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American Journalism's Conventions and Cultures, 1863–2013: Changing Representations of the Gettysburg Address

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During the first three days of July 1863, the Battle of Gettysburg resulted in more than 50,000 casualties, to which the Union contributed almost 20,000 wounded and 3,155 dead. The toll was so great that President Abraham Lincoln agreed personally to dedicate a new cemetery for the Union's fallen soldiers.

Today, many believe that the Gettysburg Cemetery dedication gave President Lincoln an 'opportunity' to announce that his administration had changed its war goal from Union to emancipation, and that Gettysburg's fallen had died for this new cause. No interpretation could be more illogical, for without Union there could have been no emancipation; yet, during the past thirty years the academy and political left have embraced this interpretation tenaciously. To demonstrate that America's journalists have played a major role in this distortion is important not only for the light it throws on the changing meaning of the Gettysburg Address but also because it speaks to a more general problem: the relation between journalistic objectivity, generational experience and collective memory.

Collective memory

Memory is a necessary property of mind, a fundamental component of culture and an essential aspect of tradition. Although individuals alone possess the capacity to remember the past, they never do so singly; they do so with and against others situated in different groups and through the knowledge and symbols that predecessors and contemporaries transmit to them.

Collective memory differs from what individuals remember as eye witnesses. A variant of *public opinion*, collective memory refers to the

distribution throughout society of what individuals know, believe and feel about past events, how they judge them morally, how closely they identify with them, and how much they are inspired by them as models for their conduct. The word 'distribution' is emphasized because its key property is variation, which denies the possibility of consensus. That every distribution also has a central tendency makes total dissensus equally impossible. The collective aspect of memory is evident in similar distributions of memory appearing among individuals widely dispersed and unknown to one another, and in memories reappearing across generations, linking the living and the dead. Thus, collective memory cannot result from individual memory because it is not included in it. Remaining after the individuals from whom it emerges disappear, collective memory is a 'collective representation' (Durkheim, 1974 [1898]: 1–34) which owes much of its resilience in literate societies to journalism. In Walter Lippman's words, 'ordinary citizens do not perceive the world directly but only through the set of forms and stereotypes provided by the press' (Lippman, 1922: 108). Lippman's statement requires three qualifications. First, press forms and stereotypes can simplify the complexity of real people and events, but they rarely arise independently of reality (Tajfel, 1968). Second, press forms and stereotypes are themselves modified as readers and other recipients pass them on to one another (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1954). Third, journalism does more than inform; it exerts *social pressure* on readers and viewers to conform to community leanings and provides *social support* for doing so, thus reinforcing the impersonal representations that constitute collective opinion and memory.

The problem

As 'journalism continues to function as one of contemporary society's main institutions of recording and remembering, we need to invest more efforts in understanding how it remembers and why it remembers in the ways that it does' (Zelizer, 2008: 85). What one learns about collective memory, however, is affected by the specimen used to study it; to recognize this is the first step toward understanding its relation to journalism. In particular, no matter what Civil War archive one accesses, the Gettysburg Address is subject to comment. As the New Testament of American civil religion (Bellah, 1970: 176–9), it is almost universally recognizable:

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.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battle-field of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we can not dedicate – we can not consecrate – we can not hallow – this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. 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. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us – that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion – that we here highly resolve 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.

(Lincoln, 1953 [1863]: VII, 23)

From the turn of the twentieth century through the Korean War, journalists interpreted the Gettysburg Address as a call to honor the fallen, to continue struggle in the face of loss and suffering, and to save the world's only democratic government. During the civil rights movement, however, an 'adversary culture' superimposed itself upon journalists' acknowledgement of the ideal of objectivity. More than any previous generation, this culture, demonstrably left-leaning yet professing objectivity, has distorted public understanding of many aspects of the Civil War. To grasp why this distortion occurred when it did and what part of it resulted from journalism's conventions is the present problem.

Civil War press

The inverted triangle – lead, body, conclusion – is a longstanding journalistic convention. A second convention, formulated during a period of growing federal power, makes the President the key figure of any event in which he participates (Schudson, 1982: 9). During the Civil War, these conventions did not exist. Newspaper accounts of the Gettysburg Cemetery dedication contained no contextual preliminaries

but went directly to the sequence in which local clergymen and officials participated. President Lincoln's comments, when mentioned, were subordinated to Edward Everett's two-hour oration.

Most literate Americans in 1863 never knew what Lincoln had said at Gettysburg, let alone how to interpret it. All 35 white-owned newspapers tracked, including Democratic and Republican, Southern and Northern, Eastern and Western papers, covered Edward Everett's two-hour oration, some reprinting it in its entirety, for it was the main event of the day, describing the details and ultimate meaning of the Gettysburg battles. Eleven, or about 31 percent of the total, made no mention of Lincoln's address. Seventeen newspapers, a little less than half, reprinted the Address without comment. The six newspapers that did assess Lincoln's words split along party lines.

