

to wit: **DAVID W. BLIGHT**

"That on the first day of January,

year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred

and sixty-three, all persons held as slaves

any State or designated part of a State, the

whereof shall then be in rebellion against the

United States, shall be then, thenceforward

forever free; and the Executive Government

United States, including the military and

authority thereof, will recognize and main

the freedom of such persons, and will do

or acts to refuse such persons, or any of the

in any efforts they may make for their act

freedom.

RACE A.N.D REUNION

THE CIVIL WAR IN AMERICAN MEMORY



RACE AND REUNION

**THE CIVIL WAR IN
AMERICAN MEMORY**

DAVID W. BLIGHT

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Prologue

History . . . does not refer merely to the past . . .
history is literally *present* in all that we do.

—JAMES BALDWIN, “Unnameable Objects, Unspeakable Crimes,” 1965

“THE CIVIL WAR is our *felt* history—history lived in the national imagination,” wrote Robert Penn Warren in his *Legacy of the Civil War* (1961). “Somewhere in their bones,” he declared, most Americans have a storehouse of “lessons” drawn from the Civil War. Exactly what those lessons should be, and who should determine them, has been the most contested question in American historical memory since 1863, when Robert E. Lee retreated back into Virginia, Abraham Lincoln went to Gettysburg to explain the meaning of the war, and Frederick Douglass announced “national regeneration” as the “sacred significance” of the war. Among those lessons, wrote Warren, is the realization that “slavery looms up mountainously” in the story, “and cannot be talked away.” But Warren acknowledged another lesson of equal importance for Americans of all persuasions: “When one is happy in forgetfulness, facts get forgotten.” Or as William Dean Howells once put it: “What the American public always wants is a tragedy with a happy ending.”¹

This book is a history of how Americans remembered their most divisive and tragic experience during the fifty-year period after the Civil War. It probes the interrelationship between the two broad themes of race and reunion in American culture and society from the turning point in the war (1863) to the culmination of its semicentennial in 1915. This is necessarily, therefore, a synthetic and selective work on a vast topic. I am primarily concerned with the ways that contending memories clashed or intermingled in public memory, and not in a developing professional historiography of the

Civil War. All historians make research decisions and impose categories on the infinity of evidence and on the enormous variety of human stories embedded in their subjects. This book is no exception: Reconstruction politics, reunion literature, soldiers' memory, the reminiscence industry, African American memory, the origins and uses of Memorial Day, and the Southern Lost Cause receive considerable attention in this work, while other important forms and voices of memory do not, such as monument-building, late-nineteenth-century presidential politics, business enterprise, or the gendered character of America's romance with reunion. I have ignored none of these themes, but in every chapter have kept my eye on race as the central problem in how Americans made choices to remember and forget their Civil War. Throughout, I tell the stories of Civil War memory with the divergent voices of North and South, black and white, joined in the same narrative. And in every chapter I have tried to tell stories by using the power and variety of American voices: presidents and generals, men and women, former foot soldiers and ex-slaves, master novelists and essayists as well as the thousands who crafted ordinary reminiscences, romantics and realists, the victors and the vanquished.

Three overall visions of Civil War memory collided and combined over time: one, the reconciliationist vision, which took root in the process of dealing with the dead from so many battlefields, prisons, and hospitals and developed in many ways earlier than the history of Reconstruction has allowed us to believe; two, the white supremacist vision, which took many forms early, including terror and violence, locked arms with reconciliationists of many kinds, and by the turn of the century delivered the country a segregated memory of its Civil War on Southern terms; and three, the emancipationist vision, embodied in African Americans' complex remembrance of their own freedom, in the politics of radical Reconstruction, and in conceptions of the war as the reinvention of the republic and the liberation of blacks to citizenship and Constitutional equality. In the end this is a story of how the forces of reconciliation overwhelmed the emancipationist vision in the national culture, how the inexorable drive for reunion both used and trumped race. But the story does not merely dead-end in the bleakness of the age of segregation; so much of the emancipationist vision persisted in American culture during the early twentieth century, upheld by blacks and a fledgling neo-abolitionist tradition, that it never died a permanent death on the landscape of Civil War memory. That persistence made the revival of the emancipationist memory

of the war and the transformation of American society possible in the last third of the twentieth century.

