

EDWARD EVERETT, "GETTYSBURG ADDRESS"  
(19 NOVEMBER 1863)

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**Abstract:** Utilizing a genre perspective, this essay investigates how Abraham Lincoln and Edward Everett commemorated the fallen soldiers within a war-time context. We argue that Everett's use of the epideictic genre emphasized Southern culpability and undermined his message of national unity, limiting the eulogistic dimensions of the speech and its potential legacy. Lincoln, conversely, more successfully honored the dead *and* envisioned a future of a unified America, which helps explain the longitudinal resonance of his address.

**Key Words:** Gettysburg, Abraham Lincoln, Edward Everett, genre, epideictic, forensic, deliberative

The enduring "Gettysburg Address"—the speech that comes to mind when one utters this phrase—was the work of President Abraham Lincoln. However, in the context of the cemetery dedication at Gettysburg, Lincoln's speech was not the featured oration. Instead, it was the oratorical work of Edward Everett that received prominent billing; and yet, President Lincoln's few words—delivered after Everett's—are the ones that have risen to great prominence in American history. In fact, one historian says of Lincoln: "In his brief time before the crowd at Gettysburg he wove a spell that has not, yet, been broken—he called up a new nation out of the blood and trauma."<sup>1</sup> Everett's address, conversely, has become known as the "other Gettysburg Address," often considered a less-effective and nearly irrelevant speech.<sup>2</sup> Despite their differing legacies, both addresses were part of a larger rhetorical event—the dedication of a new national cemetery during the Civil War.

Utilizing a genre perspective, this essay investigates how Lincoln and Everett commemorated the fallen soldiers of a key battle in the Civil War. Although the generic characteristics of Lincoln's address have been considered by other scholars,<sup>3</sup> this essay considers the complexity of the rhetorical situation that gave rise not only to an

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Last Updated: October 2007

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*Voices of Democracy*, ISSN #1932-9539. Available at <http://www.voicesofdemocracy.umd.edu/>.

epideictic response but also to arguments typically associated with deliberative and forensic discourse. Specifically, we argue that Everett's accentuation of southern culpability undermined his message of national unity, limiting the eulogistic dimensions of the speech and its potential legacy. Lincoln, conversely, more successfully honored the dead *and* envisioned a unified America, which helps explain the longitudinal resonance of his address. To more fully understand the differing rhetorical contributions of the Gettysburg addresses, we first trace Everett's and Lincoln's oratorical careers and the development of their rhetorical sensibilities. Next, we situate the dedication within the larger context of the Civil War and tend to the particular exigencies of the addresses. Last, we offer a critical look at how Everett and Lincoln managed the complexities of the same rhetorical situation.

### *The Oratorical Careers of Everett and Lincoln*

Edward Everett, the lesser-known of the two orators today, was a prominent and celebrated public figure who had amassed extensive public speaking experience by 1863. Everett's oratorical training began in his youth. By the age of 13, Everett began attending Harvard University and graduated at age 17. When he was 19, Everett became a minister at the Brattle Street Unitarian Church and earned a Ph.D. from the University of Göttingen in Germany, making him the first American to ever receive a German Ph.D. Everett served as a professor of Greek literature and president of Harvard between 1846 and 1849. His success as a leader in the academic community segued into a remarkable career in politics. Everett served as a member of Congress in the U.S. House of Representatives (1825-1835), as governor of Massachusetts (1836-1840), as U.S. Senator (1853-1854), and as Secretary of State (1852-1853).<sup>4</sup>

A central theme throughout Everett's life, regardless of vocation, was his speaking ability. Ronald F. Reid points out that after Everett's death, eulogists praised his oratory, calling Everett a modern-day Cicero. Everett, though, was not simply known for his ceremonial speeches; he also delivered numerous campaign speeches, participated in numerous congressional debates, and also gave sermons and lectures.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Everett dedicated several other Civil War battlefields—Lexington, Concord, and Bunker Hill. Thus, when a skilled orator was needed to dedicate the cemetery at Gettysburg in 1863, Everett's credentials fit the occasion.<sup>6</sup>

Most may assume that President Abraham Lincoln also was a natural choice for this solemn occasion given that he is one of the most heralded presidents in our nation's history. To an extent, he was. Lincoln's political career made him an experienced orator and a master of the dominant speaking styles of the nineteenth century. Despite a lack of formal education, Lincoln was familiar with important speeches in American life. Mildred Freburg Berry notes that Lincoln was particularly drawn to books with speeches demonstrating the forensic style of oratory, specifically M.L. Weems's *Life of George Washington*, David Ramsey's *Life of Washington*, and William Grimshaw's *History of the United States*. These books, Berry noted, were written in a "highly embellished, forensic style" wherein the audience is addressed directly "in order to enforce lessons of humility, courage, and generosity."<sup>7</sup>

Lincoln mastered this embellished, ungenteeled style in order to speak on the rough frontier. Indeed, Lincoln was a practiced orator of frontier rhetoric, or what was called "stump speaking," where "the countryside was Abe's auditorium."<sup>8</sup> This style was characterized by "harsh charges," "rough slang-governed grammar," and the telling of "tall tales," which used hyperbole to make a moral point.<sup>9</sup> Speaking on the frontier forced Lincoln to develop his sharp wit and sense of humor, qualities that became evident during his campaign for the state legislature in 1832, when he made numerous stump speeches in this rough, witty style.

