

## INTRODUCTION

*Fortune favoured him . . . in the opportune  
moment of his death.*

—Tacitus, *Agricola*

The ascendancy of one cultural group over other cultural groups that are competing for dominance typically is a gradual, nearly imperceptible process.<sup>1</sup> This is not difficult to fathom. In times and/or places where members of a cultural group are conscious of their marginalization and subordination, when they are alert and attuned to their membership in their culture, and when they have the means and the conditions and the power to organize and to work against the forces that have created the conditions of their marginalization and subordination, the possibilities for cultural transformation are great. Remove, block, thwart, or stifle any of these—as occurs almost by definition in any multicultural nation, especially in those that manifest the ingredient of the postmodern condition we recognize as fragmentation—and the possibilities immediately diminish toward nothingness.

Events that rupture the social structure of a nation so dramatically that they thoroughly call into question the totality of

cultural arrangements that were in place before the event are rare. When such events occur, however, they create conditions that are consummate for cultural transformation, for providing an opportunity for well poised cultures to assume the position of the hegemonic bloc (Gramsci 1971). Within the frame provided by these extraordinary events we are privileged to witness within the span of a brief time what ordinarily we must trace across broad spans of time. I know of no other event that so exactly marks the dramatic rupture of the social structure of a nation and that so clearly lays cultural transformation open to observation than the death of Abraham Lincoln.

The possibilities of cultural transformation had been building long before Lincoln's assassination, of course. Immigration, the exaggerated importation of European deportments, the stabilization of the political environment, economic restructuring, and a myriad of other indicators point undeniably to gradual and sometimes ephemeral shifts in the status of American<sup>2</sup> cultures.<sup>3</sup> But at the moment of Lincoln's death—and the nearly simultaneous end of a terrible, bloody war—those possibilities emerged, through a peculiar synchronicity, as actualities. Embedded within those actualities we find the voices of citizens who responded to Lincoln's death, who announced for others to hear that the great, fallen leader was, without question, a member of *their* cultural group, and that, therefore, they were entitled to carry on his work, to assume the mantle of his position and power, and to guide the nation toward a future that *their* Lincoln had helped create and toward which the nation was destined to travel.

Just below I have pieced together what *appears* to be a coherent narrative, a cogent story of a single culture singularly struggling to respond to a national tragedy. Yet, "the term 'narrative,' like 'beauty,' or 'order,'" as Arnold Krupat (1992) recently has remarked, "represents a determination as to what counts as signal or figure; narrative, beauty, and order are sociolinguistic constructs, which is to say that only those exchanges of information

we take as fulfilling the conditions we posit for narrativity can be taken to constitute a narrative" (76). Just so, a reading informed by the perspective that I am advancing here allows us to hear and bear witness to the voices of disparate cultures seeking to ascend in this rare opportunity for cultural transformation. To hear those disparate voices, to listen to them clamoring to lay claim to Lincoln and his legacy sets the stage here for understanding three consistently potent and powerful American cultures whose *ethoi* and worldviews constitute the central focus of this book. That some readers will hear a ring of familiarity in some of the voices—or will be repulsed or altogether unable to hear other voices—is a portentous indication that these three cultures are still very much with us. Responses to Lincoln's assassination thus serve here and throughout this work not so much as addenda for enhancing our understanding of Lincoln or of Lincoln's place in history, but as instructive media through which we can begin to understand the rhetorical and cultural bases of memorializing, the struggle to control and maintain public memory, and the interplay of cultures and cultural boundaries.

Following this brief narrative, I sketch and then expand the circumstances immediately surrounding Lincoln's assassination. I then place Lincoln's death and the responses and central myths that his legacies generated in a broader context. Third, I set forth the analytic framework that I later bring to bear on those responses and legacies. Finally, I conclude with a preview of the remaining chapters of this work.

## LINCOLN'S DEATH

At ten-thirty on the evening of April 14, 1865, while Maj. Henry Reed Rathbone, Clara Harris, Mary Todd Lincoln, and Abraham Lincoln watched the third act of *Our American Cousin* from the State Box in John Ford's theater, twenty-six-year-old John Wilkes Booth entered the box, aimed his derringer, and discharged a shot

that struck the left side of the President's head. The ball then traveled "obliquely forward, towards the right eye, crossing the brain obliquely, a few inches behind the right eye, where the ball lodged" (Barnes 1865, 71). Having "heard the discharge of a pistol behind him," Henry Rathbone "then turned to the President."

