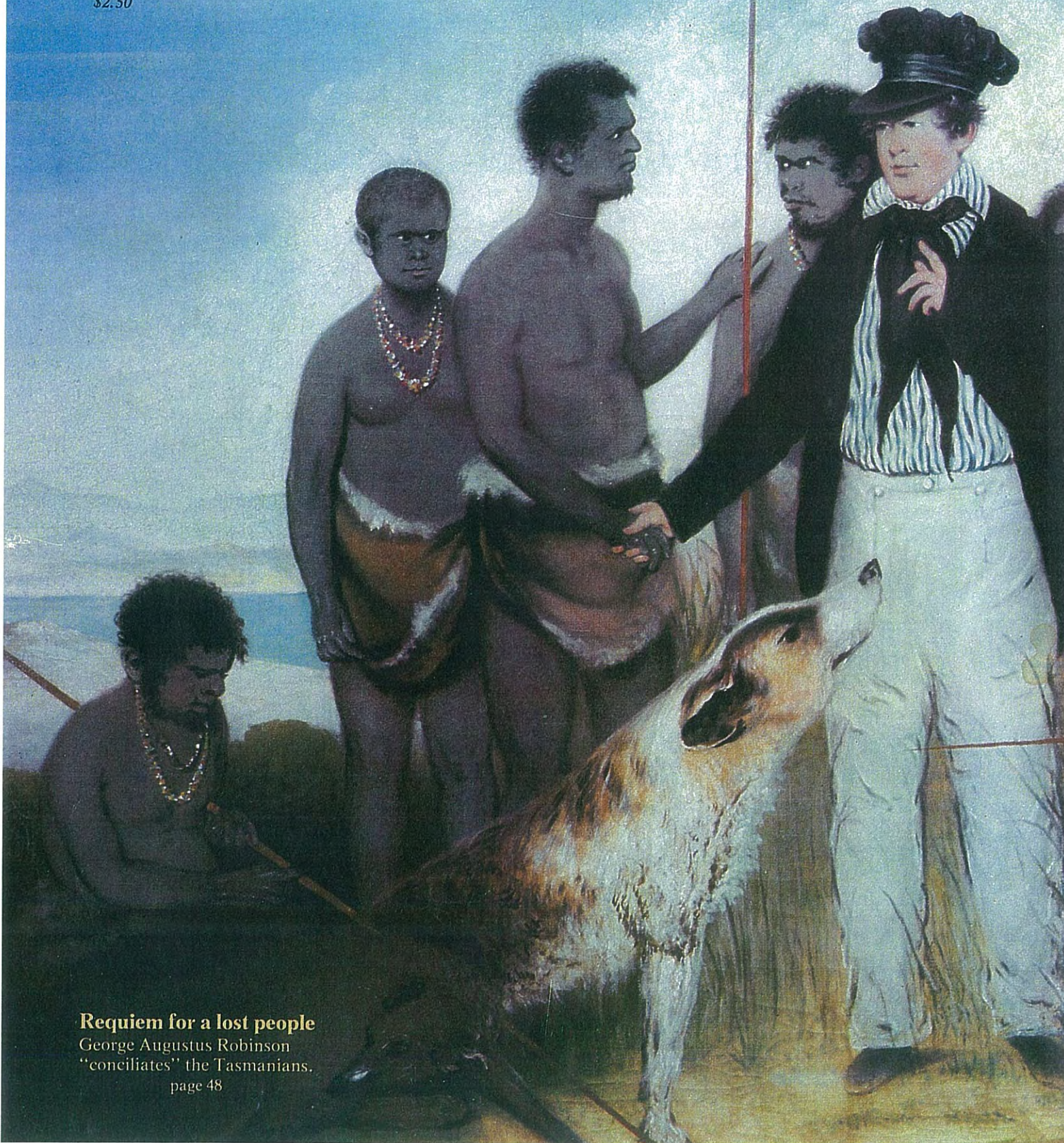
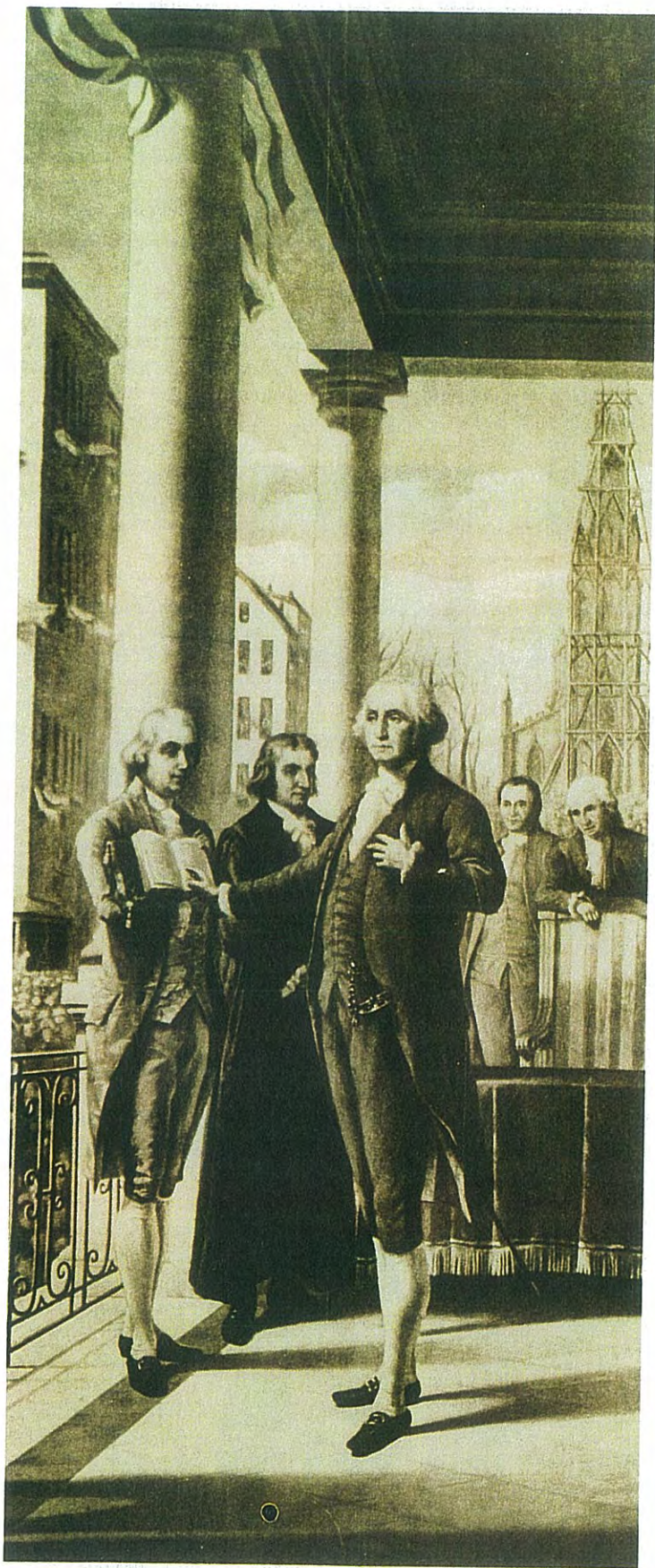