Despite the public service that Lincoln amassed in the Illinois state legislature and the U.S. House of Representatives,<sup>10</sup> Earl W. Wiley argued that "[h]ad Lincoln died prior to 1854, not a syllable of his utterances would have survived him."<sup>11</sup> Lincoln's oratorical career took hold in the fall of 1854 when he publicly campaigned against the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which not only boosted his political career, but transformed his oratorical style. According to David Zarefsky, Lincoln's campaign against the Act forced him to resolve his ambiguities over the morality of slavery. Lincoln reconciled this moral paradox by making two clarifications: that slavery should be eliminated, and that slavery was an evil because it limited slaves' ability to advance economically. According to Zarefsky, the result of taking this position "allowed Lincoln to condemn slavery without accepting the abolitionist conclusion that blacks and whites should be considered social or political equals."<sup>12</sup>

Clarifying his position on slavery forced Lincoln's style to change from the ungenteeled to the transcendent. For example, during the presidential election cycle of 1858, Lincoln engaged his opponent, Stephen A. Douglas, in the now famed Lincoln-Douglas debates. Of the debates Zarefsky writes: "Lincoln's arguments tried to reach beyond the *fact* that, at its inception, the nation was part slave and part free, and, through the use of arguments from sign, to discuss the founders' *intent* or motive."<sup>13</sup> Arguing from a moral standpoint helped Lincoln transcend the immediate stickiness of the rhetorical situation (i.e., partisan views on slavery), and adopt a transcendent style. Ultimately, Lincoln was elected president in 1860, re-elected in 1864, and was assassinated on April 15, 1865. Like Everett, Lincoln's oratory was an integral part of his political career, which served the nation during the complex rhetorical context of the Civil War.

### *Contextualizing the Gettysburg Addresses*

In early July 1863, the Civil War had engulfed the city of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, leaving 50,000 dead in its wake. One can ascertain much of the battle's details from Everett's speech; however, a brief description of the overarching political and social forces of 1863 will accentuate the distressing exigencies confronting Everett and Lincoln on the day of the Gettysburg dedication.

By the summer of 1863, the Civil War had been in full swing for more than two years.<sup>14</sup> Lincoln's presidential leadership throughout the war had weathered severe attacks. Many anti-abolitionist Northerners criticized Lincoln for being too sympathetic to abolitionists; abolitionists, though, felt Lincoln's emancipation efforts were

insufficient.<sup>15</sup> By July 1863, over two and a half million troops had already perished in the Civil War. The clash of Union and Confederate troops at Gettysburg from July 1 to 3 proved another devastating blow. Over the course of two days, battles waged on two fronts, concluding after 15,000 Confederate troops abandoned one front and walked into artillery fire to take the Union line. The Confederate troops were unsuccessful and ultimately, the Union troops prevailed. Following the battle, anti-war riots erupted in the North and support for the war waned.<sup>16</sup> Despite the Union's victory at Gettysburg, Union leader General George Meade submitted a letter of resignation—as did Confederate leader, General Robert E. Lee.<sup>17</sup>

More than seven months passed before a proper dedication was made for those who died at Gettysburg. The removal and identification of bodies slowed the burial process. A prominent Pennsylvania banker, David Wills, orchestrated the burial site and the dedication at Gettysburg. On September 23, Wills invited Everett to a ceremony to be held on October 23. Everett, however, requested that the ceremony be moved to November 19 so that he would have more time to prepare his remarks. Ultimately, the delay was not enough time to prepare the cemetery—only one third of the bodies would be buried by the arrival of the occasion.<sup>18</sup>

In late October, in deference to the federal cabinet, David Wills also extended an invitation to President Lincoln to give a few words at Gettysburg. To Wills's surprise, the president accepted. According to historian Gary Wills, the president needed this opportunity to bolster war support and his own political popularity.<sup>19</sup> Gary Wills also argues that Lincoln understood the implications of this speaking opportunity and took great care to craft his words, asked to see the cemetery's design, and ensured he would arrive on time by traveling a day earlier. Had Lincoln taken the train the day of the dedication, he very likely would have arrived too late to deliver his speech.<sup>20</sup>

The night before the dedication, Everett and Lincoln slept at David Wills's home, where the two most likely shared each others' texts.<sup>21</sup> On the morning of November 19, 1863, the procession to the cemetery began forming at ten o'clock. The exact number of people in the crowd is not known, although estimates range from 15,000 to 150,000.<sup>22</sup> Sitting upon a platform overlooking such masses, Everett and Lincoln waited to deliver their meticulously-chosen words on the battle at Gettysburg.

### *Epideictic, Forensic, & Deliberative Rhetoric*

If, according to Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "rhetorical form follows institutional function," then Everett and Lincoln had their work cut out for them.<sup>23</sup> Asked to speak at a cemetery dedication, the orators were compelled to follow the epideictic form of the eulogy to praise the lives of the soldiers.<sup>24</sup> Everett and Lincoln, however, also were required to confront the material consequences of a fierce, paralyzing war. As such, they invoked the deliberative genre to advocate a course of future action that would enable the nation to move beyond the present turmoil of the war.<sup>25</sup> In what follows, we trace the theoretical developments of genre studies, including a discussion of the ways genres work together in war-time eulogies.

The classical Greek roots of generic discourse directly inform our understanding of the Gettysburg addresses. Genre analysis stems from Aristotle's three types of rhetoric: deliberative, forensic, and epideictic. These types are characterized by their differences among time frame and audience type or "kinds of hearers."<sup>26</sup> To be specific, audiences of the deliberative judge the future expediency or harmfulness of a proposed course of action, including issues of war and peace; audiences of the forensic judge past events and motives of wrongdoing; and audiences of the epideictic are "mere 'spectator[s]'" or critics of the speaker's ability to praise or blame at present events such as festivals or funerals.<sup>27</sup> Aristotle considered hearers as either judges or spectators, although he admitted that spectatorship involved active participation in the speaker's rhetorical work.<sup>28</sup> As such, Everett's and Lincoln's "hearers" would be judges of the orators' ability to properly eulogize the fallen soldiers (epideictic), to offer a course of future action to redress the perils of the Civil War (deliberative), or, in a less conventional move for a eulogy, to assess the past wrongdoings responsible for the tragic state of affairs (forensic).