His position was not changed. His head was slightly bent forward and his eyes were closed. Deponent [Rathbone] saw that he was unconscious, and supposing him mortally wounded, rushed to the door for the purpose of calling medical aid. . . . Deponent removed the bar and the door opened. Several persons who represented themselves to be surgeons were allowed to enter. . . . Deponent then returned to the box and found the surgeons examining the President's person. They had not yet discovered the wound. As soon as it was discovered it was determined to remove him from the theatre. He was carried out, and this deponent then proceeded to assist Mrs. Lincoln, who was intensely excited, to leave the theatre. On reaching the head of the stairs deponent requested Major Potter to aid him in assisting Mrs. Lincoln across the street to the house to which the President was being conveyed. (Rathbone 1865, 62–63)

Across the street in "the house of a Mr. [William] Petersen" [sic], Lincoln's moribund frame lay stretched across a double bed "with his head at the outside" (Shea 1865, 69). Within minutes "the pillows were saturated with blood, and there was considerable blood upon the floor immediately under him. There was a patch-work coverlet thrown over the President,"

which was only so far removed, from time to time, as to enable the physicians in attendance to feel the arteries of the neck or heart, and he appeared to have been divested

of all clothing. His eyes were closed and injected with blood, both the lids and the portions surrounding the eyes being as black as if they had been bruised by violence. He was breathing regularly, but with effort, and did not seem to be struggling or suffering. (Field 1865, 69–70)

Throughout the night a continuous stream of visitors inspected Lincoln's unconscious form—sixteen different physicians, cabinet members, various government officials, “senators, congressmen, army officers, personal friends,” William T. Clark, the young Massachusetts soldier in whose room Lincoln lay, “the four other Peterson House boarders and their landlord, Mr. Lincoln's son Robert and his mother's circle of comforters, actors from the interrupted *Our American Cousin*, and just plain people who had slipped in somehow to watch Abraham Lincoln die” (Kunhardt & Kunhardt 1965, 91).

In the midst of this continuous confusion the numerous physicians who had crowded into the small room vigilantly, diligently, incessantly monitored and recorded Lincoln's condition. By “five minutes past eleven,” they noted, his pulse was forty-five “and growing weaker.” At “thirty-two minutes past eleven” his pulse was forty-eight “and full.” By “quarter past twelve” his pulse was forty-eight, his respiration had dropped to twenty-one, and the deeply bruised appearance around “both eyes” clearly indicated “ecchymosis.” At “forty minutes past twelve” his pulse had increased to sixty-nine, his “right eye [was] swollen, and ecchymosis” was deepening and spreading. At “fifty-five minutes past twelve” his pulse had increased to eighty, and the physicians noted “struggling motions of arms.” By “half-past one” his pulse had increased to eighty, but he was “appearing easier.” At “twenty-five minutes past three” his respiration was forty-two “and regular.” By “four o'clock” his respiration was “hard” and “regular.” At “fifty minutes past five his respiration was twenty-eight,” “regular,” and he was “sleeping.” But by “six o'clock” his pulse was “failing.” At

"half-past six" his respiration was "still failing," and his breathing was "labored"; by "seven o'clock" the physicians observed "symptoms of immediate dissolution"; and, finally, at "twenty-two minutes past seven—Death" (Abbott 1865a, 39; see also 1865b, 70 and 1865c, 71).

The expression on Lincoln's face "immediately after death," Maunsell Field (1865) noted, "was purely negative, but in fifteen minutes there came over the mouth, the nostrils, and the chin, a smile that seemed almost an effort of life. I had never seen upon the President's face," he continued, "an expression more genial and pleasing" (70). Mary Lincoln, the men present uneasily observed, was rather less than genial.

