this I deem to be only a simple duty on my part; and I shall perform it, so far as practicable, unless my rightful masters, the American people, shall withhold the requisite means, or, in some authoritative manner, direct the contrary. I trust this will not be regarded as a menace, but only as the declared purpose of the Union that it will constitutionally defend and maintain itself.

In doing this there needs to be no bloodshed or violence; and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority. The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion—no using of force against or among the people anywhere. Where hostility to the United States, in any interior locality, shall be so great and so universal, as to prevent competent resident citizens from holding the Federal offices, there will be no attempt to force obnoxious strangers among the people for that object. While the strict legal right may exist in the government to enforce the exercise of these offices, the attempt to do so would be so irritating,

and so nearly impracticable with all, that I deem it better to forego, for the time, the uses of such offices.

The mails, unless repelled, will continue to be furnished in all parts of the Union. So far as possible, the people everywhere shall have that sense of perfect security which is most favorable to calm thought and reflection. The course here indicated will be followed, unless current events and experience shall show a modification or change to be proper; and in every case and exigency my best discretion will be exercised according to circumstances actually existing, and with a view and a hope of a peaceful solution of the national troubles, and the restoration of fraternal sympathies and affections.

That there are persons in one section or another who seek to destroy the Union at all events, and are glad of any pretext to do it, I will neither affirm nor deny; but if there be such, I need address no word to them. To those, however, who really love the Union, may I not speak?

Before entering upon so grave a matter as the destruction of our national fabric, with all its benefits, its memories and its hopes, would it not be wise to ascertain precisely why we do it? Will you hazard so desperate a step, while there is any possibility that any portion of the ills you fly from have no real existence? Will you, while the certain ills you fly to, are greater than all the real ones you fly from? Will you risk the commission of so fearful a mistake?

All profess to be content in the Union, if all constitutional rights can be maintained. Is it true, then, that any right, plainly written in the Constitution, has been denied? I think not. Happily the human mind is so constituted, that no party can reach to the audacity of doing this. Think, if you can, of a single instance in which a plainly written provision of the Constitution has ever been denied. If, by the mere force of numbers, a majority should deprive a minority of any clearly written constitutional right, it might, in a moral point of view, justify revolution—certainly would, if such a right were a vital one. But such is not our case. All the vital rights of minorities, and of individuals, are so plainly assured to them, by affirmations and negations, guarantees and prohibitions, in the Constitution, that controversies never arise concerning them. But no organic law can ever be framed with a provision specifically applicable to every question which may occur in practical administration. No foresight can anticipate, nor any document of reasonable length contain express provisions for, all possible questions. Shall fugitives from labor be surrendered by national or by State authority? The Constitution does not expressly say. May Congress prohibit slavery in the territories? The Constitution does not expressly say. Must Congress protect slavery in the territories? The Constitution does not expressly say.

From questions of this class spring all our constitutional controversies, and we divide upon them into majorities and minorities. If the minority will not acquiesce, the majority must, or the government must cease. There is no other alternative; for continuing the government, is acquiescence on one side or the other. If a minority, in such case, will secede rather than acquiesce, they make a precedent which, in turn, will divide and ruin them; for a minority of their own will secede from them whenever a majority refuses to be controlled by such minority. For instance, why may not any portion of a new confederacy, a year or two hence, arbitrarily secede again, precisely as portions of the present Union now claim to secede from it? All who cherish disunion sentiments, are now being educated to the exact temper of doing this.

Is there such perfect identity of interests among the States to compose a new Union, as to produce harmony only, and prevent renewed secession?

Plainly, the central idea of secession, is the essence of anarchy. A majority, held in restraint by constitutional checks and limitations, and always changing easily with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments is the only true sovereign of a free people. Whoever rejects it, does, of necessity, fly to anarchy or to

despotism. Unanimity is impossible; the rule of a minority, as a permanent arrangement, is wholly inadmissible; so that, rejecting the majority principle, anarchy or despotism in some form is all that is left.

I do not forget the position assumed by some, that constitutional questions are to be decided by the Supreme Court; nor do I deny that such decisions must be binding in any case, upon the parties to a suit, as to the object of that suit, while they are also entitled to very high respect and consideration in all parallel cases by all other departments of the government. And while it is obviously possible that such decision may be erroneous in any given case, still the evil effect following it, being limited to that particular case, with the chance that it may be overruled, and never become a precedent for other cases, can better be borne than could the evils of a different practice. At the same time, the candid citizen must confess that if the policy of the government upon vital questions, affecting the whole people, is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made, in ordinary litigation between parties, in personal actions, the people will have ceased to be their own rulers, having to that extent practically resigned their government into the hands of that eminent tribunal. Nor is there in this view any assault upon the court or the judges. It is a duty from which they may not shrink, to decide cases properly brought before them; and it is no fault of theirs if others seek to turn their decisions to political purposes.

One section of our country believes slavery is *right*, and ought to be extended, while the other believes it is *wrong*, and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute. The fugitive slave clause of the Constitution, and the law for the suppression of the foreign slave trade, are each as well enforced, perhaps, as any law can ever be in a community where the moral sense of the people imperfectly supports the law itself. The great body of the people abide by the dry legal obligation in both cases, and a few break over in each. This, I think, cannot be perfectly cured; and it would be worse in both cases after the separation of the sections, than before. The foreign slave trade, now imperfectly suppressed, would be ultimately revived without restriction, in one section; while fugitive slaves, now only partially surrendered, would not be surrendered at all, by the other.

Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence, and beyond the reach of each other; but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face; and intercourse, either amicable or hostile, must continue between them. Is it possible, then, to make that intercourse more advantageous or more satisfactory, after separation than *before?* Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens than laws can among friends? Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions, as to terms of intercourse, are again upon you.

This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it. Whenever they shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their *constitutional* right of amending it, or their *revolutionary* right to dismember or overthrow it. I cannot be ignorant of the fact that many worthy and patriotic citizens are desirous of having the national Constitution amended. While I make no recommendation of amendments, I fully recognize the rightful authority of the people over the whole subject to be exercised in either of the modes prescribed in the instrument itself; and I should under existing circumstances favor rather than oppose a fair opportunity being afforded the people to act upon it.

I will venture to add that to me the Convention mode seems preferable, in that it allows amendments to originate with the people themselves, instead of only permitting them to take or reject propositions, originated by others, not especially chosen for the purpose, and which might not be precisely such as they would wish to either accept or refuse. I understand a proposed amendment to the Constitution, which amendment, however, I have not seen, has passed Congress, to the effect that the federal government shall never interfere with the domestic institutions of the States, including that of persons held to service. To avoid misconstruction of what I have said, I depart from my purpose not to speak of particular amendments, so far as to say that holding such a provision to now be implied constitutional law, I have no objection to its being made express and irrevocable.

The Chief Magistrate derives all his authority from the people, and they have conferred none upon him to fix terms for the separation of the States. The people themselves can do this also if they choose; but the executive, as such, has nothing to do with it. His duty is to administer the present government, as it came to his hands, and to transmit it, unimpaired by him, to his successor.

Why should there not be a patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people? Is there any better or equal hope, in the world? In our present differences, is either party without faith of being in the right? If the Almighty Ruler of nations, with his eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North or on yours of the South, that truth, and that justice, will surely prevail, by the judgment of this great tribunal, the American people.

By the frame of the government under which we live, this same people have wisely given their public servants but little power for mischief; and have, with equal wisdom, provided for the return of that little to their own hands at very short intervals.

While the people retain their virtue and vigilance, no administration, by any extreme of wickedness or folly, can very seriously injure the government in the short space of four years.