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Requiem for a lost people
George Augustus Robinson
"conciliates" the Tasmanians.
page 48



"The preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the republican model of government, are justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people."

GEORGE WASHINGTON, 1789



"Our most dangerous tendency is to expect too much of government, and at the same time do for it too little."

WARREN G. HARDING, 1921



"We have faith that we shall not prove false to the memories of the men of the might past."

THEODORE ROOSEVELT, 1905



"My Fellow Citizens...."

Great or forgettable, the Presidential inaugural address is always more than a speech

by Michael S. Oberman

Inauguration day provides a time for observation. For the citizenry, it gives an opportunity to inspect their incoming leader—to see his style, to hear his thoughts, to sense his stature. For the President-elect, it affords a chance to examine the problems and the progress of the nation, to perceive the challenges and the responsibilities of leadership, and to measure himself against the standards set by his predecessors. For witnesses around the world, it is a time to view the peaceful transfer of power that evidences the stability of the United States government. The oaths, speeches, prayers, and festivities that mark this occasion make the day of transition a day of celebration: in this national ritual, the force of unity is reinvigorated and the strength of the nation is reaffirmed.

The different levels of observation—of the leader, of the job, of the system—are best reflected in the inaugural address. Like all events of the transition, except the oath of office (which is prescribed by the Constitution), the speech given by the entering President has come down to us by tradition. Washington

"Let every nation know, whether it wishes us good or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, oppose any foe to assure the survival of liberty."

JOHN F. KENNEDY, 1961



thought it appropriate to impart to members of Congress "my sentiments as they have been awakened by the occasion which brings us together." All of his elected successors have adhered to this precedent, using the speech to explore publicly the views, philosophies, motives, and plans that they were bringing to office. In the context of its time, each speech has fulfilled its symbolic function; it has provided part of the ritual that accompanies a transition and that establishes a legitimate claim to power. In delivering the inaugural, the newly elected first-term President truly assumes the Presidency.

But the addresses—studied as a collection of documents—have another significance: they reveal much about the nature of every Chief Executive and, even more, about the meaning of the Presidency.

Few inaugurals stand out as notable written achievements; the majority—especially those of the nineteenth century—are unoriginal and uninspiring. Indeed, only a handful of Presidents have displayed significant imagination or have broken with the basic format that became entrenched by 1809; only a few have revealed a flair for words. It has been the exceptional Presidents who have delivered the exceptional speeches—perhaps predictably so, for an ability to communicate effectively is an important trait of any great leader.