On at least three separate occasions during the ordeal, she attempted to be at her husband's side.<sup>4</sup> But "she was allowed to remain there only a few minutes, when she was removed in a sobbing condition, in which, indeed, she had been during all the time she was present" (Field 1865, 70). On the last occasion, at 3:00 A.M., Edwin M. Stanton, Lincoln's secretary of war, called for someone to "take that woman out of here" and declared that no one was to "let her in again" (as quoted in Kunhardt & Kunhardt 1965, 79). The First Lady's display of emotions was so offensive to Stanton and the physicians that they would not even allow her to be present "in the chamber of death" when Phineas Gurley delivered his deathbed prayer or to accompany her husband's corpse to the White House. After completing his prayer Dr. Gurley went into the front parlor, "where Mrs. Lincoln was, with Mrs. and Miss Kinney, and her son Robert, Gen. Todd of Dacotah (a cousin of hers), and Gen. Farnsworth, of Illinois. Here the reverend offered up another prayer," which "was continually interrupted by Mrs. Lincoln's sobs" (Field 1865, 69–70). Immediately following the prayer, officials escorted Mary Lincoln to her carriage, then took her to the White House, where a "doctor said she must go to bed immediately" (Randall 1953, 384).

As Mary Lincoln struggled to be near her husband, those

who thought themselves more suited to the tasks at hand removed Abraham's corpse "to the White House, attended by a dense crowd, and escorted by a squadron of cavalry and several distinguished officers." At the White House "Surgeon-General Barnes, Dr. Stone, the late president's family physician, Drs. Crane, Curtis, Woodward, Taft, and other eminent medical men" conducted a postmortem examination (Shea 1865, 71). Following the examination,

the embalmers proceeded to prepare [Lincoln's corpse] for the grave. Mr. Harry P. Cattell, in the employ of Doctors Brown and Alexander, who, three years before, had prepared so beautifully the body of little Willie Lincoln, now made as perpetual as art could effect the peculiar features of the late beloved President. The embalming was performed in the President's own room, in the west wing, in the presence of President Johnson. The body was drained of its blood, and the parts necessary to remove to prevent decay were carefully withdrawn, and a chemical preparation injected, which soon hardened to the consistence of stone, giving the body the firmness and solid immobility of a statue. . . .

The body was then placed in a beautiful mahogany coffin lined with lead, and with a white satin covering over the metal. It was finished in the most elaborate style, with four silver handles on each side, stars glistening between the handles, and a vein of silver winding around the whole case in a serpentine form. To the edges of the lid hung a rich silver tassel, making a chaste and elaborate fringe to the whole case. (Shea 1865, 111-12)<sup>5</sup>

In the short time between being sworn in as President and witnessing the embalming, Andrew Johnson had met with his cabinet and had "determined that the funeral ceremonies in

Washington should be celebrated on Wednesday, the 19th of April, and all the churches throughout the country were invited to join at the same time 'in solemnizing the occasion' by appropriate observances" (Nicolay & Hay 1890, 317; see also Johnson 1865). Immediately, artists and workers began to prepare the East Room in the White House for the funeral, which greatly disturbed Mary Lincoln; for "every plank that dropped gave her a spasm and every nail that was driven seemed to be like a pistol shot" (Edgar T. Wells, as quoted in Randall 1953, 385).<sup>6</sup>

By Sunday, April 16, Washington was "shrouded in Black. Not only the public buildings, the stores and shops, and the better class of residences were draped in funeral decorations," but also "the poorest class of houses, where the laboring men of both colors found means in their penury to afford some scanty show of mourning" (Shea 1865, 112). Everywhere, observers repeatedly remarked, people draped their cities and towns "in mourning, and from every pulpit in the land came the voice of lamentation over the national loss, and of eulogy to the virtues of the good President who had been so cruelly murdered" (Holland 1866, 523).

On Monday, April 17, officials turned their attention to the details of interring Lincoln's remains. At noon "members of the 39th Congress then in Washington met in the Senate reception room, at the Capitol" to consider their options (Bancroft 1866, 55). "Some urged that he should be buried in the vault built for Washington under the national capitol dome; Mrs. Lincoln [reportedly] favored New York or Chicago, but Governor Richard L. Oglesby [*sic*] and the senators from Illinois were insistent on the burial being at Springfield" (Holmes 1930, 317).<sup>7</sup> At four o'clock that afternoon the committee publicly announced their decision to assume full responsibility for making the necessary funeral arrangements, to transport Lincoln's "remains to their place of burial in the state from which he was taken for the national service," and to send a copy of their decision "to the afflicted widow of the late President, as an expression of sympathy in her great



bereavement" (Bancroft 1866, 57). Even before the committee had announced its decision, members of the Springfield City Council had met, "appropriated \$20,000 to defray the expense of the funeral," and hired artists to embellish "the State House without and the Halls of the House of Representatives within" (Holmes 1930, 317). Without consulting Mary Lincoln, the Springfield committee paid \$5,300 for "six acres of the Mather grounds in [Springfield] for a burial place for Lincoln" and had very nearly completed his burial vault "before Mrs. Lincoln telegraphed her refusal to have him buried there" (Randall 1953, 387). But the Springfield committee was in accord with its Washington representatives, who were in accord with the Congressional Committee.