My countrymen, one and all, think calmly and *well*, upon this whole subject. Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time. If there be an object to *hurry* any of you, in hot haste, to a step which you would never take *deliberately*, that object will be frustrated by taking time; but no good object can be frustrated by it. Such of you as are now dissatisfied, still have the old Constitution unimpaired, and, on the sensitive point, the laws of your own framing under it; while the new administration will have no immediate power, if it would, to change either. If it were admitted that you who are dissatisfied, hold the right side in the dispute, there still is no single good reason for precipitate action. Intelligence, patriotism, Christianity, and a firm reliance on Him, who has never yet forsaken this favored land, are still competent to adjust, in the best way, all our present difficulty.

In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail *you*. You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors. *You* have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while *I* shall have the most solemn one to "preserve, protect and defend" it.

I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battle-field, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.

With "more of Euclid than of Demosthenes"[76] in him, his delivery was not that of the spellbinder, agitator, or demagogue. His voice was a tenor that "carried song-tunes poorly but had clear and appealing modulations."[77] Habitually a

[76]Randall, op. cit., I, 49.
[77]Sandburg, *The Prairie Years*, I, 305.

little "scared"[78] when he spoke, he was "pale and very nervous"[79] on this occasion, but his "cheerfulness was marked."[80] "Compelled by nature, to speak slowly,"[81] his manner was "deliberate and impressive"[82] and his voice "remarkably clear and penetrating."[83] There was little evidence in his voice of the fear that might have come as the result of knowing that there were "heavy bets" about his safety.[84] Some of the spectators noted a "loud, and distinct voice, quite intelligible by at least ten thousand persons below him";[85] others found it a "clear, ringing voice, that was easily heard by those on the outer limits of the crowd";[86] still others noted his "firm tones of voice," his "great deliberation and precision of emphasis."[87] Sandburg might have remarked that it gave out "echoes and values."[88]

As Lincoln read on, the audience listened respectfully, with "intense interest, amid a stillness almost oppressive."[89] In the crowd behind the speaker sat Horace Greeley, momentarily expecting the crack of rifle fire.[90] At one point he thought it had come. The speaker stopped. But it was only a spectator crashing down through a tree.[91] Otherwise, the crowd in the grounds "behaved very well."[92] Buchanan sat listening, and "looking as straight as he could at the toe of his right boot."[93] Douglas, close by on Lincoln's right, listened "attentively," showing that he was "apparently satisfied" as he "exclaimed, *sotto voce*, 'Good,' 'That's so,' 'No coercion,' and 'Good again.' "[94] Chief Justice Taney "did not remove his eyes from Mr. Lincoln during the entire delivery."[95] Mr. Cameron stood with his back to the President, on the opposite side to Mr. Douglas, "peering off into the crowd."[96] Senator Seward and the other Cabinet officers-elect "kept themselves in the background."[97] Senator Wigfall of Texas, with folded arms "leaned conspicuously in a Capitol doorway," listening to the Inaugural, plainly wearing "contempt, defiance, derision, on his face, his pantomimic posture saying what he had said in the Senate, that the old Union was a corpse and the question was how to embalm it and conduct the funeral

[78][W. H. Herndon and J. W. Weik], *Herndon's Life of Lincoln*, with an introduction and notes by Paul M. Angle (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1949), p. 220.
[79]*The Diary of a Public Man*, p. 74.
[80]Correspondence of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, as quoted in *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1861, p. 2, col. 4.
[81]Herndon and Weik, op. cit., p. 273.
[82]*New York Tribune*, March 5, 1861, p. 5, col. 4.
[83]Ibid.
[84]*New York Times*, March 4, 1861, p. 1, col. 2.
[85]*National Intelligencer*, March 5, 1861, p. 3, col. 3.
[86]*New York Times*, March 5, 1861; p. 1, col. 3.
[87]Correspondence of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, quoted in *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1861, p. 2, col. 4.
[88]Sandburg, *The Prairie Years* I, 306.
[89]Frederick W. Seward, *Seward at Washington, as Senator and Secretary of State* (New York: Derby and Miller, 1891), I, 516.
[90]Greeley, op. cit., p. 404.
[91]*Diary of a Public Man*, p. 74.
[92]Ibid.
[93]*New York Times*, March 5, 1861, p. 1, col. 3.
[94]Ibid.
[95]Ibid.
[96]Correspondence of the *Cincinnati Commercial*, as quoted in *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1861, p. 2, col. 4.
[97]Ibid.

decently."[98] Thurlow Weed moved away from the crowd, reporting to General Scott at the top of the slope "The Inaugural is a success," as the old general exclaimed, "God be praised! God in his goodness be praised."[99] To a newspaper reporter surveying the scene, there was a "propriety and becoming interest which pervaded the vast assembly" and "impressed every spectator who had the opportunity of overlooking it."[100] The crowd "applauded repeatedly" and "at times, rapturously,"[101] particularly at points where he "announced his inflexible purpose to execute the laws and discharge his whole constitutional duty."[102] When Lincoln declared, "I hold that in the contemplation of international law, and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual," the "cheers were hearty and prolonged."[103] When he said, "I shall take care that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States," he was met with a "tremendous shout of approval."[104] But the "greatest impression of all was produced by the final appeal,"[105] noted one of the reporters. "With great solemnity of emphasis, using his gestures to add significance to his words," Lincoln remarked "You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy this Government, while I shall have the most solemn one to preserve, protect and defend it," and the crowd responded with "round after round of cheering."[106] Finally, after Lincoln had addressed his "words of affection" to the audience, ending his address, "men waved their hats, and broke forth in the heartiest manifestations of delight. The extraordinary clearness *[sic]*, straightforwardness and lofty spirit of patriotism which pervaded the whole address, impressed every listener, while the evident earnestness, sincerity and manliness of Mr. Lincoln extorted the praise even of his enemies."[107] "The effect of the Inaugural on the country at large remains to be awaited and to be gathered from many sources," observed a reporter, "but it is conceded on all hands that its effect, already noticeable on the vast gathering here, upon the city, and the tone of feeling here is eminently happy, and the source of great gratulation on every side."[108]

Chief Justice Taney stepped forward, shrunken, old, his hands trembling with emotion, and held out an open Bible. Lincoln laid his left hand upon it, raised his right hand, and repeated with a "firm but modest voice"[109] the oath: "I do solemnly swear that I will faithfully execute the office of President of the United States, and will, to the best of my ability, preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States." Lincoln was now President. Below, the crowd "tossed their hats, wiped their eyes, cheered at the tops of their voices,

[98]Sandburg, *The War Years*, I, 123.
[99]Seward, op. cit., pp. 516, 517.
[100]*New York Daily Tribune*, March 5, 1861, p. 5, col. 4.
[101]*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1861, p. 2, col. 4, quoted from *Cincinnati Commercial*.
[102]*New York Daily Tribune*, March 5, 1861, p. 5, col. 4.
[103]*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1861, p. 2, col. 4, quoted from *Cincinnati Commercial*.
[104]*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1861, p. 2, col. 4, quoted from *Cincinnati Commercial*.
[105]Ibid.
[106]Ibid.
[107]*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1861, p. 2, col. 4, quoted from *Cincinnati Commercial*.
[108]*Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 9, 1861, p. 3, col. 2.
[109]*New York Times*, March 5, 1861, p. 1, col. 3.

hurrahed themselves hoarse," and "had the crowd not been so very dense, they would have demonstrated in more lively ways, their joy, satisfaction and delight."[110] Over on the slope the artillery boomed a salute to the sixteenth President of the United States.[111] The crowd ebbed away, and Lincoln rode down Pennsylvania Avenue with Buchanan, bidding him good-bye at the Presidential mansion.[112]

The address had taken thirty-five minutes in delivery, and now it was all over, at least until the nation in general turned in its response. Lincoln had spent six weeks in preparing it—six weeks and many years of lonely thought, along with his active experience on the circuit and the stump. Like the "House Divided Speech" and the "Cooper Union Address" it was deliberately and cautiously prepared, undergoing revision up to the moment of delivery. "Late in January," he told his law partner, Herndon, that he was "ready to begin"[113] the preparation of the Inaugural. In a room over a store, across the street from the State House, cut off from all intrusion and outside communication, he began the preparation. He had told Herndon what works he wanted to consult and asked to be furnished "Henry Clay's great speech delivered in 1850; Andrew Jackson's proclamation against Nullification; and a copy of the Constitution." He "afterwards" called for a copy of Webster's reply to Hayne, a speech which he regarded as "the grandest specimen of American oratory."[114] "With these few 'volumes,' and no further sources of reference,"[115] he began his work on the address.