Americans faced an overwhelming task after the Civil War and emancipation: how to understand the tangled relationship between two profound ideas—*healing* and *justice*. On some level, both had to occur; but given the potency of racial assumptions and power in nineteenth-century America, these two aims never developed in historical balance. One might conclude that this imbalance between outcomes of sectional healing and racial justice was simply America's inevitable historical condition, and celebrate the remarkable swiftness of the reunion, as Paul Buck did in his influential book, *The Road to Reunion* (1937).² But theories of inevitability—of irrepressible conflicts or irrepressible reconciliations—are rarely satisfying. Human reconciliations—when tragically divided people unify again around aspirations, ideas, and the positive bonds of nationalism—are to be cherished. But sometimes reconciliations have terrible costs, both intentional and unseen. The sectional reunion after so horrible a civil war was a political triumph by the late nineteenth century, but it could not have been achieved without the resubjugation of many of those people whom the war had freed from centuries of bondage. This is the tragedy lingering on the margins and infesting the heart of American history from Appomattox to World War I.

For many whites, especially veterans and their family members, healing from the war was simply not the same proposition as doing justice to the four million emancipated slaves and their descendants. On the other hand, a simple justice, a fair chance to exercise their basic rights, and secure access to land and livelihood were all most blacks ever demanded of Reconstruction and beyond. They sought no official apologies for slavery, only protection, education, human recognition, a helping hand. The rub, of course, was that there were many warring definitions of healing in the South and the nation's collective memory had never been so shattered. In the wake of the Civil War, there were no "Truth and Reconciliation" commissions through which to process memories of either slavery or the experience of total war. Defeated white Southerners and black former slaves faced each other on the ground, seeing and knowing the awful chasm between their experiences, unaware that any path would lead to *their* reconciliation. Yankee and Confederate soldiers, however, would eventually find a smoother path to bonds of fraternalism and mutual glory. As is always the case in any society trying to master the most conflicted elements of its past, healing and justice had to happen *in history*

and *through politics*. Reinhold Niebuhr wrote with insight about this historical dilemma that has so plagued modern nations. "The processes of historical justice," said Niebuhr, "are . . . not exact enough to warrant the simple confidence in the moral character of history . . . Moral judgments are executed in history, but never with precision . . . every execution of moral judgments in history is inexact because of its necessary relation to the morally irrelevant fact of power."³ Americans have had to work through the meaning of their Civil War in its rightful place—in the politics of memory. And as long as we have a politics of race in America, we will have a politics of Civil War memory.

In many ways, this is a story of how in American culture romance triumphed over reality, sentimental remembrance won over ideological memory. For Americans broadly, the Civil War has been a defining event upon which we have often imposed unity and continuity; as a culture, we have often preferred its music and pathos to its enduring challenges, the theme of reconciled conflict to resurgent, unresolved legacies. The greatest enthusiasts for Civil War history and memory often displace complicated consequences by endlessly focusing on the contest itself. We sometimes lift ourselves out of historical time, above the details, and render the war safe in a kind of national Passover offering as we view a photograph of the Blue and Gray veterans shaking hands across the stone walls at Gettysburg. Deeply embedded in an American mythology of mission, and serving as a mother lode of nostalgia for antimodernists and military history buffs, the Civil War remains very difficult to shuck from its shell of sentimentalism. Over time, Americans have needed deflections from the deeper meanings of the Civil War. It haunts us still; we feel it, to borrow from Warren, but often do not face it.