Almost concurrent with the Congressional Committee's public announcement, the Illinois delegation in Washington issued its own set of resolutions in which they thanked "the Federal authorities for their cordial cooperation and concurrence with the citizens of Illinois in securing to that State the remains" of Lincoln; they also announced that his remains would "be interred at the capitol of the State so long his residence" (Haynie et al. 1865, 136-137). Within a matter of hours "every town and city on the route begged that the train might halt within its limits and give its people opportunity of testifying their grief and their reverence," although the Congressional Committee eventually determined "that the funeral cortege should follow substantially the same route over which Lincoln had come in 1861" (Nicolay & Hay 1890, 319).

By ten o'clock the following morning, April 18, federal workers had prepared the White House to be "thrown open, to give the people an opportunity to take their farewell of the familiar face, whose kind smile death had for-ever quenched. At least twenty-five thousand persons availed themselves of this liberty; and thousands more, seeing the crowd, turned back unsatisfied" (Holland 1866, 524). Churches the next day recorded attendances that exceeded the record attendances of "Black Easter" three days

prior—perhaps as many as “25,000,000 people” (Holmes 1930, 318). In the nation’s capital the official ceremonies began at noon in the East Room of the White House, where the casket containing Lincoln’s remains rested on a meticulously designed catafalque:

The floor of the catafalque was about four feet in height, and approached by one step on all sides, making it easy to view the face of the honored dead. Above was a canopy, in an arched form, lined on the underside with white fluted satin, covered otherwise with black velvet and crepe. This was supported by four posts, heavily encased with the emblems of mourning. The canopy, the posts, and the main body of the catafalque were festooned with crepe and fastened at each fold with rosettes of black satin.

On the top of the coffin lay three wreaths of moss and evergreen, with white flowers and lilies intermingled. At the head of the coffin, standing upon the floor of the catafalque, and leaning against the metallic case, stood a beautiful cross, made of japonicas, lilies, and other white flowers, as bright and blooming as though they were still on their parent stem, and had not been plucked to adorn the house of the dead, its pure and immaculate white furnishing a strong contrast with the deep black on all sides. . . . Here, then, were the emblems of the dead, the marks of rank, the tokens of grief, deep and sorrowful, the signs of love and affection, and the living emblems of purity and happiness hereafter, as well as hope and immortality in the future. (Shea 1865, 112–13)

Around the equally ornamented room sat “governmental and judicial dignitaries, and such high officials from the states as had gathered to the capitol to pay their last tribute of respect to the illustrious dead” (Holland 1930, 524). While Albert Hale, Matthew Simpson, Phineas Gurley, and E. H. Gray presented scrip-

tures, prayers, and funeral addresses, "Robert Lincoln sat . . . with his face in his handkerchief, weeping quietly, and Little Tad, with his face red and heated, cried as if his heart would break. Mrs. Lincoln, weak, worn, and nervous, did not enter the East Room nor follow the remains" (Shea 1865, p. 114).

At the conclusion of the ceremonies pall bearers solemnly carried the casket to an elaborate two-tiered hearse, "built expressly by G. R. Hall," that permitted "a full view to all spectators" (Shea 1865, 128).<sup>8</sup> Then began the lengthy procession on its deliberate march toward the Capitol: "All of the pomp and circumstance which the Government could command was employed to give a fitting escort from the White House to the Capitol where the body of the President was to lie in State." And, "to associate the pomp of the day with the greatest work of Lincoln's life, a detachment of colored troops marched at the head of the line" (Nicolay & Hay 1890, 317 and 318). At the Capitol, amid more richly ornamented emblems of mourning, "Dr. Gurley completed the religious exercise of the occasion. Here the remains rested, exposed to public view, but guarded by soldiery, until the next day" (Holland 1866, 526).