On February 2, 1861, he wrote a friend, George D. Prentice,[116] editor of the *Louisville Journal*, "I have the document blocked out; but in the now rapidly shifting scenes I shall have to hold it subject to revision up to the time of delivery."[117] He had an original draft printed by one of the proprietors of the *Illinois State Journal* to whom he entrusted the manuscript.[118] "No one else seems to have been taken into the confidence of Mr. Lincoln as to its contents until after he started for Washington on February 11."[119] Upon reaching Indianapolis, he presented a copy to O. H. Browning who had accompanied him from Springfield. According to Browning, "before parting with Mr. Lincoln at Indianapolis, Tuesday, he gave me a copy of his inaugural address, and requested me to read it, and give him my opinion, which I did. I thought it able, well considered, and appropriate, and so informed him. It is, in my judgment, a very admirable document. He permitted me to retain a copy, under promise not to show it except to Mrs. Browning."[120]

[110]Ibid.
[111]Sandburg, *The War Years*, I, 122.
[112]Baringer, op. cit., p. 334.
[113]Herndon and Weik, op. cit., p. 386.
[114]Ibid.
[115]Ibid.
[116]*Lincoln Lore*, No. 308 (March 4, 1935).
[117]Louis A. Warren, "Original Draft of the First Inaugural," *Lincoln Lore*, No. 358 (February 17, 1936).
[118]Ibid.
[119]Ibid.
[120]*The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning*, edited with an introduction and notes by Theodore Calvin Pease and James G. Randall (Springfield, Ill.: Illinois State Historical Library, 1925), I, 1850–1864, 455, 456.

Upon arriving in Washington, Lincoln submitted a copy to Secretary Seward with the same invitation to criticize it.[121] According to Louis A. Warren, "As far as we know these two men are the only ones who made any suggestions about certain revisions in the original copy,"[122] even though a few others may have seen it.[123]

Reporters showed an avid interest in the preparation of the Inaugural, sometimes reporting inaccurately on the various stages of its preparation. Recording the activities of the President on Saturday night, March 2, one reporter erroneously observed: "Mr. Lincoln sent for Senator Seward, and at 11½ o'clock that gentleman reached the hotel. Mr. Lincoln read to him the Inaugural for the first time, and then asked his advice. Senator Seward took it up section after section and concurred heartily in a great part of it. He suggested a few modifications, an occasional emendation and a few additional paragraphs, all of which were adopted by Mr. Lincoln, and the Inaugural was declared complete and perfect by Senator Seward, who then retired."[124] On Sunday, the reporter remarked, "Mr. Lincoln stated this evening that the Inaugural could not be printed, as some points might require modifying or extending, according to the action of the Senate to-night. His son is now writing copies of what is finished, one of which will be given to the Associated Press when he commences reading it."[125] On the same day there were "reports of efforts in high quarters to induce the president to tone down his inaugural, but it is not affirmed that they were successful."[126]

A final report on the preparation of the Inaugural records the activities on the morning of March 4th: "Mr. Lincoln rose at 5 o'clock. After an early breakfast, the Inaugural was read aloud to him by his son Robert, and the completing touches were added, including the beautiful and impassioned closing paragraph."[127]

As J. G. Randall has observed, "if one would justly appraise Lincoln's first presidential state paper, this inaugural of 1861 deserves to be read as delivered and to be set over against the alternative statements that Lincoln avoided or struck out in revision. Statements pledging maintenance of Federal authority were toned down and shorn of truculence, while promises of conciliation were emotionally underlined."[128] Mr. Browning advised "but one change," supposed by some authorities to be "the most important one in the entire document."[129] "Mr. Seward made thirty-three suggestions for improving the document and nineteen of them were adopted, eight were used after Mr. Lincoln had modified them, and six were discarded *in toto*."[130] Finally, Lincoln, "without suggestion from any one made sixteen changes in the original draft."[131]

[121]Seward, op. cit., p. 512.
[122]*Lincoln Lore*, No. 358.
[123]John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, A History* (New York: The Century Co., 1914), III, 319. Nicolay and Hay observe that "Judge David Davis read it while in Springfield," and "Francis P. Blair, Sr., read it in Washington, and highly commended it, suggesting no changes."
[124]*New York Times*, March 4, 1861, p. 1, col. 1.
[125]*New York Times*, March 4, 1861, p. 1, col. 2.
[126]*New York Daily Tribune*, March 4, 1861, p. 5, col. 1.
[127]*New York Times*, March 5, 1861, p. 1, col. 1.
[128]Randall, op. cit., I, 309.
[129]Warren, loc. cit.
[130]Ibid.
[131]Ibid.

And so, however much the country might criticize as it scanned the Inaugural, Lincoln could respond, as he did to the Douglas taunt in 1858, that the "House Divided Speech" had been "evidently well prepared and carefully written."[132] "I admit that it was. I am not master of language; I have not a fine education; . . . I know what I meant, and I will not leave this crowd in doubt. . . ."[133]

Lincoln did not have to wait long for a response from the country at large. As he delivered the address, little audiences unseen by the speaker dotted the land, clustering around newspaper offices and waiting for telegraphic reports of what was in the Inaugural. Between Washington and New York, the American Telegraph Company had placed at the disposal of the Associated Press three wires for the communication of the address.[134] Similar arrangements had been made with other key cities. The delivery of the Inaugural commenced at 1:30 P.M., Washington time, and the "telegraphers promptly to the minute" began its transmission. "The first words of the Message were received by the agents of the Press at 1:45, and the last about 3:30," observed the *New York Times.*[135] "Such rapidity in telegraphic communication has never before been reached in this country."[136] By four o'clock, "the entire document was furnished to the different newspapers,"[137] and special editions of the press were in the hands of readers within an hour. "People of all parties in this city, as elsewhere, were on tip-toe all day to know what was going on at Washington, and especially to hear what President Lincoln would say in his Inaugural," observed the *New York Times.*[138] "At length it was announced that the procession had reached the Capitol, and then, while the President was delivering his speech and the reporters were transmitting it by telegraph, there was a long period of unalloyed expectancy. Meantime, men given to talking, in the many crowds, discussed all sorts of topics, connected with the questions of the day, before little groups of gaping listeners. There was many a prophet among them, not without honor, before the Message was received, who knew exactly what it was going to contain, and foretold with marvelous preciseness the points which Mr. Lincoln would dwell on.