In the half century after the war, as the sections reconciled, by and large, the races divided. The intersectional wedding that became such a staple of mainstream popular culture, especially in the plantation school of literature, had no interracial counterpart in the popular imagination. Quite the opposite: race was so deeply at the root of the war's causes and consequences, and so powerful a source of division in American social psychology, that it served as the antithesis of a culture of reconciliation. The memory of slavery, emancipation, and the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments never fit well into a developing narrative in which the Old and New South were romanticized and welcomed back to a new nationalism, and in which devotion alone made everyone right, and no one truly wrong, in the remembered Civil War. Persistent discussion of the "race problem" across the political and ideological

spectrum throughout the late nineteenth century meant that American society could not easily remember its “Civil War problem” or a “Blue-Gray problem.”

In a popular novel, *Cease Firing* (1912), Southern writer Mary Johnston, a Virginian imbued with Lost Cause tradition and a determination to represent its complexity (as well as a progressive woman and a suffragist), imagined a telling dialogue that may have captured the memory that most Americans, then and even now, want to embrace about the Civil War. On the last page of the book, Robert E. Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia is retreating west toward its final collapse and surrender at Appomattox in the last week of the war. The April breezes are not yet warm, and the rivers to be forded still run cold. One Confederate soldier asks another what he thinks it all means. “I think that we were both right and both wrong,” says the veteran of many battles, “and that, in the beginning, each side might have been more patient and much wiser. Life and history, and right and wrong and minds of men look out of more windows than we used to think! Did you never hear of the shield that had two sides and both were precious metal?” There was, of course, no lack of honor on either side in that fateful and compassionate surrender at Appomattox in 1865. And Johnston captured an honest soldiers’ sentiment that had reverberated through veterans’ memory for decades. But outside of this pathos and the endearing mutuality of sacrifice among soldiers that came to dominate national memory, another process was at work—the denigration of black dignity and the attempted erasure of emancipation from the national narrative of what the war had been about. That other process led black scholar and editor W. E. B. Du Bois to conclude in the same year as Johnston’s novel that “this country has had its appetite for facts on the Negro problem spoiled by sweets.”⁴ Deflections and evasions, careful remembering and necessary forgetting, and embittered and irreconcilable versions of experience are all the stuff of historical memory.

If Du Bois was at all correct in his famous 1903 assertion that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line,” then we can begin to see how the problems of “race” and “reunion” were trapped in a tragic, mutual dependence.⁵ This book is the story of that dependence, and its consequences, in America’s collective memory.

ONE

The Dead and the Living

And so good-bye to the war. I know not how it may have been, or may be, to others—to me the main interest I found, (and still, on recollection, find) in the rank and file of the armies, both sides, and in those specimens amid the hospitals, and even the dead on the field.

—WALT WHITMAN, *Specimen Days*, 1882

THE LONG AND TROUBLED CAREER of Civil War memory began well before the conflict ended. It took root in the dead and the living. The living were compelled to find meaning in the dead and, as in most wars, the dead would have a hold on the living. In his Gettysburg Address, Abraham Lincoln referred to the “brave men” who had “consecrated” the ground of that battlefield above the “power” of his words to “add or detract.”¹ Implied in the rest of that speech was the notion that the difference between the living and the dead was that the living were compelled to remember, and from the stuff of memory, create a new nation from the wreckage of the old.

ON JULY 3, 1913, a day of withering heat in Washington, D.C., President Woodrow Wilson took a cruise aboard the *Mayflower* down the Potomac River toward Chesapeake Bay. A small party of aides and journalists accompanied a harassed President who was eager to be a historical tourist for a day at the Yorktown Revolutionary War battlefield. The following day, July 4,

Wilson was to address an extraordinary gathering of Union and Confederate veterans at America's most famous battlefield—Gettysburg, Pennsylvania.