At the end of the day many citizens began to insist that this pageant "was never paralleled upon this continent. Nothing like it—nothing approaching it—had occurred in this country, if, indeed, in the world" (Holland 1866, 526). Nor did the pageant end here. Through the following day thousands of citizens filed past Lincoln's open casket to pay their final respects before federal authorities took his remains "along a track of more than fifteen hundred miles" to Illinois "to be buried among the scenes of his early life" (Holland 1866, 526–27). On the morning of "April 21, with Lincoln's coffin" and "the coffin of Willie Lincoln, the son, who had died at Washington in February, 1862," the funeral train began its deliberate journey toward Springfield (Holmes 1930, 319).

In Baltimore and Harrisburg on April 21, in Philadelphia from April 22 to 23, in Cleveland on April 28, in Columbus on

April 29, in Indianapolis on April 30, in Chicago from May 1 to 2, mourners solemnly repeated the funeral pageant: elaborate funeral processions, specially designed hearses, funeral services, splendid catafalques, addresses, sermons, prayers, speeches, viewings of the remains, and emblems of mourning everywhere (Morris 1865, 155–218; Shea 1865, 168–222; Williamson 1865, 233–42). And where the train did not stop, “in out-of-the-way places, little villages, or single farm-houses, people came out to the side of the track and watched,” showering the train with flowers and handing funeral wreaths to the train’s passengers as they slowly passed: “Every five rods along the whole line were seen these mourning groups, some on foot and some in carriages, wearing badges of sorrow, and many evidently having come a long distance to pay this tribute of respect, the only one in their power, to the memory of the murdered President” (Shea 1865, p. 168).

Nearly three weeks after his death “the mortal remains of Abraham Lincoln, the sixteenth President of the United States, arrived in Springfield, the capital of Illinois, on Wednesday morning, the 3rd of May, 1865” (Morris 1865, p. 219), where the funeral scene began anew, as though it were being performed for the first time. Again authorities transferred the casket from the train to an ambitiously designed hearse; again a funeral procession bore the remains to an honored place where it would lie in state upon a grand catafalque adorned with the symbols of mourning; again “the citizens of the place, with thousands who came pouring in by every mode of conveyance, sought to gaze on the face of the corpse” (Shea 1865, 227). And again the morning light brought with it complementary ceremonies. From the Capitol in Springfield a funeral procession bore Lincoln’s corpse “over the gently undulating suburbs, across the beautiful meadows, to the cemetery. Oak Ridge Cemetery, if it has not the grandeur of Greenwood or Mount Auburn, is yet a beautiful resting place for the dead, covering an area of thirty-eight acres. Nature made the spot beautiful, and the artificial landscaping has been made with

much taste and skill, in conformity with the natural outlines. The original growth of small oaks still stands, and there are a score of towering elms along the banks of the brook which flows across the southern side" (Morris 1865, 223–24).

At Oak Ridge Cemetery Lincoln's casket, "hidden in the beauty of flowers," rested "atop a bier inside a thoroughly adorned limestone vault prepared for the temporary reception of his remains" (Morris 1865, 224).<sup>9</sup> Then came a prayer by Albert Hale, a dirge composed for the occasion by L. M. Dawes and George F. Root, a reading of scriptures by N. W. Miner, a choral presentation of "To Thee, O Lord," a reading of Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Address" by A. C. Hubbard, a metic performance of Otto's "As When Thy Cross Was Bleeding," a funeral oration by Matthew Simpson, a choral presentation of "Over the Valley the Angels Smile," some well-chosen remarks and a closing prayer by Phineas Gurley, a metic performance of a funeral hymn and doxology, and Phineas Gurley's benediction (Morris 1865, 219–37; Shea 1865, 225–41; and Williamson 1865, pp. 242–54). On June 1, 1865, by special proclamation, millions of citizens met publicly to pay tribute once again to Abraham Lincoln.<sup>10</sup>

#### AN IMMEDIATE CONTEXT

From a vantage point situated long after the fact, some may find it difficult to imagine that Lincoln's contemporaries would not have responded to his death with as much pomp and circumstance and devotion as they could command. Because Lincoln has become such an integral part of the nation's image, and because citizens have witnessed similar tributes during the intervening years, the pageantry and emotionality occasioned by his death, although distant, somehow seem appropriate, inevitable, and, therefore, perhaps rather unremarkable. But this vantage point overlooks an immediate context that makes both nineteenth century responses to his death and his current status as one of the

nation's most beloved and legendary presidents entirely remarkable.