"It was nearly 5 o'clock when the eloquence of these worthies was suddenly quenched as by a wet blanket, and the wet sheets of the latest edition, with the President's Inaugural in black and white, leaped forth from the presses into the hands of all who could get copies. Then there was wild scrambling around the counters in publication offices, a laying down of pennies and a rape of newspapers, and the crowds began to disperse, each man hastening to some place remote from public haunt, where he might peruse the document in peace. The newsboys rushed through the city crying with stentorian lungs 'The President's

[132]Speech of Senator Douglas, delivered in Chicago, July 9, 1858, in *The Political Debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas,* with an introduction by George Haven Putnam (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), p. 24.
[133]Speech in reply to Douglas at Chicago, Illinois, July 10, 1858, in *Abraham Lincoln, His Speeches and Writings,* edited by Roy P. Basler, p. 392.
[134]*New York Times,* March 5, 1861, p. 8, col. 5.
[135]Ibid.
[136]Ibid.
[137]Ibid.
[138]*New York Times,* March 5, 1861, p. 8, cols. 4, 5.

Message!' 'Lincoln's Speech!' 'Ex-tray Times!' 'Get Lincoln's Inau-gu-ra-a-a-il!' And an hour later everybody had read the Message and everybody was talking about it."[139]

Out in Mattoon, Illinois, a similar scene was being enacted. A roving reporter, heading south from Chicago to observe the reactions of the crowds, made a "tour of the town" and stopped at hotel lobbies, where the speech, fresh from the press, was being "read and re-read, silently and aloud, to groups of ardent listeners . . . As the reading in a crowd progresses, when the reader comes to the place where Mr. Lincoln 'puts his foot down,' down goes likewise every foot in the circle."[140]

The home folks whom Lincoln had bade an affectionate farewell three weeks before were among the most anxious of the unseen audiences. Whereas they spoke only for themselves at the time of the tearful departure, they were now ready to speak for the nation. "The Inaugural Address of our noble Chief Magistrate has electrified the whole country," they said. "It has satisfied people of all parties who love the Union and desire its preservation. In this city it gives almost universal satisfaction."[141] In Quincy, the scene of one of the debates of 1858, the address was received with "much enthusiasm," and the Republican Gun Squad fired thirty-four guns;[142] in Peoria, "so great was the anxiety felt to see what Mr. Lincoln said, that people came forty miles to get copies of the message,"[143] reading it with "much enthusiasm."[144]

But occasionally there was a dissenting voice back home, particularly in the Democratic press, as there was generally throughout the North. While the *Chicago Daily Tribune* was "quite sure that no document can be found among American state papers embodying sounder wisdom and higher patriotism,—breathing kindlier feelings to all sections of the country,"[145] the Chicago *Times* denounced the Inaugural as "a loose, disjointed, rambling affair," concluding that the Union was now "lost beyond hope."[146] While the *New York Times* observed that "conservative people are in raptures over the Inaugural," and that "Its conciliatory tone, and frank, outspoken declaration of loyalty to the whole country, captured the hearts of many heretofore opposed to Mr. Lincoln,"[147] the New York *Herald* found that "the inaugural is not a crude performance—it abounds in traits of craft and cunning. It bears marks of indecision, and yet of strong coercion proclivities . . . It is neither candid nor statesmanlike; nor does it possess any essential dignity or patriotism. It would have caused a Washington to mourn, and would have inspired a Jefferson, Madison, or Jackson with contempt."[148] There were those in Maine who found it a "poor, weak, trashy affair, a standing disgrace to the country, and a fit commentary on the fanaticism

[139]Ibid.
[140]*Chicago Daily Tribune,* March 8, 1861, p. 2, col. 3.
[141]*Illinois State Journal,* March 6, 1861, p. 2.
[142]*Chicago Daily Tribune,* March 6, 1861, p. 1, col. 3.
[143]Ibid.
[144]Ibid.
[145]*Chicago Daily Tribune,* March 5, 1861, p. 1, col. 1.
[146]Quoted in Randall, op. cit., p. 306.
[147]*New York Times,* March 5, 1861, p. 1, col. 4.
[148]Quoted in the *New York Daily Tribune,* March 7, 1861, p. 6, col. 6.

and unreasonableness which made him President."[149] Some in Pennsylvania found it "one of the most awkwardly constructed official documents we have ever inspected," and "pitiably apologetical for the uprising of the Republican party, and his own election to the Presidency, by it."[150] And there were those in Ohio "who never expected to see a Black Republican peaceably inaugurated in this White Republican country . . . but now the Rubicon is passed," and the Inaugural, "like its distinguished author," is "flat-footed. It is more *magazinish* in *sound* than in *style*, smelling strongly of gunpowder, and is *'coercion' all over,* as the South understands that word."[151]

"It is an interesting study" said a Douglas journal, the Peoria *Daily Democratic Union*, on March 7th, "to look over the various journals that have come to our table since the delivery of President Lincoln's Inaugural Address, and notice the different manner in which they speak of it." "All of these criticisms of the Address cannot be correct, for they clash materially; and that fact demonstrates very plainly that some of them were either the offspring of prejudice, or were written by men incapable of judging of the merits of this first state paper of President Lincoln."[152]

Whereas there was difference of opinion in the North, much of it stopped short of vehement denunciation. However, the South saw little hope from Lincoln, and expressed itself accordingly. "Mr. Lincoln's Inaugural Address is before our readers," observed the *Richmond Enquirer*, "couched in the cool, unimpassioned, deliberate language of the fanatic, with the purpose of pursuing the promptings of fanaticism even to the dismemberment of the Government with the horrors of civil war . . . Civil war must now come. Sectional war, declared by Mr. Lincoln, awaits only the signal gun from the insulted Southern Confederacy, to light its horrid fires all along the borders of Virginia."[153] The *Richmond Dispatch* was equally strong: "The Inaugural Address of Abraham Lincoln inaugurates civil war, as we have predicted it would from the beginning . . . The sword is drawn and the scabbard thrown away . . . ere long Virginia may be engaged in a life and death struggle. . . ."[154] The *Baltimore Sun* observed, "The Inaugural, as a whole, breathes the spirit of mischief," and found "no Union spirit in the address."[155] "We presume nobody is astonished to hear that Secessionists regard the Inaugural as a 'declaration of war,' " noted one observer. "Before the Inaugural has been read in a single Southern State, it is denounced, through the telegraph, from every Southern point, as a declaration of war."[156] "I have heard but one construction of Mr. Lincoln's declaration of his intention to 'hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government, and to collect the duties and imposts,' " observed a special

[149]*The Bangor Union*, as quoted in *New York Daily Tribune*, March 8, 1861, p. 6, col. 5.
[150]*The Philadelphia Evening Journal*, as quoted in *New York Daily Tribune*, March 7, 1861, p. 7, col. 3.
[151]*Cleveland Plain Dealer*, as quoted in *Chicago Daily Tribune*, March 9, 1861, p. 1, col. 3.
[152]Quoted in *Northern Editorials on Secession*, edited by Howard Cecil Perkins (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1942), II, 643.
[153]Quoted in *New York Daily Tribune*, March 7, 1861, p. 7, col. 2. See also, *Southern Editorials on Secession*, pp. 474, 475.
[154]*Southern Editorials on Secession*, p. 475.
[155]Quoted in *New York Daily Tribune*, March 7, 1861, p. 7, col. 1.
[156]*New York Times*, March 7, 1861, p. 4, col. 2.

correspondent in Richmond. The Inaugural "is received with much disfavor," and "is regarded, if not as a declaration of war, as at least the expression of a determination to coerce the seceding States into compliance with the demands of the Federal Government."[157] Reporting from Charleston, South Carolina, another correspondent observed, "The part which, of course, attracted most attention and was read and re-read with deep interest, was that wherein Mr. Lincoln declares that to the best of his ability, he will take care, according to his oath and the Constitution, that 'the laws of the Union are faithfully executed in all the States,' and that he will use the power confided to him to 'hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the Government, and to collect the duties and imposts.' " The verdict was, according to this correspondent, "that rebellion would not be treated tenderly by Mr. Lincoln, and that he was quite another sort of man from James Buchanan."[158]