One of the best remembered—and best written—inaugurals is Wilson's first, delivered on March 4, 1913. It shows the elements that contribute to a

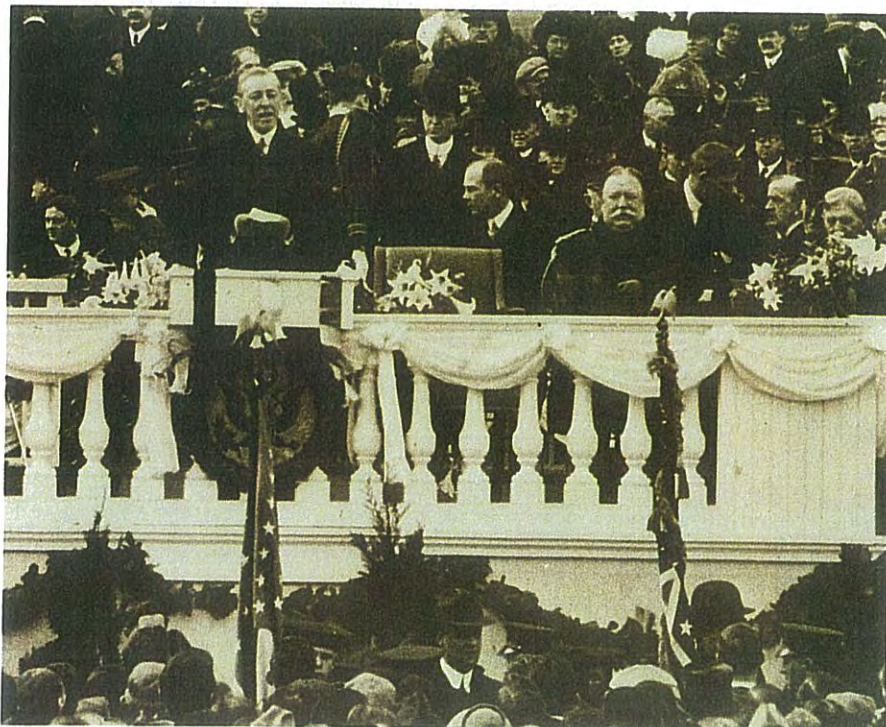
great speech, and suggests the characteristics that make an outstanding President. Compared with the addresses that preceded it, Wilson's inaugural was original and eloquent. Earlier Presidents—except Jefferson, Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt—invariably had expressed their gratitude, conveyed a sense of humility, considered the position of the nation in patriotic terms, sketched a philosophy or program for the incoming government, and offered a benediction. Speeches adhering to this formula were largely functional; they did not offer a universal message or special eloquence that would make them memorable. Trained as an educator and possessed of a strong religious influence, Wilson used his speech to "interpret the occasion": with overtones of both a lecture and a sermon, he described to his public the significance of the change in government. While focusing on issues of contemporary concern, Wilson reached beyond the America of his day. His words challenged citizens to reform their society, "to cleanse, to reconsider, to restore, to correct the evil without impairing the good, to purify and humanize every process of our common life without weakening or sentimentalizing it." This points up the first element of the great inaugural: to offer leadership, to place the problems of the time in context, and to universalize the tasks and opportunities facing the nation. Through the exploration of a universal concern in relation to the problems of the country, the speaker should aim to inspire.

Other elements are exposed by this great speech. As have been virtually all of the best speeches, it was comparatively short: less than two thousand words. The virtue of the brief address is related not so much to the attention span of the audience as to the unity of the message. Almost all of the lengthier speeches have been too loose, with the thematic focus lost in an outpouring of words.

Wilson's first speech demonstrates the force of brevity and unity of theme. The central thought—"There has been a change in government"—was stated in the opening sentence, developed in the body of the address, and summarized and generalized in the terminal paragraph. The direction of the speech never wavered; all subordinate ideas arose from this theme. In explaining the change and thereby interpreting the occasion, Wilson explored the needs of the country in essentially nonpartisan terms; he pictured the tasks and the challenges of the government and of the people under the new order. The dedica-

"I summon all honest men, all patriotic men, all forward-looking men, to my side. God helping me, I will not fail them, if they will but counsel and sustain me!"

WOODROW WILSON, 1913





"With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in... to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN, 1865

tion of all Americans in a united search for progress was the basic appeal.

Besides universality, brevity, and unity, the best inaugurals require literary agility. The skills of the polished writer heighten the impact of the message; in this area very few Presidents have found success. Midway through his inaugural address, Wilson declared:

We have studied as perhaps no other nation has the most effective means of production, but we have not studied cost or economy as we should either as organizers of industry, as statesmen, or as individuals. Nor have we studied and perfected the means by which

government may be put at the service of humanity, in safeguarding the health of the Nation, the health of its men and its women and its children.

This passage typified Wilson's style. He stated his idea succinctly, and then modified and developed it. He spoke in terms of "we" to keep his audience involved. Most notably, he built on repeated words and phrases in succeeding parallel constructions, which at once gave his sentences logic, progress, and involvement; he designed moving phrases with simple words.

With the exception of Lincoln, no President before Wilson appreciated—or at least demonstrated—the importance of an effective terminal paragraph. Usually inaugurals closed with a benediction or invocation, most of which were predictable. Wilson, like Lincoln, used the final paragraph to summarize his theme, to generalize the message, and to reach the highest level of eloquence:

This is not a day of triumph; it is a day of dedication. Here muster, not the forces of party, but the forces of humanity. Men's hearts wait upon us; men's lives hang in the balance; men's hopes call upon us to say what we will do. Who shall live up to the great trust? Who dares fail to try? I summon all honest men, all patriotic, all forward-looking men, to my side. God helping me, I will not fail them, if they will but counsel and sustain me!

This memorable address illustrates not only the rudiments of eloquent composition; it reveals something about the style and the image of the speaker. That Wilson willingly abandoned the prototype used by most of his predecessors, that he understood the strengths in Lincoln's messages, and that he appreciated the needs and the significance of his era signal the leadership capabilities of this President. Perhaps his experience as a political scientist, as a college president, and as a governor gave him a sense of what the Chief Executive should do.