In the best of times before his death Lincoln was only a moderately popular president. At other times, at William Hanchett (1983) has pointed out, "Lincoln was the object of far more hatred than love" (7). Consider, for instance, the election results of 1860 and 1864. In the election of 1860 Lincoln received only 39 percent of the popular vote—the second lowest percentage of anyone ever elected to the presidency.<sup>11</sup> Lincoln not only failed to carry a single slave state in this election, he also received only 26,388 of the 2,523,428 votes cast in the slave states (Cole 1986, 303–307; and Potter 1976, 442–43). Nor did he fare well in the urban North. As David Potter (1976) has noted, "whereas the North as a whole gave him 55 percent of its votes, in seven of the eleven cities with populations of 50,000 or more, he failed to get a majority" (443). Further, although Lincoln received 180 of the 303 electoral votes, which gave him twenty-seven more than he needed to win the election, his margin of victory very likely was more a result of good strategists and of William Seward's support than of Lincoln's popularity (429–47). This is particularly telling in light of the fact that the electoral college inflates the margin of victory.

In the election of 1864 Lincoln received 55 percent of the popular vote and 212 of the 233 electoral votes, which seems to imply that his popularity increased significantly during his first term in office. However, several points strongly suggest the opposite. Given the generally accepted belief that changing leaders in the middle of an all-consuming war invites catastrophe, for example, 55 percent of the popular vote and 212 of the electoral votes hardly seem resounding expressions of confidence or popularity. Consider, also, that the population of the United States increased by more than four million between 1860 and 1864, that there were many more potential voters in 1864 than there had been in 1860, that the states that had seceded did not participate in the election of 1864, and that Lincoln actually received nearly 700,00 fewer

votes in 1864 than he had received in 1860 (Cole 1986, 303–307; and Potter 1976, pp. 442–43).

Even more telling indicators of Lincoln's status in the eyes of many of his contemporaries before his death are the attacks people so frequently and openly made against his character, the constant threats to his life, and the glaring references, even in eulogies, to his flaws. In eulogizing Lincoln, for example, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1878) recalled that "All of us remember . . . the surprise and disappointment of the country at his first nomination by the Convention at Chicago. . . . It seemed too rash, on a purely local reputation, to build so grave a trust in such anxious times; and men naturally talked of the chances in politics as incalculable" (308–309). However incalculable his chances may have been, Lincoln won the election, which prompted the Richmond (VA) *Enquirer* to insist that the election of a Black Republican was tantamount to "a declaration of war" (as quoted in Hanchett 1983, 7). Whether Southerners widely shared that sentiment is not difficult to discern, for, as David Potter (1976) pointed out, "secession had begun, after all, not as a response to anything done or left undone by Congress, but rather as a response to the election of Lincoln" (552).

Secession was not the only concrete product of Lincoln's election. When Lincoln arrived in Philadelphia on February 21, 1860, on his way to be inaugurated, he was warned that someone planned to make an attempt on his life in Baltimore. Having ignored the warning initially, Lincoln later received a message directly from William Seward and Gen. Winfield Scott urging him to take the threat seriously. On their advice Lincoln altered his plans and took a different train through Baltimore to Washington. After Lincoln's death many would remember this as Lincoln's "hair-breadth escape from the hand of the assassin as he passed through the notorious city of Baltimore" (Miner 1865, 282). At the time, however, many citizens regarded Lincoln's "escape" as "an anticlimactic and even ignominious ending to a journey that had



been in some respects an extended celebration." As David Potter (1976) observes, "opposition newspapers seized gleefully on the episode and made the president-elect a target of ridicule and cartoons. His prestige, never extraordinarily high, sank probably to its lowest point since his election" (562).