More contemporary scholarly studies typically characterize genres as organic classification systems. Campbell and Jamieson argue, for example, that "A genre is a group of acts unified by a constellation of forms that recurs in each of its members."<sup>29</sup> This "constellation of forms" arises from a fusion of situation, substance, and style.<sup>30</sup> The situational constraints of a funeral, for example, compel the orator to alter the audience's relationship with the deceased and offer a way in which the deceased will live on. As such, the substance of the speech may include personal stories or promises to carry on the wishes of the deceased into the future. Stylistically, the speech may be intimate and inspirational. Thus, for a piece of discourse to be considered as part of a particular genre, the situation, substance, and style must work together dynamically.

Rhetorical scholarship has also sought to expand the limits of genre. Jamieson and Campbell, for instance, introduce "rhetorical hybrids," which form when a speech of one genre incorporates the characteristics of another genre to serve the speech's original purpose.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, G.P. Mohrmann and Michael C. Leff argue against the rigid boundaries of genres. They contend that "generic distinctions should not force every item into a preconceived category; instead, their proper function is to uncover genuine points of similarity and difference among forms of discourse."<sup>32</sup> Celeste Michelle Condit elaborates that "we cannot fence in the territory of epideictic with a single definitional criterion. Rather, we must assemble a set or 'family' of characteristics shared by epideictic speakers."<sup>33</sup> This familial perspective is similar to Campbell and Jamieson's notion of hybrids, which emphasizes the "productive, but transitory character" of genres.<sup>34</sup>

This essay similarly challenges the limitations of traditional genre studies to consider the management of all three genres in one piece of discourse. Recognizing the need to classify speeches, we also seek to demonstrate how a single exigence can produce responses that reflect the unique interplay of ceremonial, deliberative, *and* forensic rhetorics, with divergent degrees of effectiveness. In Stephen E. Lucas's words, genre criticism should "look beyond the formal traits of rhetorical genres to the interconnections between generic discourse and the situational constraints that shape

both its form and its function."<sup>35</sup> The Gettysburg addresses allow us to appreciate these interconnections given the complex rhetorical situation that the speakers faced.

Some consideration has been given to the ways in which the epideictic, deliberative, and forensic genres overlap in eulogies and war addresses. Jamieson and Campbell argue that an eulogy—an epideictic form of discourse—may be served by the deliberative genre by calling for future action that would honor the deceased. This call serves the eulogistic purpose of honoring the dead's memory and reknitting a community after a traumatic threat to its identity.<sup>36</sup> The authors also argue that a eulogy can incorporate the forensic genre in order to defend past actions of the deceased.<sup>37</sup> Other genres, however, demonstrate such overlap as well. For example, a war address's deliberative purpose of advocating a course of future action, contains within it some key epideictic purposes. Because a war address must react to a potential threat to the American community, it must perform the eulogistic function of "definition/understanding" in order to make "a troubled event less confusing and threatening."<sup>38</sup> Ultimately, war-time eulogies possess great potential for studying the interplay of the epideictic, deliberative, and forensic genres.

### *The Gettysburg Addresses*

Everett's and Lincoln's Gettysburg addresses demonstrate the limitations of assigning speeches to discrete generic categories. While each speaker's ethos and oratorical style have been used to explain the differences between orations, we argue that studying Everett's and Lincoln's use of genre provides an alternative explanation for the speeches' differing rhetorical contributions and legacies. In short, while Everett purported to deliver a eulogy, his decision to assess blame (epideictic) on the South's past (forensic) undermined his final call for a renewed America (deliberative). On the other hand, Lincoln remained faithful to his deliberative purpose of envisioning a unified America in the aftermath of the devastating war. In only a few short words, he also evoked the epideictic function of honoring the soldiers as a necessary step toward securing this shared future.

#### Edward Everett and Competing Purposes

Everett, the featured orator, spoke for over two hours, as his speech reflected the appropriate length and style of nineteenth-century oratorical culture. Characteristic of the "sentimental style" in which he spoke was the use of excessive words, which certainly contributed to the length of the speech. While some argue that the style and length of the speech hindered its posterity, we contend that Everett's unsuccessful negotiation of all three genres further limited its rhetorical strength.<sup>39</sup> To be specific, in the first of three sections of Everett's address, he purported to eulogize the soldiers.<sup>40</sup> In the beginning of this first section Everett successfully honored the dead; however, in the remainder of his speech, he employed the epideictic, forensic, and deliberative to vilify the South, limiting the speech's capacity to heal.

As Everett began his eulogy, he remained faithful to his epideictic goal of honoring the fallen soldiers. Everett suggested that his eulogy followed the funeral customs of ancient Athens.<sup>41</sup> Through a detailed narrative of the four-day process in which the Greek memorialized fallen soldiers (2-3),<sup>42</sup> Everett likened the battle of Gettysburg to the battle of Marathon—a battle "distinguished from all others in Grecian history" (3). The opening of Everett's address fulfilled his eulogistic purposes as he suggested that the burial ground of Greek martyrs was shared "by the graves of our dear brethren" (4). Thus, when Everett explicitly declared the occasion's eulogistic purpose "to pay the last tribute of respect to the brave men" buried at Gettysburg, he had already performed the epideictic function of praising the deceased by comparing them to the mythical status of Greek heroes (5).

Throughout the opening of Everett's address, though, he employed the forensic genre to support his epideictic purpose. The forensic genre is used to judge a past event; in this case, Everett used the forensic to judge the soldiers' participation in the war, which he initially judged as valiant and honorable. Everett argued that the war was a necessary defense measure. He claimed: "it is impossible for a people without military organization, inhabiting the cities, towns, and villages of an open country, including of course the natural proportion of non-combatants of either sex and of every age, to withstand the inroad of a veteran army" (6). Through Everett's forensic argument justifying the war—and therefore the soldiers' sacrifice—he was able to further honor the deceased. He said,

There beat in every loyal bosom a throb of tender and sorrowful gratitude to the martyrs who had fallen on the sternly contested field. Let a nation's fervent thanks make some amends for the toils and sufferings of those who survive. Would that the heartfelt tribute could penetrate these honored graves! (8)

Here, Everett demonstrated that the soldiers' sacrifice was not only necessary, but honorable. As such, Everett's forensic argument justifying the war served the overall epideictic purpose of honoring the soldiers.