The relationship between effective communication and effective leadership is close and important. For a majority of citizens, the affairs of government unfold mysteriously; to understand the problems and direction of the nation requires careful study. As most people are unwilling to apply themselves to more than the minimal task of citizenship—voting—they look to the words and public deeds of their elected officials for a sense of what is happening. They seek reassurance that the problems of state are not beyond the capabilities of government officials. One function of the President is to communicate with the

citizenry and to make clear what, in fact, is quite complex.

In *The Symbolic Uses of Politics*, an excellent analysis of the theatrical side of politics, Murray Edelman states that "the leader's dramaturgical jousts with public problems make the world understandable and convey the promise of collective accomplishment to masses who are bewildered, uncertain, and alone." To lead effectively is to win the confidence and the support of the people; with proper communication, this can be accomplished.

In most cases, this involves letting people hear what they want: "Language becomes," in Edelman's terms, "a sequence of Pavlovian cues rather than an instrument for reasoning and analysis.... A word or phrase which has become established as connoting threat or reassurance for a group... can evoke everything about the group situation that lends emotions to its public interests, abstracting, reifying, and magnifying."

The theory of symbolic reassurance—of producing quiescence through an adept use of language—is reflected in the most successful inaugurals. Ritual obeisances to various groups in society, reaffirmation of government by the people, rededication to the American experiment, reconsecration of the Constitution—these themes are present in virtually every speech. These ideas represent the mythical heritage of America, which is vital to the continual legitimation of the system and of the officials directing it. In the great addresses, especially those that



"The only thing we have to fear is fear itself."

FRANKLIN D. ROOSEVELT, 1933

"If national pride is ever justifiable or excusable it is when it springs, not from power or riches, grandeur or glory, but from conviction of national innocence, information, and benevolence."

JOHN ADAMS, 1797



met the challenges of a time of crisis, the symbols are used to maximum advantage and are blended with eloquence.

A striking example is Franklin D. Roosevelt's first inaugural. Speaking to a nation beset by economic depression and a sense of self-doubt, Roosevelt was able to communicate hope and a promise of better days. By drawing the distinctions between material and spiritual crises, he at once minimized the problems of the nation and spoke to its strengths. He incorporated into his address the myths of the nation, and he specified the way in which concerted efforts under firm leadership would check the financial crisis. He reassured the public that "this great Nation will endure as it has endured, will revive, and will prosper."

Franklin Roosevelt, Wilson, and Lincoln displayed an ability to lead with words. Presidents remembered as unsuccessful, on the other hand, were unable to deliver even average inaugurals. Grant's first address, given in 1869, underscores his low historical ranking. Aside from brevity, the address lacks the most important elements of an effective speech. Instead, it conjures up the image of a changing military command. The former general mechanically listed what he would and would not do. The word "I" continually reappeared; there was little attempt to involve the audience. One passage not only illustrates the weakness of the rhetoric but, in historical perspective, it betrays other limitations: "It will be my endeavor to execute all laws in good faith, to collect all revenues assessed, and to have them properly accounted for and economically disbursed. I will to the best of my ability appoint to office only those who will carry out this design."

Since communication skills contribute so much to the image of the President, the roles played by speech writers and the mass media are also worth examining. Ghostwriting is not a new practice; Madison is reported to have aided Washington with the first inaugural. But, especially since Franklin Roosevelt's Administration, writing assistants have become numerous and important. Nevertheless, the President's own sense of literary style is still critical. The Chief Executive must know which aides to select for a given task, and which suggestions to accept. Lyndon Johnson inherited for a brief period John F. Kennedy's speech-writing team, but where Kennedy was eloquent and dynamic, Johnson's communication failures produced a breakdown in credibility and symbolic reassurance. To employ ghost writers skillfully,

a President has to be able to recognize writing that will complement his speaking style; the eloquent President today must be an adept copyreader.