Nor did his prestige rise very much soon afterward, for Lincoln was persistently the object of derision throughout his first term in office. Some ridiculed Lincoln for his awkward and peculiar mannerisms—what George Hepworth (1865) referred to as "a certain want of refinement" (113). Rather more explicitly, James Davidson called Lincoln "the vulgar monkey who now rules Washington" (as quoted in Hanchett 1983, 11-12). J.D. Fulton (1865), a Boston minister, pointed to Lincoln's "official awkwardness" (362). Another, who claimed to have visited Lincoln in the White House, insisted that he found Lincoln "seated in shirt sleeves, his feet on the mantelpiece, his hat on his head, amusing himself by making huge semicircles with tobacco juice that he squeezed out of his quid" (as quoted in Hanchett 1983, 11-12). J. M. Manning (1865) drew attention to Lincoln's "philosophy of jacoseness," which many thought unbecoming an American president (65). George Templeton Strong, a New York diarist, thought Lincoln was "a barbarian, Scythian, yahoo, or gorilla" (as quoted in Hanchett 1983, 11-12). And A. N. Littlejohn (1865) remarked that "as a writer he was singularly deficient in the ordinary graces of style," "destitute of methodological training, utterly without what is technically known as culture" (151-152).

Others ridiculed Lincoln's competence, intelligence, and policies. In New York a member of the state House of Representatives remarked that "many of the measures that [Lincoln] adopted for the suppression of the bloody contest, had, in some instances, as was to be expected, passed through the ordeal of severe criticism" (Redington 1865, 27). Speaking on the same occasion, another New Yorker blandly remarked that Lincoln "was not, in the common acceptance of the term, a great man" (Murphy 1865, 82).



Warren Cudworth (1865) later recalled that many of those in Lincoln's own administration had vigorously opposed his policies on "the confiscation of property, the unconditional abolition of slavery, the extension of the right of suffrage, and the publication of an act of amnesty offering pardon to everybody willing to renew alliance" (207). The Reverend A. N. Littlejohn (1865) insisted that Lincoln "had not the severe dignity of Washington, nor the acumen and breadth of Hamilton, nor the versatility of John Quincy Adams. He had not the electric eloquence of Clay, nor the matchless finish of Everett, nor the massive strength of Webster" (151). A New York editor insisted that Lincoln was "an uneducated boor. He is brutal in all his habits and in all his ways. He is filthy. He is obscene. He is vicious" (as quoted in Hanchett 1983, 12). Another Northerner criticized Lincoln because "he hesitated to put his foot down. There can be little doubt," he proclaimed, but that "thousands of lives were sacrificed because of his slowness" (J. D. Fulton 1865, 374). And the *New York World* flatly declared that "The conspicuous weakness of Mr. Lincoln's mind on the side of imagination, taste, and refined sensibility, has rather helped him in the estimation of the multitude" (as quoted in Shea 1865, 80).

As the election of 1864 approached, Lincoln was denounced in Chicago "as a tyrant and usurper, and compared to Nero and Caligula, and every other vile wretch whose black deeds darken the page of history" (as quoted in Colfax 1865, 216). Maria Daily wondered if "our countrymen can be so blind, so stupid, as to again place such a clod . . . in the presidential chair"; and Marcus "Brick" Pomeroy, the infamous editor of the LaCross (WI) *Democrat*, prayed to "Almighty God [to] forbid that we are to have two terms of the rottenest, most stinking, ruinworking small pox ever conceived by friends or mortals." Pomeroy was also hopeful that "some bold hand" would piece Lincoln's "heart with a dagger point for the public good" (as quoted in Hanchett 1983, 17 and 18).

Pomeroy's hope was by no means isolated. The *New York Copperhead* told Lincoln to "behave yourself, boss, or we shall be obliged to make an island of your head and stick it on the end of a pole. Then, for the first time, Lincoln's cocoanut [sic] will be posted" (as quoted in Turner 1982, 69). In the South, or so many Northerners believed, "the assassination of the President" was such a common topic of conversation that few were terribly surprised when "one of the Southern papers actually offered a reward for the assassination of the President, Vice-President, and Secretary of State" (Shea 1865, 56). That infamous advertisement, as Schuler Colfax (1865) noted in his eulogy for Lincoln, was "published in the Selma (AL) *Dispatch* of Last December [1864], and copied approvingly into other rebel organs":

ONE MILLION DOLLARS WANTED, TO HAVE PEACE BY THE FIRST OF MARCH.—If the citizens of the Southern confederacy will furnish me with the cash, or good securities for the sum of one million dollars, I will cause the lives of Abraham Lincoln, W. H. Seward, and Andrew Johnson to be taken by the first of March next. This will give us peace, and satisfy the world that cruel tyrants cannot live in a "land of liberty." If this is not accomplished, nothing will be claimed beyond the sum of fifty thousand dollars in advance, which is supposed to be necessary to reach and slaughter the three villains.