Throughout the lengthy remainder of the first section of the address, however, Everett no longer used the epideictic to praise the dead, but rather, he used the epideictic to praise the North and vilify the South. As Everett offered a detailed narrative of the Civil War, he emphasized the South's culpability. For example, Everett framed this narrative as a story of the South's devious history: "There is abundant proof," he argued, "that a darker project was contemplated, if not by the responsible chiefs of the rebellion, yet by nameless ruffians, willing to play a subsidiary and murderous part in the treasonable drama" (9). Thus, before Everett relayed the "train of events" preceding Gettysburg, he alluded to the South's "murderous" and "treasonable" tendencies, emphasizing the South's villainous character and identifying their culpability in the incitement and execution of war. In the process, he exploited the epideictic genre for its "blame" function (9) and exhibited the forensic strategies in assessing past guilt.

Everett's narrative of the Civil War, thus, became a vehicle for highlighting the South's evil motives and incompetence. First, Everett described how the "armies and guerillas of the Rebels" tried to lure "Border States into the vortex of the conspiracy" (12). Next, as Everett detailed the movements of both armies before, during, and after Gettysburg, he emphasized the Confederates' incompetence. He considered "the apparent and perhaps real absence of plan on the part of [General Robert E.] Lee" and "the providential inaction of the Rebel army" as boons for the North (19, 28). Even after the Confederates gained ground the second day of the battle, Everett said, "[It] was the only advantage obtained by the Rebels to compensate them for the disasters of the day, and of this, as we shall see, they were soon deprived" (29). Defaming the Confederates worked to unite Everett's Northern audience in opposition to the South. Even though uniting an audience through a shared, future purpose is a key feature of eulogies,<sup>43</sup> Everett's narrative united his audience in the hatred of an enemy's past wrongdoings. As a result, his narrative not only failed to move his audience beyond the present, but strayed from the speech's purpose to honor the soldiers. Although the assessment of blame upon the South reflected the features of epideictic rhetoric, this use of epideictic appeared less appropriate for a context designed to commemorate the dead; accordingly, he passed judgment on the South's guilt more reminiscent of the forensic form.

Even while Everett employed the epideictic to praise the North, he furthered his excoriation of the South. Consider the way in which his narrative rehearsed nationalistic values in praise of the North, celebrating the nation's righteous and chosen character. He argued that Union troops defeated the South at Gettysburg because they were blessed with "good omens" (30). Everett continued,

Victory does not always fall to the lot of those who deserve it; but that so decisive a triumph, under circumstances like these, was gained by our troops, I am inclined to ascribe, under Providence, to the spirit of exalted patriotism that animated them, and a consciousness that they were fighting in a righteous cause. (33)

Historically, war addresses rely on the notion that America is a chosen nation, destined for greatness.<sup>44</sup> As such, Everett exalted the Union troops for participating in God's righteous plan. Moreover, Everett praised the Union troops for their triumph while "the superiority in numbers was with the enemy" (33). As such, Everett's praise of Union troops is accompanied by an unfavorable characterization of Confederate troops, entrenching the adversarial relationship between the North and South through his use of the epideictic.

As Everett moved onto the second portion of his address, he further deviated from his eulogistic purposes and employed the forensic genre to shame the South. The forensic is used to judge a past event and assess motives of wrongdoing; as such, Everett's use of the forensic emphasized the past and prevented his audience from moving beyond the present crisis—the way an epideictic speech often intends. Everett made clear the purpose of this section when he asked: "Which of the two parties to the



war is responsible for all this suffering, for this dreadful sacrifice of life?" (39). Everett invested the following seven paragraphs to prove the South's culpability and to rebut the South's arguments for secession. Everett used England's tumultuous history to argue that rebellions are justified only against oppressive governments—certainly not against the "lawful and constituted government of the United States" (39). Everett considered the U.S. Constitution sacred, declaring that "To levy war against the United States is the constitutional definition of treason, and that crime is by every civilized government regarded as the highest which citizen or subject can commit" (40). As such, Everett considered the South's rebellion "an imitation on earth of that first foul revolt of 'the Infernal Serpent,' against which the Supreme Majesty of heaven sent forth the armed myriads of his angels, and clothed the right arm of his Son with the three-bolted thunders of omnipotence" (40). This argument resonated with Everett's narrative of American life, in which America is God's chosen country, and enemies of America violated God's plan. As such, Everett used the forensic to serve his epideictic purpose of vilifying the South, but not the epideictic purpose of honoring the deceased.

Thus far, Everett's use of the epideictic and forensic entrenched the adversarial relationship between the North and South. In the third portion of the speech, the antagonism fostered to this point ultimately undermined Everett's deliberative efforts. The deliberative genre is typically invoked to assess a course of future action. In this section, Everett's call for reconciliation reflected the tenets of the deliberative genre. Everett believed, however, that reconciliation necessitated the South's surrender. He said,

But the hour is coming and now is, when the power of the leaders of the Rebellion to delude and inflame must cease. There is no bitterness on the part of the masses. The people of the South are not going to wage an eternal war for the wretched pretexts by which this rebellion is sought to be justified. (57)

Reminding his audience of the South's "wretched pretexts" undergirded Everett's previous epideictic efforts to blame the South. Everett's repeated castigation of the South, then, may well have thwarted his deliberative efforts toward a peaceful future. As such, when Everett finally returned to his eulogistic purpose to praise the dead soldiers, his efforts carried little rhetorical weight. Consider the way he attempted to perform the eulogistic function of reknitting and comforting the American community:

The bonds that unite us as a people—a substantial community of origin, language, belief, and law (the four great ties that hold the societies of men together); common, national and political interests; a common history; a common pride in a glorious ancestry; a common interest in this great heritage of blessings. (57)

Everett's appeal to the nation's "common pride" is arguably negated by his overwhelming appeal to the North's disdain for the South throughout the previous two sections. Thus, when Everett concluded his speech by asking his audience to "invoke

[its] benediction on these honored graves," his words rang hollow (57). Ultimately, Everett's use of the epideictic and forensic genres undermined the deliberative purpose of the final section.