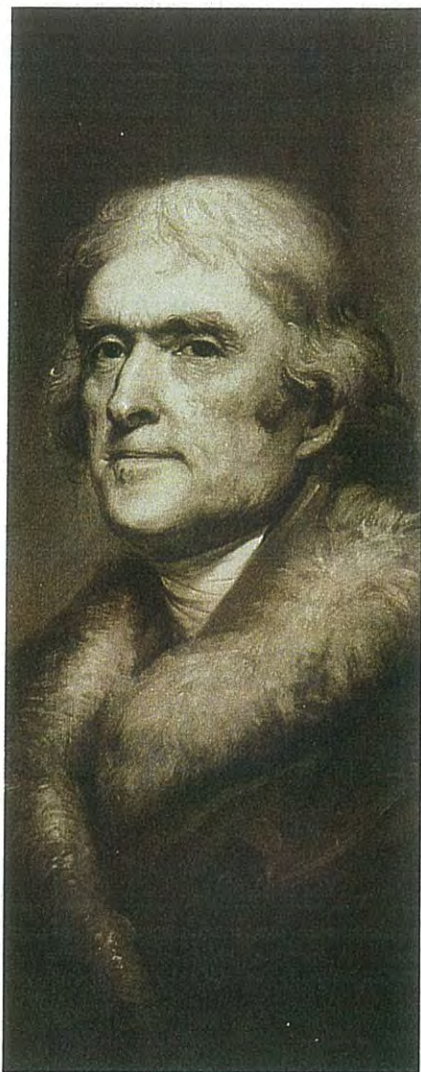
John Kennedy and his principal ghost writer, Theodore Sorensen, complemented each other's talents and produced in 1961 one of the strongest inaugurals. In his biographical work, *Kennedy*, Sorensen gives an account of the drafting of the speech. The President-elect was the principal author; he determined the themes to be stressed and helped polish the language. Relying heavily on the rhetorical devices perfected by Lincoln—with the addition of a large dose of anti-thesis—the two writers broke with the traditional pattern of inaugurals and wrote a dynamic speech that corroborated the theme of new leadership. Kennedy was deeply concerned with the image and the hopes he would create: he knew which suggestions to accept and which changes to make in order to perfect the text. His most quoted line—"Ask not what your country can do for you: Ask what you can do for your country"—first emerged during the campaign in this form: "We do not campaign stressing what our country is going to do for us as a people. We stress what we can do for the country, all of us."* The opening line in the first draft of the inaugural proclaimed: "We celebrate today not a victory of party but the sacrament of democracy"; this was changed to: "We celebrate today not a victory of party but a convention of freedom." The final form read: "We observe today not a victory of party but a celebration of freedom." Kennedy understood the impact of words; the sense of leadership attributed to him can be traced largely to this strength.

If carefully packaged rhetoric and adroit use of symbolic language were essential to leaders before the advent of mass media, these skills are even more critical now. Kennedy, through television, created for himself an image of a

*Even then, the formulation was hardly new. In a Decoration Day speech delivered in 1884, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr. called on his listeners "to recall what our country has done for each of us, and to ask ourselves what we can do for our country in return."

In 1904, Dean LeBaron Russell Briggs of Harvard wrote, "As has often been said, the youth who loves his Alma Mater will always ask, not 'What can she do for me?' but 'What can I do for her?'"

And in 1916, the chairman of the Republican Convention, Senator Warren G. Harding, declaimed, "In the great fulfillment we must have a citizenship less concerned about what the government can do for it and more anxious about what it can do for the nation."



"Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind. Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things. . . . Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists."

THOMAS JEFFERSON, 1801

young, dynamic, and qualified executive, just as Roosevelt had projected dynamic leadership through his mastery of radio. The impression Kennedy achieved with his televised inaugural and subsequent press conferences gave the nation confidence and made him, for his time, an effective leader.

To execute the duties of the President successfully, an incumbent must be able to communicate and—today—must be adept before the television camera. Performance on inauguration day—especially under the close scrutiny of the media—is a strong indication of Presi-

dential potential. And the initial impression, frozen by the bank of cameras, will be difficult to alter.

While the inaugural addresses suggest the importance of communication in leadership, and imply the style and potential of various executives, the speeches also uncover some basic points about the office of the Presidency.

Those who enter the office appear to view themselves as members of an exclusive club, at once prestigious and imposing. To become acclimated to both the glories and the challenges, entering Presidents rely on the examples and words of their predecessors. The inaugural proceedings, as mentioned before, are almost entirely traditional; only the oath of office is Constitutionally prescribed, and even here, the phrase "so help me God" is used because of Washington's example. In their inaugural addresses, John Adams and Jefferson described their emotions, philosophies, and intentions without explaining why a speech was necessary. With Madison, a statement of explanation became a standard theme: "Unwilling to depart from examples of the most revered authority, I avail myself of the occasion now presented to express the profound impression made on me by the call of my country to the station to the duties of which I am about to pledge myself by the most solemn of sanctions." Similar declarations were voiced by the next seven Presidents; in later speeches, the statement was usually implicit.

That the inaugural speech and the verbal justification of it remain almost constant implies something about the office of the Presidency. In approaching this position, each new Chief Executive is to some degree unsure of what is involved, unsure of how leadership is to be demonstrated. A few reveal in excellent inaugurals a predilection for their task; most, however, are unwilling to alter tradition, at least until they are safely in office. Ever since the outdoor ceremony became permanent with Jackson, the installation proceedings have not varied substantially. Unlike the State of the Union message, which was prescribed by the Constitution and which was communicated in writing for over a century, the inaugural has always been given orally, following the precedent of George Washington. The challenge to the new leader to surpass the performance of his predecessor and to legitimate his claim to power helps make this a necessity.

The reliance on the past to justify

accession to office in the present leads the new President not only to deliver an inaugural; it also leads him to invoke the memory and the teachings of his predecessors. References to former executives by name or by quotation are quite common; they function as a type of secular benediction, comforting and reassuring the public through memories of a heroic heritage. Personal wishes to immediate predecessors—a practice not generally seen in recent years—contributed in the early years of the Republic to the ceremonial and peaceful alteration of power.

John Adams, who was clearly overshadowed at his inaugural by his predecessor, paid tribute to Washington:

In that retirement which is his voluntary choice may he long live to enjoy the delicious recollection of his services, the gratitude of mankind, the happy fruits of them to himself and the world. . . . His name may still be a rampart, and the knowledge that he lives a bulwark, against all open or secret enemies of his country's peace.