At least a minority of the people of the South responded less vehemently. Occasionally a roving reporter, mingling among the crowds in Southern cities, reported less fury. From Montgomery came word that Alexander Stevens had found the Inaugural "the most *adroit* State paper ever published on the Continent," and "a great moral impression has been produced"[159] in both Charleston and Montgomery. In Savannah, Georgia, "Not a word have we yet heard uttered against its tone," observed a reporter, predicting "a powerful and sweeping effect at the South."[160] Now and then a reporter noticed "a pretty general disappointment that the document contained so little 'blood and thunder.' "[161] "That the document should be calm and dignified in tone and style, logical in its conclusions, and plain and kind in its treatment of the great topic of the day, was annoying to the Rebels, who hoped to find in the address a provocation for extreme action."[162]

While the country at large read the speech and responded both favorably and unfavorably, Senator Clingman of North Carolina and Stephen A. Douglas engaged in debate over its meaning in the United States Senate. "If I understand it aright, all that is direct in it, I mean, at least, that purpose which seems to stand out clearly and directly, is one which I think must lead to war—war against the confederate or seceding State"[163] remarked Clingman. Douglas, on the other hand, who had "read it carefully" could not "assent to the construction" of the senator from North Carolina, believing he could "demonstrate that there is no foundation for the apprehension which has been spread throughout the country, that this message is equivalent to a declaration of war."[164]

Just as the country searched the Inaugural for the sentiments it contained, it also examined and appraised the language and style in which it was couched. The Toronto *Leader* could not admire the "tawdry and corrupt schoolboy style," even as it gave "credit" for its "good sense."[165] An Albany, New York, observer found it "useless to criticize the style of the President's Inaugural when

[157]*New York Daily Tribune*, March 9, 1861, p. 6, col. 2.
[158]*New York Daily Tribune*, March 9, 1861, p. 6, col. 1.
[159]*New York Daily Tribune*, March 12, 1861, p. 6, col. 1.
[160]*New York Daily Tribune*, March 11, 1861, p. 6, col. 2.
[161]*New York Daily Tribune*, March 9, 1861, p. 6, col. 1.
[162]Ibid.
[163]*Congressional Globe*, Second Session, 36th Congress, Vol. 30, Part II, p. 1436.
[164]Ibid.
[165]Quoted in *New York Daily Tribune*, March 7, 1861, p. 7, col. 3.

the policy it declares is fraught with consequences so momentous." Nevertheless, he paused to describe it as a "rambling, discursive, questioning, loose-jointed stump speech." It consisted of "feeble rhetorical stuff."[166] While papers unfriendly to Lincoln were finding it "inferior in point of elegance, perspicuity, vigor, talent, and all the graces of composition to any other paper of a like character which has ever emanated from a President of the Republic,"[167] papers that were friendly found the contrary to be the case. "It is clear as a mountain brook," commented a Detroit reporter. "The depth and flow of it are apparent at a glance."[168] In Boston, the *Transcript* reporter commented at length. "The style of the Address is as characteristic as its temper. 'Right words in their right places'; this is the requirement of good rhetoric. Right words at the right times, should be the test by which we try the speech of statesmen; and this test Mr. Lincoln's address will bear. It has not one flaming expression in the whole course of its firm and explicit statements. The language is level to the popular mind,—the plain homespun language of a man accustomed to talk with 'the folks' and 'the neighbors,' the language of a man of vital common sense, whose words exactly fit his facts and thoughts."[169] Occasionally, the concluding paragraph was singled out for praise. In Indianapolis, the reporter of the *Daily Journal* remarked: "The closing sentence, the only attempt at rhetorical display in the whole address, is singularly and almost poetically beautiful."[170]

Part II

Given the circumstances that brought forth the Inaugural Address, and removed in time from the passions which agitated the country, what may one say of Lincoln's address on March 4, 1861? The historian has often examined it for its effects, and has concluded that "Though not fully appreciated then, this was one of the great American inaugurals."[171] And the literary critic has sometimes observed its final passage, finding in it poetic beauty and enduring worth. Unlike the historian, we are not concerned merely with the Inaugural as a force in the shaping of American culture; nor are we concerned with its enduring worth as literature. The Inaugural was a speech, "meant to be heard and intended to exert an influence of some kind on those who heard it,"[172] or those who read it. We must, therefore, be concerned with evaluating the Inaugural as a speech, a medium distinct from other media, and with methods peculiarly its own. We must be concerned with discovering in this particular case "the available means of persuasion" and with evaluating their worth.

Let us view the Inaugural as a communication, with a purpose, and a content presumably designed to aid in the accomplishment of that purpose, further

[166] *Albany Atlas and Argus*, as quoted in *Northern Editorials on Secession*, II, 628.
[167] *Jersey City American Standard*, as quoted in *Northern Editorials on Secession*, II, 625.
[168] *Detroit Daily Tribune*, as quoted in *Northern Editorials on Secession*, II, 623.
[169] Quoted in *New York Daily Tribune*, March 7, 1861, p. 7, col. 1.
[170] Quoted in *Northern Editorials on Secession*, II, 619.
[171] J. G. Randall, "Lincoln's Great Declarations of Faith," *New York Times Magazine*, February 6, 1949, p. 23.
[172] Wayland M. Parrish and Marie Hochmuth Nichols, *American Speeches*, (New York, David McKay, 1954), p. 3.

supported by skillful composition in words, and ultimately unified by the character and manner of the person who presented it.

We must not casually assume that Lincoln's purpose is easily discernible in the occasion itself. It is true, of course, that this was an inaugural ceremony, with a ritual fairly well established by fifteen predecessors, "Yet, with all this scope for [of] precedent," Lincoln was keenly aware that he entered upon the same task "under great and peculiar difficulty. A disruption of the Federal Union, heretofore only menaced, is now formidably attempted." If we are to discern the purpose that Lincoln had when he addressed the American people on March 4, 1861, we must recall the experiences of the nation between his election as President and the day of his inauguration. During that time, he had been made keenly aware of Southern resentment to a "sectional" President. The rapid movement of the Secessionists followed closely on the announcement of his election, and of the ascendancy of the Republican party to a position of power. The South viewed the Republican platform as an instrument for its "subjugation" and the "complete ruin of her social, political and industrial institutions."[173] By its acts of secession, and its establishment of a provisional government of its own, the lower South raised the very practical question: What is the authority of the federal government in regard to maintaining itself and in regard to reclaiming those federal properties possessed by retiring members?

Lincoln had also been made keenly aware of the doubts and skepticism that prevailed regarding his ability to lead his party and the nation. "I cannot but know what you all know," he had observed on his way to Washington, "that without a name, perhaps without a reason why I should have a name, there has fallen upon me a task such as did not rest even upon the Father of this Country . . . "[174] In addition, he was keenly aware of both Northern and Southern distrust of his moral character and integrity. Even to members of his party, he was a "funny man," given to stories in bad taste, and an Illinois wag. And to the South, he was at best thought to be as radical as the most rabid of the left-wing Republicans, hence a "dangerous man."[175] That he was aware of the prevailing sentiments regarding him as a man is reflected in his casual remark en route to Washington when, for a moment, his address was misplaced. In a worried search, he described the Inaugural as "my certificate of moral character, written by myself."[176]

Although from the time of his election he was urged to state his views on the passing events, Lincoln had remained silent. That his silence was not due to a lack of anxiety is easily apparent. "Allusion has been made," he noted on his way to Washington, "to the interest felt in relation to the policy of the new administration. In this I have received from some a degree of credit for having kept silence, and from others some deprecation. I still think that I was right . . . "In the varying and repeatedly shifting scenes of the present, and without a precedent which could enable me to judge by the past, it has seemed fitting that

[173] *New Orleans Daily Crescent*, November 13, 1860, as quoted in *Southern Editorials on Secession*, p. 237.
[174] "Address to the Legislature of Ohio at Columbus, February 13, 1861," *Complete Works*, VI, 121.
[175] Speech of Senator Clingman of North Carolina in the Senate, December 3, 1860, *The Congressional Globe*, Second Session, 36th Congress, Vol. 30, p. 3.
[176] Ward Hill Lamon, *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, 1847–1865*, edited by Dorothy Lamon Teillard (Washington, D.C.: Published by the editor, 1911), p. 36.

before speaking upon the difficulties of the country I should have gained a view of the whole field, being at liberty to modify and change the course of policy as future events may make a change necessary.