Had the purpose of Everett's address been to unite the North in support of further action against the South, his speech would likely have been more successful in executing the deliberative demands of a war address. Everett's negotiation of genres, however, complicated the objectives of his eulogy.<sup>45</sup> Eulogies can most certainly employ the deliberative genre effectively, but only in so far as they reunite a fractured community. As Jamieson and Campbell have said, "Because the deliberative subform risks dividing the community that the eulogy must reknit, there is little likelihood that calls for action will be controversial or that they will contradict the presumed wishes of the deceased."<sup>46</sup> While Everett's deliberative call for reconciliation was not exactly controversial for a Northern audience, its widespread success relied on cooperation from the South—the very population he alienated through his epideictic assertions of blame and guilt. By polarizing the North and the South, Everett's Gettysburg address failed to move his audience beyond the present trauma and helped instead re-enforce a disunited America.

#### Abraham Lincoln and Unified Purpose

Where Everett's speech reportedly spanned two hours in length, Lincoln's took only three minutes to deliver.<sup>47</sup> Lincoln's speech, all 272 words of it, proved a stark counterpoint to Everett's featured address.<sup>48</sup> Certainly, Lincoln's address was a crucial rhetorical opportunity to address a divided nation. Asked only to deliver "Dedicatory Remarks,"<sup>49</sup> Lincoln could not upstage Everett, and thusly delivered a shorter speech in a style typical of his rhetorical corpus. The length and style of Lincoln's address, though, only explain part of the differences from Everett's address.<sup>50</sup> While many have argued that Lincoln's transcendent style shaped the speech's enduring qualities, we argue that Lincoln's faithful commitment to the deliberative purpose of the speech further explains its long-term success. More specifically, we demonstrate how Lincoln employed the epideictic genre only insofar as it helped fulfill his deliberative purpose of reuniting America.

Lincoln began fulfilling the deliberative purpose of envisioning the nation's future by employing the epideictic to praise America's ancestry. The famous first sentence to Lincoln's speech recalled the American Revolution, where the North and South are nowhere mentioned by name: "Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal" (1). Lincoln's history did not recall the turmoil of the Revolution, but rather exalts a similar ancestry for Northerners *and* Southerners to share. Rejoining Americans in this shared history allowed Lincoln to advocate for a unified future that recommitted Northerners and Southerners to the work of the nation. Were he to name particular founding fathers or emphasize the sectional differences during the Revolution, Lincoln would have created the same polemic reflected in Everett's speech. Thus, Lincoln's use of the epideictic to praise

America's ancestry worked in service of his deliberative purpose to establish a future, unified America.

In the second section of his speech, Lincoln also employed the epideictic to further support the speech's deliberative purpose. Lincoln praised the nation for enduring the Civil War. He said, "Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure" (2). Lincoln's use of the epideictic genre transformed the war into evidence of a great nation and further united his audience as members of this nation. Additionally, Lincoln's praise of the nation translated to praise of the soldiers for fighting to preserve the nation. He considered Gettysburg "as a final resting place for those who gave their lives that the nation might live" (2). Again, Lincoln employed the epideictic's "praise" function to unite the nation in its greatness and commemoration of fallen soldiers. By establishing this unity, Lincoln laid the foundation to make his ultimate, deliberative call for a future America.

Until the third portion of Lincoln's address, Lincoln employed the epideictic to unite the American people in their Revolutionary history and in their admiration of the soldiers' sacrifice. In the third section of his speech, Lincoln transformed this unity into the means by which a future America would emerge—transitioning from the epideictic to the deliberative. Consider how, in Lincoln's last two sentences, he called for support of the nation's future. The sentences proceed similarly, first identifying the audience as a group united in purpose, and then proposing actions appropriate to fulfill its purpose. Lincoln stated, "It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced" (3). Within this passage, Lincoln offered a future plan, speaking of the "unfinished work" that has been "advanced." In the last sentence, he united the audience as those "dedicated to the great task remaining before us"; as those who "take increased devotion to that cause"; and as those who "highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain" (3). In the final segment of this sentence, Lincoln expanded upon "that cause" in which his audience was united: "and that a government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth" (3). Lincoln's exaltation of the people's government suggested that the government was the means by which America would be carried into a more secure future. Lincoln argued that a future, unified America is made possible by the shared experience of the Civil War and the history of America's great government. As such, the overall deliberative purpose of Lincoln's address was fully realized in this final paragraph, but only after he successfully employed the epideictic's "praise" function in the first two paragraphs of the address. Ultimately, Lincoln managed skillfully the generic demands of this address.

### *The Legacies of the Gettysburg Addresses*

The Gettysburg addresses provide a case study for understanding how speakers respond differently to the same rhetorical situation, offering explanations for the opposing outcomes of public oratory. Like Everett, Lincoln's address did not exemplify each and every generic criterion of the eulogy or war genres. However, both texts

demonstrate how genres can interact, complicate, and support a speaker's overall purpose. As such, the critic can appreciate Everett's attempt to recapture a historical moment and tend to the partisan views of his particular audience. Yet, our analysis also shows that in doing so, Everett undermined his explicit epideictic purpose to praise the dead. With Lincoln's address, the generic demands of a war-time eulogy worked dynamically to provide an enduring vision of American unity.