Madison, in offering his sincere wishes to his predecessor, Jefferson, noted that "it is my good fortune, moreover, to have the path in which I am to tread lighted by examples of illustrious services successfully rendered in the most trying difficulties by those who marched before me." Other nineteenth-century Presidents offered similar gratitude for the examples of the past and hailed the achievements

(continued on page 80)



"I tread in the footsteps of illustrious men, whose superiors it is our happiness to believe are not found on the executive calendar of any country. . . ."

MARTIN VAN BUREN, 1837

"My Fellow Citizens . . ."
(continued from page 27)

of their predecessors. Usually, this was reserved for cases when the outgoing President had yielded to an heir apparent—for instance, Monroe and Van Buren. The Presidency at these times resembles a club in which the new member offers a toast to his sponsor.

While direct references to past Chief Executives underscored the tranquility of transition and the growing national heritage, the practice was expanded by Theodore Roosevelt, replacing the invocation of God usually given in the closing paragraph. In the terminal of his speech—the part of the address that is supposed to insure inspiration—Roosevelt stated:

We have faith that we shall not prove false to the memories of the men of the mighty past. They did their work, they left us the splendid heritage we now enjoy. We in our turn have an assured confidence that we shall be able to leave this heritage unwasted and enlarged to our children and our children's children. To do so we must show, not merely in great crises, but in the everyday affairs of life, the qualities of practical intelligence, of courage, of hardihood, and endurance, and above all the power of devotion to a lofty ideal, which made great the men who founded this Republic in the days of Washington, which made great the men who preserved this Republic in the days of Abraham Lincoln.

Roosevelt was using the memories of the past to design a secular prayer. To a nation beginning to expand onto the world stage, citation of past Presidents—and the two most prominent, at that—provided more than a historical marker. Roosevelt sought to identify the proven strength of past Americans with the potential of the present Americans he addressed; he sought to associate in their minds the achievements of Washington and Lincoln with the promise of Theodore Roosevelt.

Incoming Presidents have often reached back to previous addresses and reapplied well-known phrases. Occasionally, these are acknowledged: Franklin Roosevelt, in his third address, repeated a "prophecy spoken by our first President in his first inaugural in 1789—words almost directed, it would seem, to this year of 1941: 'The preservation of the sacred fire and the destiny of this republican model of government are

justly considered as deeply, perhaps as finally staked, on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people.'"

In his first inaugural, Richard M. Nixon stated: "Standing in this same place a third of a century ago, Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed the nation ravaged by depression and gripped by fear. He could say in surveying the nation's troubles: 'They concern, thank God, only material things.'"

Most of the time, however, phrases reappear without specific reference to the original source. This practice of Presidential plagiarism underscores the image of the Presidency as a closed club; those few who become Chief Executive can expect special privileges in tapping their special heritage. Those who do cite tested phrases recognize the literary strengths of past speeches; a good turn of phrase does not fade when left to the annals of history.

Such recycling was apparent in Richard M. Nixon's first inaugural. Besides quoting directly from FDR's first speech, Nixon borrowed ideas from other addresses. Nixon titled his inaugural "Search for Peace"; Eisenhower's second was "The Price of Peace." Nixon opened with a listing, by title and name, of the guests seated near him on the platform, and with a greeting to the public. This courtesy, which salutes the outgoing officials of the opposition, had been introduced by Kennedy; both Kennedy and Nixon specifically named their defeated Presidential rivals. Nixon's first line read: "I ask you to share with me today the majesty of this moment." This looks back to an early sentence in Lyndon Johnson's speech—"This is the majesty and the meaning of this moment"—and is probably an intentional derivation. (Curiously, Spiro T. Agnew



"I ask you to share with me today the majesty of this moment."

RICHARD M. NIXON, 1969

began his first acceptance speech at the 1968 Republican National Convention with: "I stand here with a deep sense of the improbability of this moment.") Finally, Nixon returned to the closing of Lincoln's first speech for the phrase "the better angels of our nature." An incoming President wants to identify with the best of his predecessors.

Not only are phrases reused; ideas are also shared. In most cases, certain myths must be invoked, certain emotions aroused, certain memories rekindled; the heritage of the nation is proclaimed in order to create the type of symbolic reassurance that Murray Edelman analyzes. But the clear repetition of basic themes in standard patterns re-emphasizes the closed nature of the Presidency. The Chief Executive must act in specified ways and must cite certain traditions: the ideas proclaimed in past inaugurals are thus invariably repeated.

Unity is the primary *idée fixe* of this genre: a national, nonpartisan commitment is the only route to progress. To a citizenry witnessing the first true transfer of power, to a nation recovering from the impact of sedition laws, and to a system striving to develop the sophisticated mechanisms of a working opposition, Jefferson proclaimed in 1801:

Let us, then, fellow-citizens, unite with one heart and one mind. Let us restore to social intercourse that harmony and affection without which liberty and even life itself are but dreary things. . . . Every difference of opinion is not a difference of principle. We have called by different names brethren of the same principle. We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists.

This attempt to assert forces of harmony against the strains of party reappears in virtually every speech; the new President, after all, is the leader of all the people, and must appeal for the support of all. On occasion, inaugurals proclaim the need for cooperation among people of different parts of the country or of different ethnic and racial backgrounds. Presidents in the decade leading to the Civil War made special efforts to effect national accord. In Lincoln's first inaugural, which most eloquently illustrates this, the preservation of the Union is left to the people. In a phrase reapplied by Kennedy, Lincoln declared: "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow-countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war."