During his visit to the Yorktown sites, Wilson went almost entirely unrecognized by the variety of local people he encountered. Only a young white girl recognized the President as she offered to be his guide through the house that had served as Lord Cornwallis's headquarters. Neither the clerk at the court house, nor the local sheriff, who had a campaign photograph of Wilson on his own wall, recognized their famous visitor. Most poignantly, as Wilson entered and returned to the wharf he met several blacks who called him "Uncle" but did not recognize the President. According to press reports, a "group of old-fashioned darkies sitting around some equally old-fashioned scales" offered to weigh the tourists. After a jaunty exchange, Wilson consented and tipped the scales at 181 pounds. The next morning at Gettysburg Wilson would weigh in on another matter, speaking to the world about the meaning of the Civil War and of fifty years of the nation's remembering and forgetting. That he had gone virtually unrecognized on either side of the color line in a small corner of Virginia the day before may hardly have mattered much to the President. But perhaps the unnamed, and almost invisible, blacks hanging around a Potomac River wharf near a great historic site of Old Virginia (Wilson's home state) represent an appropriate backdrop for the resounding event that Wilson would visit within twenty-four hours. The ignorance of the clerk and sheriff is remarkable. But it is hardly surprising that rural black Virginians would not know Wilson; since 1904 none of them had been able to vote in the state without passing literacy tests, paying poll taxes, and meeting all but impossible property restrictions. They spent so much of their segregated lives being "disrecognized" by whites that recognizing a President might take special knowledge.²

President Wilson had initially declined to appear at the fiftieth-anniversary Blue-Gray reunion to be held in the Pennsylvania town July 1-4, preferring a vacation trip with his family in Cornish, New Hampshire. But circumstances, and the urgings of Congressman A. Mitchell Palmer, made him "constrained to consent to be present at the fiftieth anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg," as he wrote to his wife, Ellen. Wilson realized that this reunion "was something we had to take very seriously indeed. It is no ordinary celebration." Wilson privately expressed his awareness of being the first Southerner elected President since the Civil War. "Both blue and gray are to be there," he observed. "It is to celebrate the end of all feeling as well as the

end of all strife between the sections." Wilson was also acutely aware that he followed Abraham Lincoln's footsteps to Gettysburg. "Fifty years ago, almost, also on the fourth of July, Mr. Lincoln was there (in the midst of business of the most serious and pressing kind, and at great personal cost and sacrifice to himself). If the President should refuse to go this time . . . it would be hotly resented . . . it would be suggested that he is a Southerner and out of sympathy with the occasion."³ Sometime between changing his plans on June 28, when he announced that he would attend the reunion, and July 4, Wilson wrote his own short, restrained Gettysburg address.

The 1913 reunion at Gettysburg was a ritual like none other that had occurred in America. It had been designed to be a festival of sectional reconciliation and patriotism. The states appropriated some \$1,750,000 to pay the transportation of any Civil War veteran from any part of the country. The federal government, through Congress and the War Department, appropriated approximately \$450,000 to build a "Great Camp" to house and feed the veterans. A total of 53,407 veterans attended the reunion, and as many spectators were estimated to have descended on the town of Gettysburg during the week of the event, all riding the special cars of some forty-seven railroad companies operating in or through Pennsylvania. As it stood in American culture in the early twentieth century, Civil War memory never saw a more fully orchestrated expression than at Gettysburg on the battle's semi-centennial.⁴

Once the old men had arrived in their uniforms, decked out in ribbons and graced with silver beards, the tent city on the battlefield became one of the most extraordinary spectacles Americans had ever seen. For most observers, the veterans were men out of another time, icons that stimulated a sense of pride, history, and amusement all at once. They were an irresistible medium through which Americans could envision part of their inheritance and be deflected by it at the same time. They were at once the embodiment of Civil War nostalgia, symbols of a lost age of heroism, and the fulfillment of that most human of needs—civic and spiritual reconciliation.