The genre perspective also can help explain the differing legacies of the Gettysburg addresses. Although Everett may have appealed to his Northern audience and met the stylistic standards of the moment, his speech lacked long-term appeal. Lincoln's use of genre, on the other hand, instantiated a vision toward a healed, unified, and steadfast America, inviting generations of Americans to participate in his vision.

In addition to further explaining the legacies of the speeches, our analysis adds to an understanding of the historical moment. The immediate reception of Lincoln's address is indicated by the crowd's five interruptions with applause. Garry Wills speaks figuratively when he said that Lincoln's words disinfected the cemetery's air and began the transformation toward the Union's victory. Wills also implies that Everett's elaborate and Union-bent recounting of the events was quite flattering to the Gettysburg crowd.<sup>51</sup> In fact, of the 61 editorials written on the event, 40 were dedicated to Everett's speech and 21 to Lincoln's.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, Ronald Reid points out that Everett's speech did not fall into obsolescence in quite the fashion that many contemporary readers might suspect. He says that in general, Republican editors praised Everett for his accurate description of the battle, while anti-administration papers criticized Everett for inconsistent political positioning and inaccurate detail.<sup>53</sup> Lincoln's address was most often considered "appropriate" and more accessible than Everett's. In fact, his address was shorter and therefore easier to read when reprinted in newspapers. However, most criticism for Lincoln's address came from anti-war Democrats, who most particularly detested the speech's opening line—"dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal"—for sounding too much like the Declaration of Independence and therefore, too abolitionist.<sup>54</sup> Understanding the immediate response to the speeches resists the tendency to immediately praise or denigrate a speech. Like most speeches, the reactions were mixed.

Lastly, this essay provides a foundation for comprehending contemporary memorial events. The prominence of technology and 24-hour news coverage instantly delivers such speeches to a broad audience. Additionally, tragedies of war continue, necessitating the commemoration of sacrifice and lost life. As we write, the "war on terror" continues on many fronts. Despite the differences of the eras, the purpose of commemorative addresses in 1863 and 2006 are not dramatically different. Regarding the speeches featured on the first anniversary of September 11, 2001, Bradford Vivian argues that even though they were unoriginal (texts by Thomas Jefferson, Lincoln, and Franklin D. Roosevelt were read), "ritually enacting conventional commemorative forms sustains the perdurance of civic memory."<sup>55</sup> While the media have expanded, the rhetorical demands of war-time eulogies faced by Everett and Lincoln and those faced by contemporary orators remain similar—the loss of life must be honored in the midst

of war while a focus on the future is likewise necessitated. Toward these ends, speakers must negotiate genres to serve one, unified purpose.

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## Notes

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1 Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1992), 175.

2 Fred Stripp places tongue in cheek with the title of his article: "The OTHER Gettysburg Address," *Western Speech* 32 (1) (1968): 19-26.

3 Harold Zyskind argues that Lincoln's Gettysburg address primarily performed a deliberative function, but incorporated epideictic features. See "A Rhetorical Analysis of the Gettysburg Address," *Journal of General Education* 4 (1950): 202-212.

4 Irving H. Bartlett, "Edward Everett Reconsidered," *The New England Quarterly* 69 (1996): 427.

5 Bartlett, "Edward Everett Reconsidered," 427.

6 Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 24.

7 Mildred Freburg Berry, "Abraham Lincoln: His Development in the Skills of the Platform," in *A History and Criticism of American Public Address*, ed. William Norwood Brigance, Vol. II (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), 839.

8 Berry, "Abraham Lincoln: His Development in the Skills, 841.

9 Ronald F. Reid and James F. Klumpp, eds., "Campaigning in Madison County (1823) and Comments on King Andrew (1834)," in *American Rhetorical Discourse* (Longrove, IL: Waveland Press, 2005), 257.

10 Lincoln served in the Illinois State Legislature between 1836 and 1842 and served in the U.S. House of Representatives between 1847 and 1849.

11 Earl W. Wiley, "Abraham Lincoln: His Emergence as the Voice of the People," in *A History and Criticism of American Public Address*, ed. William Norwood Brigance, Vol. II (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), 859.

12 David Zarefsky, "Consistency and Change in Lincoln's Rhetoric about Equality," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 1 (1998): 21-44.

13 David Zarefsky, "The Lincoln-Douglas Debates Revisited: The Evolution of Public Argument," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 72 (1986): 175. For more on Lincoln's transcendent style, see notes 48 and 50.

14 The war was considered to begin when Confederate forces attacked Fort Sumter on April 12, 1861.

15 Reid and Klumpp, "Gettysburg Address," 456-458. Congress emancipated slaves in the District of Columbia early in the war and on January 1, 1863, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation freed slaves in rebel areas.

16 More specifically, a draft riot broke out in New York City and anti-black riots erupted in the North. Reid and Klumpp, "Gettysburg Address," 457.

17 Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 19. Both resignations were rejected.

18 Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 19-24.

19 More specifically, Lincoln knew that Pennsylvania's gubernatorial election was coming up and re-electing a Republican governor would help his own re-election.

20 Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 24-28.

21 Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 30-31.

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22 Ronald F. Reid, "Newspaper Response to the Gettysburg Addresses," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 53 (1967): 50.

23 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, *Deeds Done in Words: Presidential Rhetoric and the Genres of Governance* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 7.

24 Both orators were well-trained rhetoricians and according to Wills, were familiar with the eulogy rhetorical form and its Greek roots. *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 41-62. Additionally, Aristotle's definition of the epideictic says its "business" is to "praise or blame, its time the present (sometimes the past or the future), its end the noble or the disgraceful." *The "Art" of Rhetoric*, trans. John Henry Freese, Loeb Classical Library (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1991), xxxviii-xxxix.