"I have not maintained silence from any want of real anxiety."[177]

What, then, was Lincoln's purpose? Clearly, he intended to take the occasion of the inauguration to declare the position of the Republican party in regard to the South, to announce his considered judgment in regard to the practical questions raised by the movement of secession, and, in all, to give what assurance he could of his personal integrity.

In evaluating the inaugural, we must keep in mind its purpose, for the purpose of the speech controlled Lincoln's selection of materials, his arrangement, his style, and his manner.

Let us turn to the speech itself in order to note the materials and methods he employed to sustain his purpose. Considering the general predisposition of the South to view the incoming administration with suspicion, and considering the fact that Lincoln had not spoken for his own party since his nomination, he found it necessary to take a moment to "press upon the public attention the most conclusive evidence of which the case is susceptible," the idea of the integrity of the Republican party and his own integrity as its helmsman. Wise judgment could scarcely have dictated otherwise, for the lower South had gone out of the Union partly on the grounds that it expected no fair consideration from the newly born party, and the border states were contemplating similar measures. Lincoln attempted to conciliate his audience by assuring the country that "the property, peace and security of no section are to be in any wise endangered by the now incoming Administration." In order to do this he called attention to the fact that he was taking a solemn oath in "your presence"; he committed himself again to previously spoken words[178] that have "all the while existed, and been open to their inspection"; to the Republican platform pertaining to the "maintenance inviolate of the rights of the States, and especially the right of each State to order and control its own domestic institutions according to its own judgment exclusively";[179] and to the clause "plainly written in the Constitution," pertaining to delivering up "on claim of the party to whom such service or labor may be due"[180] the escaping fugitive. He concluded his opening remarks with a reiteration of the avowal that he took the "official oath to-day, with no mental reservations, and with no purpose to construe the Constitution or laws, by any hypercritical rules." This was neither the material nor the method of a "deceitful" or "dangerous" man. By it, Lincoln was attempting to touch off those favorable responses that accrue to the appearance of honesty, straightforwardness, and obedience to the Constitution. One must remember that Lincoln's pledge of faith could not have given satisfaction to the Abolitionist group within his own party with whom he was constantly identified by the South; it did, however, serve to differentiate him from the radical element and hence to reassure the states yet within the Union. From the standpoint of persuasiveness

[177]"Address to the Legislature of Ohio at Columbus, February 13, 1861," *Complete Works*, VI, 121, 122.

[178]"Mr. Lincoln's Reply," First Joint Debate, at Ottawa, August 21, 1858, *The Political Debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas*, p. 209.

[179]Halstead, op. cit., p. 138.

[180]Article IV, Sec. 2.

Lincoln was undoubtedly wise in taking the advice of Seward to omit the paragraphs immediately following his opening statement in the original dr the Inaugural:

> The more modern custom of electing a Chief Magistrate upon a previously declared platform of principles, supersedes, in a great measure, the necessity of restating those principles in an address of this sort. Upon the plainest grounds of good faith, one so elected is not at liberty to shift his position. It is necessarily implied, if not expressed, that, in his judgment, the platform which he thus accepts, binds him to nothing either unconstitutional or inexpedient.
>
> Having been so elected upon the Chicago Platform, and while I would repeat nothing in it, of aspersion or epithet or question of motive against any man or party, I hold myself bound by duty, as well as impelled by inclination to follow, within the executive sphere, the principles therein declared. By no other course could I meet the reasonable expectations of the country.[181]

To have used the paragraphs would undoubtedly have incited anew the suspicion that he was merely a "sectional" President and an "abolitionist" or "party man."

Having spent time in an attempt to gain a fair hearing for the rest of his address, Lincoln next took up the question for which the whole country awaited an answer, namely, What is the duty and the policy of the Republican administration in regard to Secession? Without delay, he laid down the proposition, "I hold, that in contemplation of universal law, and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all national governments"; hence "no State, upon its own mere motion, can lawfully get out of the Union,—that *resolves* and *ordinances* to that effect are legally void, and that acts of violence, within any State or States, against the authority of the United States, are insurrectionary or revolutionary, according to circumstances." Furthermore, "if the United States be not a government proper, but an association of States in the nature of contract merely, can it, as a contract, be peaceably unmade, by less than all the parties who made it?"

To the North, the mere assertion of the principle of perpetuity would have been sufficient; no further proof would have been necessary. But to the lower South, already out of the Union, and to the border states and upper South contemplating similar action, clearly assertion was not sufficient. Therefore, Lincoln found his proposition "confirmed by the history of the Union itself." The Union, he pointed out, was "much older than the Constitution"; it was "formed in fact, by the Articles of Association in 1774"; it was "matured and continued by the Declaration of Independence in 1776"; it was "further matured and the faith of all the then thirteen States expressly plighted and engaged that it should be perpetual, by the Articles of Confederation in 1778"; finally "in 1787, one of

[181]For changes in the Inaugural, see MS of early printed version with secretarial reproductions of the changes, and accompanying letter of John Hay to Charles Eliot Norton, dated March 25, 1899, explaining the nature of the revisions, in Widener Library of Harvard University. See also, John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln*, III, 327–344; Louis A. Warren, "Original Draft of the First Inaugural," *Lincoln Lore*, No. 358 (February 17, 1936) and No. 359 (February 24, 1936). See, *The Robert Todd Lincoln Collection of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln*, Library of Congress. Microfilm in University of Illinois Library. This collection contains the most important source for the various working sheets of the Inaugural.

the declared objects for ordaining and establishing the Constitution, was *'to form a more perfect Union.'* " Although Lincoln's support of his proposition was factual, the facts themselves carried with them the respect and loyalty that had always attached to the founding fathers who were held in esteem for their vision and their wisdom.

Having stated the principle that guided him, Lincoln continued logically with its application, holding that "to the extent of my ability I shall take care, as the Constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the States." In discussing the policy of the government in enforcing the laws of the Union, Lincoln does not speak as the master or the mere advocate handing down a bloodless decision, but as a servant performing a "simple duty," the "American people" being "my rightful masters." As a skilled persuader, he was undoubtedly aware that lines of argument will often meet with varied responses according to whether they are put forward by those toward whom one feels sympathetic or antagonistic.[182] Nowhere in the Inaugural does Lincoln seek more earnestly to be conciliating and mild. He was aware that legalism alone would not sustain his purpose. He could have used the bold and confident assertion that appeared in the original draft of the Inaugural:

> All the power at my disposal will be used to reclaim the public property and places which have fallen; to hold, occupy and possess these, and all other property and places belonging to the government and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion of any State.

Even in the original draft, Lincoln had avoided the use of the names of specific forts to which he had reference. Pickens and Sumter were in a precarious position and were peculiarly explosive topics of discussion. However, Lincoln yielded even further in tempering his remarks, accepting the suggestion of O. H. Browning, and finally choosing only to say:

> The power confided to me will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property and places belonging to the Government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but, beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion, no using of force against or among the people anywhere.