As bands played, suffragettes lobbied the tented grounds, shouting "votes for women." The recently formed Boy Scouts of America served as aides to the old soldiers, and members of the regular U.S. Army guarded the proceedings. Newspapers gushed with amazement. "You may search the world's history in vain for such a spectacle," announced the *Columbus Citizen* (Ohio). The sense of completeness of the national reunion was especially prevalent in the newspapers. The *National Tribune* (an official organ of the Grand Army

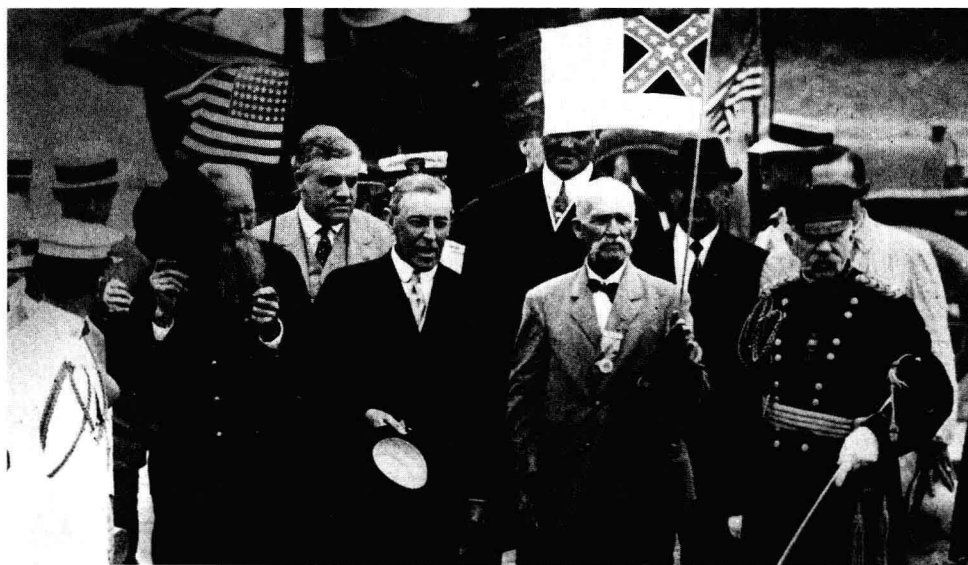
of the Republic, GAR) rejoiced over the “death of sectionalism” and the ongoing “obliterating of Mason and Dixon’s line.” And the *Confederate Veteran* could declare with full confidence that “the day of differences and jealousies is past.” The *London Times* of England marveled that, however pathetic their feebleness, the mingled veterans were “eradicating forever the scars of the civil war in a way that no amount of preaching or political maneuvering could have done.” Glorious remembrance was all but overwhelmed by an even more glorious forgetting. “Thank God for Gettysburg, hosanna!” proclaimed the *Louisville Courier-Journal*. “God bless us everyone, alike the Blue and the Gray, the Gray and the Blue! The world ne’er witnessed such a sight as this. Beholding, can we say happy is the nation that hath no history?”⁵

On the third day of the reunion, July 3, the governors of the various states spoke in a giant tent constructed on the field where Pickett’s Charge had occurred fifty years earlier. Governor William Hodges Mann of Virginia struck the most meaningful chord of memory: “We are not here to discuss the Genesis of the war, but men who have tried each other in the storm and smoke of battle are here to discuss this *great fight* . . . we came here, I say, *not to discuss what caused the war of 1861–65*, but to talk over the events of the battle here as man to man” (emphasis added).⁶ Like the politics of reconciliation, which was several decades old by 1913, this reunion was about forging unifying myths and making remembering safe. Neither space nor time was allowed at Gettysburg for considering the causes, transformations, and results of the war; no place was reserved for the legacies of emancipation or the conflicted and unresolved history of Reconstruction. Because the planners had allowed no space for surviving black veterans, they had also left no space on the programs for a discussion of that second great outcome of the war—the failures of racial reconciliation.