25 More specifically, Aristotle says, "The business of the deliberative kind [of rhetoric] is to exhort or dissuade, its time the future, its end the expedient or the harmful." *Rhetoric*, xxxvii.

26 *Rhetoric*, xxxvii.

27 *Rhetoric*, xxxvii. Clark Rountree notes that Aristotle cites Gorgias's *Olympic Discourse* (III.14.2) as an example of epideictic rhetoric at festivals and Pericles's *Funeral Oration* (I.7.34) as an example of eulogy. "The (Almost) Blameless Genre of Classical Greek Epideictic," *Rhetorica* 19 (3) (2001): 296, note 11.

28 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, 32-33.

29 Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson, "An Introduction," in *Form and Genre*, 20.

30 Campbell and Jamieson discuss Lloyd Bitzer's contribution to the notion that situations call discourse into existence, but suggest all situations are idiosyncratic to an extent and consider the dynamic relationship between form and style an alternate theory of commonplaces to explain the recurrence of common rhetorical strategies. See *Form and Genre*, 14-15. See also Lloyd Bitzer, "The Rhetorical Situation," *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1 (1968): 1-14. Carolyn R. Miller critiques Campbell and Jamieson's privileging of the situation in their notion of fusion; she contends that "exigence is a form of social knowledge...an objectified social need." She calls rhetorical critics to be more aware of their social motives in construing genres. "Genre as Social Action," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 70 (1984): 151-167.

31 The authors discuss the eulogy genre as a potential hybrid that may employ deliberative elements which call for future action to honor the deceased. Kathleen Hall Jamieson and Karlyn Kohrs Campbell, "Rhetorical Hybrids: Fusions of Generic Elements," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 68 (1982): 146-157.

32 G. P. Mohrmann and Michael C. Leff, "Lincoln at Cooper Union: A Rationale for Neo-Classical Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 60 (1974): 232-248.

33 Celeste Michelle Condit, "The Functions of Epideictic: The Boston Massacre Orations as Exemplar," *Communication Quarterly* 33 (1985): 284-298.

34 Jamieson and Campbell, "Rhetorical Hybrids," 147.

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35 Stephen E. Lucas, "Genre Criticism and Historical Context: The Case of George Washington's First Inaugural Address," *Southern Speech Communication Journal* 51 (1986): 354-370.

36 Jamieson and Campbell, "Rhetorical Hybrids," 147.

37 Jamieson and Campbell argue that, in the case of Lyndon B. Johnson's eulogy to Robert Kennedy, the forensic was employed to legitimate the speaker's authority. Further, they argue that Theodore Roosevelt's eulogy of President McKinley incorporated the forensic "to defend McKinley's character." "Rhetorical Hybrids," 156, note 18.

38 Condit, "The Functions of Epideictic," 288. Similarly, Bonnie J. Dow argues that in part, presidential crisis rhetoric serves "an epideictic function for the audience by providing a comforting interpretation of troubling events while rehearsing shared values." "The Function of Epideictic and Deliberative Strategies in Presidential Crisis Rhetoric," *Western Journal of Speech Communication* 53 (1989): 294-310.

39 Many have noted that Everett's address exemplifies the "sentimental style," which, according to Edwin Black, was characterized by "the detail with which it shapes one's responses." In order to mold the response of the audience the sentimental style limits ambiguous language, guards against mixed metaphors, and employs thirty words when six would do. Such overly instructive features, as Black points out, sought "a total control over the consciousness." In addition to soliciting emotional responses, the sentimental style also "defines and delimits them." As such, the sentimental style is not simply emotional or pathetic oratory, but rather a persuasive force. "The Sentimental Style as Escapism, or the Devil with Dan'l Webster," in *Form and Genre: Shaping Rhetorical Action*, eds. Karlyn Kohrs Campbell and Kathleen Hall Jamieson (Annandale, VA: Speech Communication Association, 1978), 75-86. Noval F. Pease, even while praising Everett's address, notes its "excess verbiage" and asks, "who will deny that the words are too many and the style too florid[?]" "The Forgotten Gettysburg Address," *Central States Speech Journal* 15 (1964): 107-111. Wills argues that Everett's speech suffers from addressing "too many tasks in his diffuse oration—historical narrative, constitutional argumentation, excoriation of the foe, comparison with the Greeks, etc." Wills attributes Lincoln's transcendent style to his ability to suppress the particulars and deliver a much more swift and deft speech. *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 52-55, 90-120. For more on Lincoln's transcendent style, see notes 48 and 50.

40 This analysis splits Everett's speech into three sections, following Pease's classification: "a detailed description of the battle," "Everett's political discussion of the issues of the war," and "Everett's appraisal of the possibility of peaceful reconstruction." This analysis follows this organization of Everett's speech. "The Forgotten Gettysburg Address," 107-111. Reid splits Everett's speech into similar sections. "Newspaper Response to the Gettysburg Addresses," 50.

41 Wills argues at length that Everett's rhetorical career helped usher in a revitalization of Greek culture in nineteenth-century America. *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 41-62.



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42 Here and elsewhere passages in Everett's and Lincoln's texts are cited with reference to paragraph numbers in the texts of the speeches that accompany this essay.

43 Jamieson and Campbell, "Rhetorical Hybrids," 149-150.

44 Campbell and Jamieson argue that a key characteristic of the presidential war address is "the justification of force and sacrifice through narrative and shared values." See *Deeds Done in Words*, 105. Furthermore, Wayne Fields says, "speeches urging such actions must justify morally and practically putting at risk the lives and property Americans expect their government to protect." He said, "virtually all calls for war are formulaic, and for every country the narrative of a dishonorable foe, no matter how credible, must precede a formal declaration of one's own intent." Thus, Fields adds the motivation of sacrifice and the construction of an enemy to the list of war rhetoric criteria. *Union of Words: A History of Presidential Eloquence* (New York: The Free Press, 1996): 232, 237.