Almost all city, town and village newspapers received subsidies from the political party with which they were locally affiliated, and all parties encouraged their members to become subscribers. Democratic newspapers accused Lincoln of exploiting the Gettysburg Cemetery dedication for political effect or pandering to abolitionists (criticisms evoked by his every presidential speech). Republicans extolled Lincoln's eulogy for the literary beauty with which it honored the dead and encouraged the living to fight to total victory.

New century

Lincoln's contemporaries had no reason to remember his Gettysburg speech. Not one lithograph or statue of Lincoln at Gettysburg appeared during or after the Civil War. Neither the press nor the public regarded the Address as a great oration; few intellectuals described it as such (Barton, 1930: 201; Dennet, 1934: 48). From post-Civil War reconstruction, through the Industrial Revolution and America's waging war against Spain, few had anything to say, one way or the other, about the Gettysburg ceremony. Not until the early twentieth century, when most of the Civil War generation had died and an industrial democracy had replaced a rural republic, was Lincoln's speech canonized.

If the nation's press at the turn of the century had remained as partisan as it had been in Lincoln's day, then interpretations of his Address would have been as divided. Political party subsidies, however, could no longer cover newspaper operating costs, especially in the larger cities, where they were replaced by new revenue sources, particularly department stores and other retail businesses. Because such businesses wanted their advertisements to reach the entire community, the criterion for

good reporting shifted from political advocacy to the neutral collection, assessment and reporting of information. In this phase of the meaning of Lincoln's eulogy, journalists reached greater consensus than ever before.

Rapid industrialization and urbanization, a generation in which Civil War memories had faded, rising nationalism challenged by massive immigration – in this context an unprecedented enthusiasm for both Lincoln and his Gettysburg Address arose. In 1909 Major William H. Lambert (1909: 391–2, 399) told the Pennsylvania Historical Society that none of Lincoln's contemporaries saw unusual merit in his Gettysburg Address. 'It is difficult to realize that [the Address] ever had less appreciation than it does now.' 'The true applause' for the Address, added Charles E. Thompson, 'comes from this generation' (*New York Times*, Sec.5, 6 June 1913: 3). These comments are paralleled by the frequency with which the Address appeared in turn-of-the-century newspapers. When the number of newspapers referencing the Gettysburg Address per year is divided by the total number of newspapers archived (www.newspaperarchive.com), the proportion rises from 0.01, 0.02 and 0.01 in 1870, 1880 and 1890, then increases suddenly to 0.12, 0.36, 0.68 and 1.52 in the years 1900, 1910, 1920 and 1930.

The Gettysburg Address appeared regularly in the early twentieth-century printed media because it seemed as resonant with life in the 'progressive era' as in Lincoln's own generation. Lincoln's references to the equality of all men and to the government belonging to the people expressed America's hope of regulating growing inequities occasioned by the Industrial Revolution.

During late 1917 and 1918, Lincoln's image regained its original air in newspapers and articles about the Great War's challenges and costs. Cartoons linking President Woodrow Wilson and Lincoln abounded. Lines from the Gettysburg Address appeared in war propaganda, newspapers and periodicals (Schwartz, 2000: 225–55; see especially pp. 216, 239, 241, 247). Also, recitals of the Gettysburg Address became a traditional part of Memorial Day ceremonies – a practice that would continue through the 1960s.

How memory becomes newsworthy

The relevance and affective resonance of past events to present predicaments make history 'newsworthy' (Zandberg, Meyers and Neiger, 2012). This is why the media recovered the Gettysburg Address so suddenly during the progressive era. However, Zandberg and his associates' understanding of how relevance is itself invoked is incomplete.

Relevance is only realized when journalists succeed in pointing it out to their readers, but to do so is not a matter of straightforward description. As biblical scholar William Graham Scroggie (1903: 3) put it: 'The New is in the Old contained / The Old is in the New explained.' Many contemporary journalists sustain, enliven and often warp American memory on precisely this assumption. Unlike picture frames, which separate images from their surroundings, different journalistic frames establish different relations between present and past. Analogical thinking, as conceived above, is a common form of cognition, but to characterize it as 'reversed memory,' as do Zandberg et al. (2012), is an overgeneralization. In some cases, it is true, the past must be *revised* to make it relevant to the present. Such is the meaning of reversed, that is, 'presentist,' memory. In other cases, the reality of the past must be *affirmed* before it can articulate a current event. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, for example, was often mentioned in news stories about 9/11; but if the history of this attack were revised into a Japanese reaction to an unprovoked American oil blockade, leaving 240 rather than 2,402 dead, it would have lacked relevance to 9/11 and been useless as its historical prototype.