Of course, nations rarely commemorate their disasters and tragedies, unless compelled by forces that will not let the politics of memory rest. One should not diminish the profoundly meaningful experiences of the veterans themselves at such a reunion; the nation, through the psyches of old soldiers, had achieved a great deal of healing. But the 1913 “Peace Jubilee,” as the organizers called it, was a Jim Crow reunion, and white supremacy might be said to have been the silent, invisible master of ceremonies. At a time when lynching had developed into a social ritual of its own horrifying kind, and when the American apartheid had become fully entrenched, many black leaders and editors found the sectional love feast at Gettysburg more than they could bear. “A Reunion of whom?” asked the *Washington Bee*. Only those who

"fought for the preservation of the Union and the extinction of human slavery," or also those who "fought to destroy the Union and perpetuate slavery, and who are now employing every artifice and argument known to deceit and sophistry to propagate a national sentiment in favor of their nefarious contention that emancipation, reconstruction and enfranchisement are a dismal failure?"⁷⁷ Black responses to such reunions as that at Gettysburg in 1913, and a host of similar events, demonstrated how fundamentally at odds black memories were with the national reunion. In that disconnection lay an American tragedy not yet fully told by 1913, and one utterly out of place at Blue-Gray reunions.

Woodrow Wilson did not likely think of this disconnection between black and white memories as he arrived at the Gettysburg train station on the morning of July 4. Wilson did not come to Gettysburg as a historian probing the past. Whisked in a car out to the battlefield where the great tent awaited with several thousand veterans crammed inside, Wilson, the Virginian-President, stood before the entrance, flanked by a Union veteran in long beard, holding a small U.S. flag, and a Confederate veteran in long mustache, holding a small Confederate flag. Behind him, Governors John K.



On July 4, 1913, Woodrow Wilson, the first Southerner elected President since the Civil War, spoke on the battlefield at Gettysburg during the fiftieth anniversary Blue-Gray reunion and declared the war America's "quarrel forgotten." (Record Group 25, Pennsylvania State Archives)

Tener (Pennsylvania) and William H. Mann (Virginia) followed him into the tent, as the President doffed his top hat. As the assembled throng of old veterans rose on the ground and in high-rise bleachers, Wilson strode to the stage. Wilson stood without a podium, the great beams of the tent arched behind him, the script in his left hand, and began to speak. He had not come to discuss the genesis or the results of the war. He declared it an “impertinence to discourse upon how the battle went, how it ended,” or even “what it signified.” Wilson’s charge, he claimed, was to comprehend the central question: What had the fifty years since the battle meant? His answer struck the mystic chord of memory that most white Americans were prepared to hear:

They have meant peace and union and vigor, and the maturity and might of a great nation. How wholesome and healing the peace has been! We have found one another again as brothers and comrades, in arms, enemies no longer, generous friends rather, our battles long past, the *quarrel forgotten*—except that we shall not forget the splendid valor, the manly devotion of the men then arrayed against one another, now grasping hands and smiling into each other’s eyes. How complete the union has become and how dear to all of us, how unquestioned, how benign and majestic, as state after state has been added to this, our great family of free men! (emphasis added)⁸

Wilson strained to look ahead and not to the past, to call the younger generation to a moral equivalent of war, doing battle “not with armies but with principalities and powers and wickedness in high places.” He appealed to a new “host” for a new age, not the “ghostly hosts who fought upon these battlefields long ago and are gone.” That new host was the teeming masses of the Progressive era, “the great and the small without class or difference of kind or race or origin; and undivided in interest.” Wilson’s great gift for mixing idealism with ambiguity was in perfect form. After this sole mention of race, and probably without the slightest thought of Jim Crow’s legal reign, Wilson proclaimed that “our constitutions are their [the people’s] articles of enlistment. The orders of the day are the laws upon our statute books.” After the obligatory endorsement of the valor of the past, Wilson devoted the majority of his fifteen-minute speech to the present and the future. “The day of our country’s life has but broadened into morning,” he concluded. “Do not put uniforms by. Put the harness of the present on.”⁹ These were telling words for the future war President who had studied the Civil War with keen interest.