I will give, myself, one thousand dollars toward this patriotic purpose. (206)

Both North and South, Thomas Reed Turner (1982) notes, "newspapers were filled with suggestions for violence against the president" (69). And, as William Hanchett (1983) has observed, "threatening letters arrived [at the White House] continuously and in large numbers" (23). It is difficult to know whether these constant threats would have been acted out or whether persistent

rumors of organized efforts to kidnap or assassinate Lincoln had any firm basis in reality (Hanchett 1983, 7-124; and Turner 1982, 125-50). One assassination effort obviously did come to fruition, and even then criticisms of Lincoln did not cease.

When an individual dies, as Freud (1953) knew so well, the living typically "suspend criticism of [them], overlook [their] possible misdoings, issue the command: *De mortuis nil nisi bene*, and regard it as justifiable to set forth in the funeral oration and upon the tombstone only that which is most favourable to [their] memory" (16). Most citizens appear to have abided by that dictum; or, at least, most manifested some degree of restraint subsequent to Lincoln's death. Others did not. With complete disregard for the belief that one should not speak ill of the dead, the *Texas Republican* insisted that "from now on until God's judgment day the minds of men will not cease to thrill at the killing of Abraham Lincoln, by the hand of Booth, the actor." The Chattanooga (TN) *Daily Rebel* gladly proclaimed that "Abe has gone to answer before the bar of God for the innocent blood which he has permitted to be shed, and his efforts to enslave a free people" (as quoted in Turner 1982, 95 and 96).

Although often less jubilant, some Northerners were no less direct. A Boston minister remarked in his eulogy for Lincoln that, had Lincoln lived, "being in our midst, and not always the representative of our ideas, no doubt he would often have failed of appreciation, had he not provoked opposition, and some of his measures or recommendations would have been sharply criticised, if not severely censured" (Cudworth 1865, 208). Some of the more extreme members of Congress "did not among themselves conceal their gratification that [Lincoln] was no longer in their way" (Nicolay & Hay 1890, 315-16). Everyday citizens, both "men and women," Charles Robinson (1865) noted in his eulogy to Lincoln, "clap their hands in applause of this murder," and some "will declare that this murder in cold blood of a man in the presence of his wife is *chivalrous!*" (97, 103-104). Many even among those who were sympathetic to

Lincoln's policies were inclined to believe that "perhaps he would have been too gentle with evil-doers in the time to come," for Lincoln clearly was "not sufficiently stern" (Bartol 1865, 55). In all, during his time in office and to a lesser extent even after his death, Lincoln was, as Henry Foote (1865) remarked in his eulogy for Lincoln, "the object of such contumely and violent hate as no other in our history has ever had to bear" (185).

None of this is to suggest that Lincoln was hugely unpopular, that a majority of citizens disliked him or disapproved of his policies or politics, or that the often frustrated rhetoric of his contemporaries is somehow inaccurate. On the other hand, because Lincoln was the object of much hatred and anger and frustration, because rumors of plots and conspiracies were incessant, because threats to his life were constant, because violence and subterfuge were everpresent, and because some people openly and publicly hoped for his death while others had been fearfully anticipating his assassination "for four years and more" (Bartol 1865, 53), Lincoln's contemporaries were not entirely surprised when they learned of his death. But they were shocked. Northerners were shocked in part because the news they had been receiving during the week preceding Lincoln's assassination suggested that the end of the war was in sight. As Alfred T. Jones (1927) recalled in his eulogy to Lincoln,

How brightly opened the days of that eventful month in 1865. Four years of bloody warfare, with its attendant vicissitudes and horrors, had passed, when came the joyful tidings of the evacuation of Petersburg; then quickly followed the flight of our enemies from Richmond; next the unconditional surrender of the Rebel army and its greatest General.

What a universal jubilee prevailed throughout the loyal States. Joy sat enthroned on every countenance, each glance shone with expectation bright, friend greeted friend