In recent times, the divisions in society have been racial rather than political or sectional. Recognizing this, Nixon announced: "To go forward at all is to go forward together. This means black and white together, as one nation, not two."



"I know no method to secure the repeal of bad or obnoxious laws so effective as their stringent execution."

ULYSSES S. GRANT, 1869

Both the theme and the rhetoric—including repetition, an epigram, and antithesis—typify the usual inaugural format.

A religious reference has also become traditional. All Presidents except Theodore Roosevelt and Abraham Lincoln invoked God's blessings in their first inaugurals; until William Henry Harrison, this appeal formed the basis of the terminal. In nineteenth-century inaugurals, the appeal for God's help is rather extensive. Most of the early Presidents described the wisdom and mercy of God, and asked the people to join in prayer for Heaven's blessings. Eisenhower returned to this form in his first speech, offering a short benediction before his main text.

The best speeches, however, have

mentioned God only briefly; the problems and the progress of the nation are phrased largely in secular terms. In his first and fourth speeches, Franklin Roosevelt was more explicit in invoking God, as he spoke to the nation in times of intense crisis. In his two other addresses, the reference is restricted to single clauses. Lincoln's first speech has no benediction; allusions to the Bible constitute the only religious note. A longer allusion, regarding the appeals to God voiced by each of the warring parties, constitutes the bulk of the brief second address; the famous terminal of that speech does include a passing mention of God:

With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in, to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle and for his widow and his orphan, to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations.

In the modern inaugural, the religious element has been maintained but not stressed; this perhaps reflects a change in national attitudes, as well as an emphasis on secular eloquence fostered by an age of mass media. Kennedy closed, imitating the example of Lincoln's second terminal: "With a good conscience our only sure reward, with history the final judge of our deeds, let us go forth to lead the land we love, asking His blessing and His help, but knowing that here on earth God's work must truly be our own." Nixon concluded his final address in a similar fashion: "'Riders on the earth together,' let us go forward, firm in our faith, steadfast in our purpose, cautious of the dangers; but sustained by our confidence in the will of God and the promise of man."

Inaugurals also glorify the strengths of the nation: the Constitution, rule by the people, and the progress of the American experiment. In seeking to "interpret the occasion" and to place the position of the country in perspective, it is necessary to reiterate the hopes and the foundation of the shared heritage. Speaking to the strengths of America provides immediate symbolic reassurance; pressing concerns are minimized when balanced with the promise of the society. Myths and components of the nation's heritage underscore the legitimacy of transition, and celebrate the system.

One theme quite apparent in early inaugurals is humility. Washington, hailed by all his fellows, expressed gratitude, modesty, and need for assistance. Van Buren, faced with the difficult

assignment of succeeding Jackson, proved the most humble of all:

I tread in the footsteps of illustrious men, whose superiors it is our happiness to believe are not found on the executive calendar of any country. . . . If such men in the position I now occupy felt themselves overwhelmed by a sense of gratitude for this the highest of all marks of their country's confidence, and by a consciousness of their ability adequately to discharge the duties of an office so difficult and exalted, how much more must these considerations affect one who can rely on no such claims for favor or forbearance!

Later inaugurals retained the gratitude and the request for cooperation; however, there is much less self-disparagement. Franklin D. Roosevelt, for example, in appraising the effects of depression rather boldly declared in 1933: "The people of the United States have not failed. In their need, they have registered a mandate that they want direct, vigorous leadership. They have made me the present instrument of their wishes. In the spirit of the gift I take it."

This change of tone, from humility and partial despair to confidence and vigor, points up the essential nature of the modern inaugural. A more aggressive tone and a more dynamic executive have characterized the Presidency in the twentieth century. With the nation at its bicentennial, peaceful alteration of power seems less of a marvel. With modern industrial capabilities creating new problems while solving old ones, social legislation is an accepted principle. With the nation recovered from several major crises, the effectiveness of a powerful government has erased old fears of approaching tyranny. And with the federal bureaucracy extremely large and complex, competent management and administration are expected. An incoming President need no longer express humility, compliment his predecessors, or magnify the burdens of the office.

To maintain unity and quiescence, the incoming President must invoke some of the nation's myths; to fill the public image of a President, he may style his remarks after those of his most effective predecessors. Beyond that, he must lead, and lead with confidence.

What image a President should try to create depends upon his interpretation of the Presidency. A comparison of the acceptance and inaugural addresses given in 1960-61 by Kennedy and in 1968-69 by Nixon suggests the type of impression each sought to make.

Thanks to the blanket television cover-

age of National Conventions, by the 1960s the acceptance speech had approached the importance of the inaugural; indeed, with Jimmy Carter's first major formal speech at the New York Democratic Convention last summer, it may have reached equal importance. Given access to peak viewing audiences, the candidate aims to appear Presidential; he must display leadership potential. At the same time, he must voice the party position, in order to achieve campaign momentum. Certain themes and accusations may be raised, only to be dropped once Election Day is over; other ideas and phrases—geared to entice nonpartisan spirits—may be retained for the inaugural.