Furthermore, "Where hostility to the United States, in any interior locality, shall be so great and so universal, as to prevent competent resident citizens from holding the Federal offices," he would make "no attempt to force obnoxious strangers among the people for that object," even though the "strict legal right may exist." And, the mails "unless repelled" would continue to be furnished. In doing this, "there needs to be no bloodshed or violence," he assured the country, and promised that "there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority." Nowhere did Lincoln assert a power or a practice that he believed impossible of enforcement, or that he believed could be interpreted as "coercion" in its baldest and most belligerent form.

Having announced his specific policy, Lincoln turned to those "who really love the Union," neither affirming nor denying that there were those "who seek to destroy the Union at all events," being "glad of any pretext to do it." In his original draft, he had intended pointedly to observe, "Before entering upon so grave a matter as the destruction of our national Union, would it not be wise to

[182]Robert K. Merton, *Mass Persuasion* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), p. 109.

ascertain precisely why we do it?" In his final draft, however, he blotted out the word "Union" and substituted for it the unifying and figurative word "fabric," further inserting the words "with all its benefits, its memories and its hopes," thereby seeking to heighten feeling by suggesting appropriate attitudes.

Having passed the climax of his remarks, Lincoln moved, in the last half of the Inaugural, to a reasoned discussion of related topics. He denied that any right plainly written in the Constitution had been violated, observing that majorities and minorities arise as a result of that class of questions for which no specific constitutional answer has been provided. The alternative to accepting the "majority principle" was always either "anarchy or depotism." Not even the Supreme Court could serve as the final arbiter on questions "affecting the whole people," for unless it limited its activity to making decisions on specific "cases properly brought before them," the "people will have ceased to be their own rulers." He argued the impracticability of secession, contrasting it with the simple act of divorce between husband and wife who may remain "beyond the reach of each other," and concluded that "Physically speaking, we cannot separate." Not even war was a satisfactory solution to difficulties, for "you cannot fight always," and after much "loss on both sides, and no gain on either," the "identical old questions" are again to be settled. "This country, with its institutions, belongs to the people who inhabit it," he insisted, urging that when the whole people "shall grow weary of the existing government, they can exercise their *constitutional* right of amending it, or their *revolutionary* right to dismember or overthrow it."

Lincoln's appeal throughout was to the "patient confidence in the ultimate justice of the people." "Is there any better or equal hope, in the world?" he asked, even as he noted the human tendency of parties in dispute to insist with equal confidence on being in the "right." Rising to the position of impartial leader, he sought faith in a higher law, and in a disinterested Ruler: "If the Almighty Ruler of nations, with his eternal truth and justice, be on your side of the North or on yours of the South, that truth, and that justice, will surely prevail, by the judgment of this great tribunal, the American people."

Lincoln ended his address with both a challenge and a declaration of faith. "In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail *you*." He was just about to take an oath, and to him an oath was a solemn pledge, not only in word, but in truth. It was an avowal of morality, binding him not only to duty to the people but to God, "the Almighty Ruler of nations." "*You* have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government," he pleaded in an attempt to secure the cooperation of all those who could help him in fulfilling the pledge he was to take, "while *I* shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect and defend' it." His final appeal was to feeling rather than to reason. He undoubtedly realized that when men cannot achieve common ground through reason, they may achieve it through the medium of feeling. "I am loth to close," he observed. "We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection." No longer the advocate, or even the President performing official duties, Lincoln, taking the advice of Seward, became the affectionate father, the benevolent and hopeful counselor, trusting not only in reason, but calling on "memory," the "patriot grave," the "heart and hearth-stone," "the better angels of our nature" to "swell the chorus of the Union."

Whereas the disgruntled may have "found too much argumentative discussion of the question at issue, as was to have been expected from a man whose whole career has been that of an advocate,"[183] obviously others could not have failed to notice that Lincoln sought valiantly to employ all the "available means of persuasion." He had sought to reach his audience not only through reason, but through feeling and through the force of his own ethical ideals.

Any fair-minded critic, removed from the passions of the times, must find himself much more in agreement with those observers of the day who believed the Inaugural met the "requirements of good rhetoric" by having "right words in their right places" and "right words at the right times,"[184] than with those who labeled it "feeble rhetorical stuff," and found it "inferior in point of elegance, perspicuity, vigor, talent, and all the graces of composition to any other paper of a like character from a President of the Republic."[185] One who studies the revisions in phrase and word in the various drafts of the Inaugural must become aware that Lincoln was concerned not only with using the right argument, but with using words cautiously, and purposefully, to obtain a desired effect from his listeners and from his potential readers. To the rhetorician, style is not an aspect of language which can be viewed in isolation or judged merely by the well-attuned ear. Nor is it sufficient to apply such rubrics as clarity, vividness, elegance as absolute values, or as an adequate description of style. Words are an "available means of persuasion," and the only legitimate question is: Did Lincoln use words effectively to achieve his specific purpose?

Although Lincoln may have lamented that he did not have a "fine education" or that he was not a "master of language,"[186] he had a keen sensitiveness for language. He "studied to see the subject matter clearly," said an early teacher, "and to express it truly and strongly. I have known him to study for hours the best way of three to express an idea."[187] And when his partner, Herndon, attempted the grandiose in expression, Lincoln sometimes remarked, "Billy, don't shoot too high—aim lower and the common people will understand you. They are the ones you want to reach—at least they are the ones you ought to reach. The educated and refined people will understand you any way. If you aim too high your ideas will go over the heads of the masses, and only hit those who need no hitting."[188] Lincoln had become adept at stump speaking, and knew how to use language to make himself clear and to make a point. That he knew the power of language to fire passions and to cloud understanding is amply demonstrated in his remarks at Indianapolis when he was en route to Washington. "Solomon says there is 'a time to keep silence,' " he observed, "and when men wrangle by the month with no certainty that they mean the same thing, while using the same word, it perhaps were as well if they would keep silence. The words 'coercion' and 'invasion' are much used in these days, and often with some temper and hot blood. Let us make sure, if we can, that we do not misunderstand the meaning of those who use them. Let us get exact definitions of

[183] *The Diary of a Public Man*, p. 75.

[184] *The Boston Transcript*, as quoted in *New York Daily Tribune*, March 7, 1861, p. 7, col. 1.

[185] *Jersey City Standard*, as quoted in *Northern Editorials on Secession*, II, 625.

[186] Speech in reply to Douglas at Chicago, Illinois, July 10, 1858, in *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, edited by Roy P. Basler, p. 393.

[187] Herndon and Weik, op. cit., p. 99.

[188] Ibid., p. 262.

these words, not from dictionaries, but from the men themselves, who certainly deprecate the things they would represent by the use of words."[189] Lincoln was keenly aware that words themselves were often grounds for argument, systems of attitudes suggesting courses of action.[190] Then, too, Lincoln knew that his "friends feared" and "those who were not his friends hoped, that, forgetting the dignity of his position, and the occasion, he would descend to the practices of the story-teller, and fail to rise to the level of a statesman."[191]

The desire for clearness, the desire to subdue passion, the desire to manifest the integrity and dignity befitting a statesman in a responsible position—these are the factors that influenced Lincoln in his composition of the Inaugural, and to appraise his style without constant awareness of them is likely to lead the critic far afield. Let us consider Lincoln's style, then, as a system of symbols designed to evoke certain images favorable to the accomplishment of his purpose and, in so far as he could, to prevent certain other images from arising.