After the playing of the "Star Spangled Banner," Governor Tener immediately escorted Wilson to his car and back to the train station. In all, Wilson had spent less than an hour in Gettysburg; before noon he was on his private car en route to New York City, and eventually on to a New Hampshire retreat with his family. Within fifteen minutes of the conclusion of Wilson's speech, the closing ceremony of the reunion took place. At high noon, all across the town and hillsides of Gettysburg, cooks and generals, Boy Scouts and veterans, journalists and tourists, Congressmen and latrine cleaners, all came to attention. The colors were lowered to half mast at all the regimental or unit headquarters throughout the tent city. A lone bugle played taps, and in the distance a battery of cannon fired intermittently. Then, for the next five minutes, the vast crowd stood in utter silence and paid the "Tribute to Our Honored Dead."¹⁰ As Wilson's train sped away in retreat, and as the fifty thousand assembled veterans tried to look down through what the President had called "those fifty crowded years" to fathom the meaning of the war and its aftermath, the dead and the living, the memories and the sun-baked oblivion, who can know what stories played on their hearts? In collective silence what memories careened back and forth between gleaming monuments and flapping flags? How did the silence of the honored dead speak?

THE FIVE MINUTES of silence to honor the dead on July 4, 1913, was two minutes longer than Abraham Lincoln's famous speech on November 19, 1863, dedicating an unfinished cemetery for more than twelve thousand soldiers (many whose names were unknown) still in the process of being properly reburied. Since the battle nearly five months before, Gettysburg had been a community in shock and a macabre scene. Makeshift graves had been hastily dug all over the fields where men fell; others had been dug up by families looking for loved ones. Serious health hazards had threatened the local population, and hogs had fed on human body parts protruding from the ground. The horror that was the real battle of Gettysburg was to be transformed into something proper, solemn, perhaps even exalted by the carefully planned cemetery to be dedicated in November. The struggle to define the Civil War in America and determine its meaning did not begin at Gettysburg on that late autumn day, but it did receive an important ideological infusion.

Lincoln's brief speech followed the official address—a long funereal oration by one of the nation's premier orators, Edward Everett. Rich in detail

about the battle and its participants, partisan and unflinching in its descriptions of the carnage, Everett's nearly two-hour effort held the audience of twenty thousand in his customary spell. Drawing inspiration from Pericles's funereal oration during the Peloponnesian War, Everett established America's ancient lineage of sacred bloodletting. He laid responsibility for the "crime of rebellion," and therefore, all the death, in the hands of Southern leaders. But no matter how long the war or the scale of death, Everett saw a future of "reconciliation," a revived spirit of Union forged in such apocalyptic and necessary sacrifice.¹¹

As Lincoln assumed his function in the dedication (intended to be largely ceremonial), only about one-third of the Gettysburg dead had actually been buried in the new cemetery. Lincoln's address contained no local details of the battle or cemetery preparations. He never mentioned the town of Gettysburg, nor that year's other great document—the Emancipation Proclamation—which had changed the character of the war. Lincoln assumed the task of offering an assessment of the graves' deepest meanings. As President, he would try to explain the war to audiences far beyond Cemetery Hill. It is as if Lincoln, beleaguered by death on a scale he could no longer control, could only discuss *why* it had happened.

Although Lincoln's speech must have seemed abstract to many auditors, an ideological explanation of the Civil War flowed through the brief address. The United States was an idea, Lincoln argued, a republic fated to open its doors, however unwillingly, by one of its founding creeds, the "proposition that all men are created equal." History had caught up with the contradictions to that creed and all but killed the idea. Only in the killing, and yet more killing if necessary, would come the rebirth—a *new* birth—of the freedoms that a republic makes possible. Humankind will forever debate what kinds of ideas men should be asked to die for. But Lincoln did not lack clarity at Gettysburg. The sad-faced Lincoln looked beyond Appomattox to the "unfinished work" of the "living." When he said "the world . . . can never forget what they did here," he anticipated not an endless remembrance of soldiers' valor, not a bloodletting purified and ennobled by extraordinary courage and manly sacrifice alone.¹² He envisioned an ideological struggle over the meaning of the war, a society's tortured effort to know the real character of the tragedy festering in the cold and in the stench of all those bodies awaiting burial. Lincoln seemed to see fitfully that the rebirth would be rooted in the challenge of human *equality* in a nation, ready or not, governed somehow