Kennedy's acceptance speech touted the virtues of the Democratic Party; this was vital to the cause of partisan unity. Where inaugurals invoke past Presidents, his acceptance remarks hailed party chiefs; Kennedy singled out Lyndon Johnson, Adlai Stevenson, Stuart Symington, and Harry S. Truman. A portion of his speech attacked the opposition and the opponent. "We know they will invoke the name of Abraham Lincoln on behalf of their candidate [Richard Nixon]—despite the fact that his political career has often seemed to show charity toward none and malice for all." Kennedy went on to praise the Democratic platform and pledge vigorous attempts at social reform. But the performance was only partially partisan; Kennedy also adorned himself with Presidential robes. He announced the need for new leadership, for a rededication to the strengths of the nation. In a passage clearly inspired by the terminal of Wilson's first inaugural, he concluded:

Are we up to the task? Are we equal to the challenge?... That is the choice our nation must make—a choice between... determined dedication and creeping mediocrity.

All mankind waits upon our decision. A whole world looks to see what we will do. We cannot fail their trust; we cannot fail to try.

Kennedy opened his inaugural on a nonpartisan note. He cited in his salutation Vice President Nixon (though he did not mention the incoming Vice President, Johnson); the inaugural ceremonies were called a victory not of party but of freedom. The theme of the speech—a change to new leadership—had been voiced at the Los Angeles nominating Convention: "It is time, in short, for a new generation of leadership—new men to cope with new problems and new opportunities." In the inaugural, this line was reworded: "Let the word go forth... that the torch has passed to a new generation of Americans." The inaugural was

the more polished speech; through extensive use of "let us" and "we," it sought to challenge and unite the audience. While aspects of the acceptance speech, therefore, were retained, Kennedy's inaugural was more universal, less partisan, and more stately. This reflects the image he aspired to.

Nixon closely followed the example of Kennedy. In fact, a line from Kennedy's acceptance speech—"We are not here to curse the darkness, but to light the candle that can guide us through that darkness to a safe and sane future"—reappears in Nixon's first inaugural: "Let us not curse the remaining dark. Let us gather the light." The essential difference between the speeches of Nixon the nominee and Nixon the President-elect was the difference between a partisan and a unifier. At the Convention, Nixon appealed to backlash sentiment and Republican ideals; he promised law and order, greater discipline, a new Attorney General, less federal control. A more moderate position materialized in the inaugural. Nixon had sensed a need to appeal to youth, to minorities, and to the intellectuals who held him in disdain. Certain themes, however, appear in both speeches. Nixon, each time, focused on the coming Bicentennial and third millennium, urging his audience to strive for a brighter future. The cause of peace is stressed, again reminiscent of Kennedy:

And now to the leaders of the Communist world we say, after an era of confrontations, the time has come for an era of negotiations... we shall work toward the goal of an open world, open sky, open cities, open hearts, open minds.

Almost the same words appear in the inaugural, though the word "Communist" is dropped:

After a period of confrontation, we are entering an era of negotiation. We seek an open world—open to ideas, open to the exchange of goods and people.

Finally, the effort of the individual is called forth, while the limitations of the federal government are cited, in both addresses.

The changes made by Kennedy and Nixon as they converted their acceptance statements into inaugurals reveal some of the considerations that the Presidency fosters. Acceptance speeches are generally intended to enhance chances of election; they focus on the problems of the times, centering the blame for blatant difficulties on the opposition. Viewpoints that swing voting blocs are embraced; controversy that might prove detrimental is avoided. The inaugural address must efface the scars of the election. To expe-

dite this process, Kennedy presented a position—though ideologically to the left—that was less liberal than that unfolded in the acceptance remarks; Nixon, in his first inaugural, outlined a moderate philosophy, appearing less conservative than he did in his 1968 Convention statement.

Once in power, the President can display much more originality, much more of his own style. This is why second inaugurals differ, in most cases significantly, from the first. The incumbent is less concerned with creating an image; the approval of the electorate indicates a degree of success in the job. After serving at least part of one term, it is less necessary for the speaker to praise preceding executives, less necessary to rely on their examples. In most cases, the second inaugural is more programmatic. Assuming office for the second time, the President reviews programs to date, and explores the promise of the future. By the time of re-election, his style of leadership has emerged; he can more freely break from the typical inaugural. While there are few generalizations that explain the difference between first and second speeches, one point is clear: the second speech, as a rule, is more personalized. In delivering a second inaugural, the speaker is truly a President, and not a President-elect. Familiar with the ways of office and familiar with his image as a leader, he can be more forthright, more himself.

To understand the office of the Presidency at a given moment in history—this is the requisite for a great inaugural address. Leadership involves communication, involves persuading the public to follow. The best Chief Executives have drafted speeches that helped them meet the demands of their day. They knew which themes to include, which myths to invoke, which words to employ. They were able to predict the burdens of the office and to employ their powers of leadership. A great inaugural does not insure a great Administration, nor does lack of eloquence always imply lack of inspiration. But in an age of communications, in which symbols and slogans often dull intellectual rigor, the performance of a President is critical. The inaugural has become more than a tradition, more than an element of transition. It establishes the style of the President, forces him onto display, freezes his image. At once, the inaugural address is a challenge and a task: to master this speech is to be closer to mastering the problems of the Presidency. □