One of the most marked characteristics of Lincoln's style is its directness. By it he attempts to achieve the appearance of candor and honesty, traits that were eminently significant to the success of the Inaugural, considering the doubts and suspicions that were prevalent regarding his integrity. From the opening sentence to the conclusion one notes the unmistakable honesty and straightforwardness that reside in direct address. "I appear before you," he remarks, "to address you briefly, and to take, in your presence, the oath prescribed by the Constitution of the United Sates . . . " Again he observes, "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists"; "I now reiterate these sentiments"; "I take the official oath to-day, with no mental reservations";"*You* have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while *I* shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect and defend' it." Direct and forthright throughout, he could scarcely have used words to better advantage in emphasizing his honesty and integrity.

What doubts there were pertaining to inadequacies traceable to his humble origins and his lack of formal education must in some wise have been dispelled by his clearness, his accuracy, and his freedom from the awkward expression or the simple idiom of the Western stump speaker. Lincoln had felt his inadequacies when he addressed an Eastern audience of educated men at Cooper Union and was uncomfortable. In his Inaugural, prepared for an audience representative of the whole country, he had been cautious and careful to use language that was sustained in its dignity. Seward, sometimes known for his polished expression, had given him some aid in the choice of the proper word. Lincoln accepted advice in such word changes as "acquiesce" instead of "submit," "constituted" instead of "constructed," "void" instead of "nothing," "repelled" instead of "refused," and he also accepted such a change of phrase as "imperfectly supports the law itself" for " is against the law itself." Although the changes are minor, they reflect Lincoln's desire for correctness and conciseness. On his own better judgment, he deleted the one extended metaphor that appeared in the

[189] "Address to the Legislature of Indiana at Indianapolis, February 12, 1861." *Complete Works*, VI, 112, 113.

[190] Kenneth Burke, "Two Functions of Speech," *The Language of Wisdom and Folly*, edited and with an introduction by Irving J. Lee (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1949), p. 40.

[191] L. E. Chittenden, *Recollections of President Lincoln and His Administration* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1904), p. 88.

original draft. "I am, rather for the old ship, and the chart of the old pilots," he had originally written, with some of the tang and flavor of his speech in addressing popular Western audiences. "If, however, the people desire a new, or an altered vessel, the matter is exclusively their own, and they can move in the premises, as well without as with an executive recommendation." The figure was not equal in elevation to the rest of his remarks. His final draft read simply, "I cannot be ignorant of the fact that many worthy and patriotic citizens are desirous of having the national Constitution amended. While I make no recommendation of amendments, I fully recognize the rightful authority of the people over the whole subject . . . " Such phrasing, simple in its dignity, undoubtedly was more appropriate and suited to his needs.

That Lincoln sought to control the behavior of his audience and the reader through the appropriately affective word is apparent throughout his address. There are times when even the level of specificity and concreteness, usually thought to be virtues of style, is altered in favor of the more general word or allusion. For instance, Lincoln had originally intended to say, "why may not South Carolina, a year or two hence, arbitrarily, secede from a new Southern Confederacy . . . ?" Finally, however, he avoided being specific, altering his remarks to read "why may not any portion of a new confederacy, a year or two hence, arbitrarily secede again . . . ?" Again, the ridicule in his assertion, "The Union is less perfect than before, which contradicts the Constitution, and therefore is absurd," is eliminated and reason is substituted: "The Union is *less perfect* than before the Constitution, having lost the vital element of its perpetuity." Lincoln sometimes chose the longer statement in preference to the sharp, pointed word or phrase, if by a longer expression he could avoid truculence or the pointing of an accusing finger. Such a phrase as "be on your side of the North or on yours of the South," aided considerably in creating an image of impartiality, and was to be preferred for the shorter, but divisive phrase, "be on our side or yours." The changes that Lincoln made in the direction of fullness rather than compression were designed to aid in clearness, exactness, and completeness, for the country expected him to express himself fully on the disturbing problems of the time.

The close of Lincoln's address, often cited for its poetic beauty, reflects not only his aesthetic sense, but perhaps more importantly, his power of using words to evoke images conducive to controlling response. As is very well known, Lincoln was not merely trying to be eloquent when he closed the address. He achieved eloquence and cadenced beauty through his direct attempt to be "affectionate," Seward having reminded him that perhaps feeling should supplement reason, and having suggested a possible conclusion:

> I close. We are not we must not be aliens or enemies but ~~countrym~~ fellow countrymen and brethren. Although passion has strained our bonds of affection too hardly they must not ~~be broken they will not~~ I am sure they will not, be broken. The mystic chords of memory which proceeding from ~~every ba~~ so many battle fields and ~~patriot~~ so many patriot graves ~~bi~~ pass through all the hearts and hearths ~~all the hearths~~ in this broad continent of ours will yet ~~harme~~ again harmonize in their ancient music when ~~touched as they surely~~ breathed upon ~~again~~ by the ~~better angel~~ guardian angel of the nation.[192]

[192]Facsimile of the original suggestion of Seward as reprinted in *Abraham Lincoln: His Speeches and Writings*, edited by Roy P. Basler, pp. 589, 590.

An image of great-heartedness, great humility, and great faith resulted when Lincoln rephrased Seward's suggestion in his own style. It was his final declaration of faith and had in it the emotional intensity that often accompanies the hoped-for but unknown. It was his final plea for a course of action befitting "friends."

Let us conclude our remarks on Lincoln's style by emphasizing that it reflected the same purposefulness that was characteristic of the arguments contained in the address. Through directness, clearness, dignity, and appropriately affective words, he sought to aid himself in achieving his ends.

One further means of persuasion may be noted, namely, that of his manner in oral presentation. Lincoln's delivery, of course, was significant chiefly to those who composed his immediate audience, and not to any great extent to the much larger audience throughout the country, except in so far as eyewitnesses and newspaper reports conveyed impressions pertaining to the character and personality of the speaker. It is undoubtedly true that Lincoln's manner contributed heavily to his effectiveness on this particular occasion. It may even be true that, had the whole country been immediately present, it would have found further grounds for trust. Ethical stature often shows itself not only in the selection of argument or the composition of words, but in those "echoes and values" that emanate from physical presence alone. "If I were to make the shortest list of the qualifications of the orator," Emerson once remarked, "I should begin with *manliness;* and perhaps it means here presence of mind."[193] It must be remembered that when Lincoln advanced to the platform to deliver his Inaugural, he did so in face of threats on his life. That he manifested little fear is apparent from practically all of the newspaper accounts of the day. The most usual observation indicated that "the great heart and kindly nature of the man were apparent in his opening sentence, in the tone of his voice, the expression of his face, in his whole manner and bearing."[194] In the judgment of many, he "gained the confidence of his hearers and secured their respect and affection."[195] Lincoln appears to have had a sense of communication, a complete awareness of what he was saying when he was saying it. His thought emerged clearly and appeared to be in no way obstructed by affectation or peculiarities of manner. With dignity and firmness coupled with mildness and humility he sought to enforce his plea by those powers that reside in personality. That they have stimulus value one can scarcely question.

Thirty-nine days after Lincoln delivered his Inaugural Address, Fort Sumter was fired upon. Civil war had begun. Lincoln had sought to save the Union by carefully reasoned argument, by regard for the feelings and rights of all the people, and by a solemn avowal of justice and integrity. That the inaugural alone could not prevent the war is surely insufficient ground to condemn it for ineptness. "In speechmaking, as in life, not failure, but low aim, is crime."[196] There were many divisive forces, and these had gained great momentum by the time Lincoln addressed the American people. The South accepted the burden of his challenge, "In *your* hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in *mine*, is the momentous issue of civil war."

[193]"Eloquence," *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (New York: Sully and Kleinteich, 1875), VIII, 123.
[194]Chittenden, loc. cit.
[195]Ibid., p. 90.
[196]Parrish and Nichols, op. cit., p. 12.