45 Jamieson and Campbell argue that a hybrid fails in a eulogy when the deliberative genre dominates the address—as in the case with Senator Charles Percy's eulogy of Robert Kennedy. "Rhetorical Hybrids," 150.

46 Jamieson and Campbell, "Rhetorical Hybrids," 148.

47 Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 34.

48 In contrast to Everett's florid sentimental style, Lincoln used fewer, more meaningful words. Marie Hochmuth Nichols, for example, highlights this transcendent quality in Lincoln's First Inaugural Address of 1861: "Lincoln's style 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." "Lincoln's First Inaugural," in *American Speeches*, eds. Wayland Maxfield Parrish and Marie Hochmuth Nichols (New York: David McKay, 1954), 60-100.

49 Wills provides a transcript of the program at the dedication. Everett was slated to deliver an "Oration," while Lincoln followed with "Dedicatory Remarks." Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 35.

50 Regarding Lincoln's address overall, far more has been written about Lincoln's Gettysburg Address than what is offered here. According to David Zarefsky, more than 10,000 books have been written on the president. See David Zarefsky, "Review Essay: The Continuing Fascination with Lincoln," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6 (2003): 337-383. Some historians, like Wills, have analyzed the speech with an eye towards its role in changing America. See *Lincoln at Gettysburg*. Other critics, like Edwin Black, have focused on the "prismatic" nature of the address, offering insight on "The Movement of the Address," its "Geographical References," the "Structure," and numerous other subjects. "Gettysburg and Silence," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80 (1994): 21-36. Robert L. Kincaid claimed Lincoln's brief address said more than Everett's very lengthy oration, "because it encompasses the universal prayer of mankind for individual liberty. It uses the time and occasion of a critical period in history to proclaim an eternal principle." "Abraham Lincoln: The Speaker," *The Southern Speech Journal* 16 (1951): 241-250. Similarly, Martha Watson highlights this aspect of Lincoln's style as a site of stylistic transformation. She argues, "While the First Inaugural is a transparent response to a

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particular set of circumstances, the Gettysburg Address moves from the particular situation to a larger frame." See "Ordeal by Fire: The Transformative Rhetoric of Abraham Lincoln," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 3 (2000): 33-49. One scholar loftily claimed: "Two styles of oratory met at Gettysburg on that day, and the new style was destined to triumph over the old." See Stripp, "The OTHER Gettysburg Address," 25.

51 Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg*, 33-37.

52 Nation-wide, media coverage of the Gettysburg dedication and speeches was not excessive. In a thorough study of 260 newspapers in the non-seceding states, Ronald F. Reid sought to answer the question, what was the response to both Gettysburg addresses? Reid's analysis shows that there was not one overwhelming response for either speech. Different types of publications treated each speech differently. For example, weekly papers "devoted little space to the Gettysburg dedication" (40 percent ignored the event completely), while "daily papers devoted considerable attention to the ceremony" (only two of 96 dailies ignored the event). This suggests that the speeches weren't received in as much awe as they are today. Reid, "Newspaper Responses to the Gettysburg Addresses," 53.

53 Reid, "Newspaper Responses to the Gettysburg Addresses," 55-56.

54 Reid, "Newspaper Responses to the Gettysburg Addresses," 58.

55 Bradford Vivian, "Neoliberal Epideictic: Rhetorical Form and Commemorative Politics on September 11, 2002," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92 (2006): 6.

The Gettysburg Address is a speech delivered by Abraham Lincoln at the November 19, 1863, dedication of Soldier's National Cemetery, a cemetery for Union. Invited to give a few appropriate remarks, Lincoln was not the featured speaker at the dedication; Edward Everett, a famous orator and former politician and educator, was. Everett spoke for two hours, from memory, before Lincoln took the podium. In about 260 words, beginning with the famous phrase, "Four score and seven years ago," Lincoln honored the Union dead and reminded the listeners of the purpose of the soldier's sacrifice: equality, freedom, and national unity. Abraham Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. © Civil War Trust (A Britannica Publishing Partner) See all videos for this article. Gettysburg Address, world-famous speech delivered by U.S. Pres. Abraham Lincoln at the dedication (November 19, 1863) of the National Cemetery at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, the site of one of the decisive battles of the American Civil War (July 1-3, 1863). Autograph of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. Ivy Close Images/Alamy. Gettysburg Battlefield dedication. The main address at the dedication ceremony was a two-hour speech delivered by Edward Everett, the best-known orator of the time. Steeped in the tradition of ancient Greek oratory, Everett's speech was some 13,000 words long, but he delivered it without notes. The Gettysburg Address. President Abraham Lincoln November 19, 1863. Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. This "Nicolay" draft of the Gettysburg Address is one of five slightly different drafts of the speech known to exist. It is named for John G. Nicolay, President Lincoln's personal secretary. Most historians consider this version the "reading copy" at Gettysburg. Learn more at Abraham Lincoln Online. Nicolay. Bliss. Hay. Everett. Bancroft. Buy a Gettysburg Address poster for your wall! Images. The Gettysburg Address is a speech that U.S. President Abraham Lincoln delivered during the American Civil War at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on the afternoon of Thursday, November 19, 1863, four and a half months after the Union armies defeated those of the Confederacy at the Battle of Gettysburg. that these dead shall not have died in vain that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.[6][9]. Despite the speech's prominent place in the history and popular culture of the United States, its exact wording is disputed. The Gettysburg Address is a speech that U.S. President Abraham Lincoln delivered during the American Civil War at the dedication of the Soldiers' National Cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on the afternoon of November 19, 1863, four and a half months after the Union armies defeated those of the Confederacy at the Battle of Gettysburg. It is one of the best-known speeches in American history.