News conventions and domestic crises

The newsworthiness of the Gettysburg Address varied throughout the twentieth century, but the occasion for which Lincoln delivered it limited what later generations could make of it. When President Harding (1922) dedicated the Lincoln Memorial, he stressed that Lincoln went to war for no reason other than to save the Union (*Helena Daily Independent*, 31 May 1922: 2). Depression-era journalism magnified the Unionist theme. On Memorial Day 1930, after children had strewn flowers on the graves of Gettysburg soldiers, reporters listened closely to Herbert Hoover declaring that 'the Appeal for the unity of our people and the perpetuation of the fundamentals of our democracy is as vital today in our national thinking as it was when Lincoln spoke' (*Bismarck Tribune*, 31 May 1930: 2).

But something new had occurred: a realignment of history, journalism, commemoration and memory. As the Great Depression intensified, disillusion over World War I set in, and fewer believed that facts spoke for themselves. The unprecedented shock and complexity of events made their interpretation urgent. According to Edwin Emery (1972: 562), the rise of interpretive reporting was the most important development in journalism of the 1930s and 1940s. For many, objectivity and

unbiased interpretation were synonymous with self-deception, but if plausible interpretation were indistinguishable from implausible, what would give journalism its authority? Walter Lippman (1920) had seen only one solution: to make journalism more professional. This required the institutionalization of objectivity: making false documentation illegal, requiring identification of sources in all stories, and facilitating the creation of non-partisan domestic and international research institutes and news agencies. The upgrading of journalism required a discipline 'in which the ideal of objective testimony is central' (Lippman, 1920: 82). If objectivity is to mean anything, however, its object must be significant; on the other hand, significance is precisely what makes interpretation – the *subjective* identification of present meaning and relevance – imperative.

Existential threats

When the United States entered World War II, the original dual sense of the Gettysburg Address – consolation and renewal of militancy – reemerged. Newspaper and radio journalists knew the Axis threat was existential; prospects of defeat affected their tastes for historical analogies: 'A new birth of freedom' meant military victory (*New York Times*, 19 March 1943: 22); that democratic government 'shall not perish from the earth' now meant it would prevail over fascism (editorial entered into *Congressional Record*, House, November 1941: A819). Simultaneously, 'In this tremendous war,' the *New York Times* (1943) editor noted, 'whose every day adds to the number of our dead, Mr. Lincoln's words of eighty years ago are as strong, inspiring and immediate as if they were heard today for the first time' (14 April 1943: 92). An eerie but relevant reality accompanied these words as the Gettysburg Cemetery reopened to embrace the bodies of the returning dead of World War II. Meanwhile, the will of the home front, always prone to lassitude, had to be stiffened. On the anniversary of the Gettysburg Address, the Cumberland (MD) *Evening Times* editor announced: 'Let the words of Abraham Lincoln, coming down through the years, be inspiration for greater effort on the part of those at home, to crown with success the heroic struggle of those who are fighting for us on foreign fields' (19 November 1943: 4).

Lincoln at Gettysburg remained newsworthy during the early years (1945–55) of the Cold War, when 'anxious humanity still yearned for a new birth of freedom.' World War II and Cold War journalists, thus, saw in the Gettysburg Address the concerns that Lincoln's generation

saw in it. Civil rights-era journalists saw in this Address something very different.

Civil rights movement and the new Gettysburg Address

In 1978, Gaye Tuchman demonstrated that many young reporters assigned to cover demonstrations and campus unrest during the 1960s were moved and radicalized by what they witnessed. Reporters were attracted rather than repelled because their liberal leanings (Weaver et al., 2007) inclined their sympathy toward the weak and vulnerable, and led them to attribute the plight of minorities to external circumstances rather than internalized values and motives (Felson, 1991). These tendencies find dramatic expression in both contemporary victim theory and revision of Americans' understanding of President Lincoln's motives for going to war.

On 19 November 1963, in the midst of civil rights strife and a polarizing Civil War centennial, newspapers throughout the country reported on Secretary of State Dean Rusk observing how 'Lincoln's reaffirmation of the American commitment to the "proposition that all men are created equal" had been preceded by the Emancipation Proclamation.' William Scranton, Republican Governor of Pennsylvania, amplified Rusk's comments by including the civil rights issue in his official centennial address:

Today, a century later, our nation is still engaged in a test to determine if the United States, conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal, can long endure. Blood has been shed in the dispute over the equality of men even in 1963.
(*Gettysburg Times*, 19 November 1963: 1, 4).

For Lincoln, then, it seemed emancipation was only a first step toward racial justice.

By the last decade of the twentieth century, historians and journalists had achieved a wholesale revision of Lincoln's eulogy, one that conformed to the goals of the civil rights movement, not the one that Gettysburg attorney David Will had in mind when he invited Lincoln to make a few remarks by the graves of the soldier dead. The transformation resulted from a new perspective that de-emphasized the themes of sacrifice, death and the sacredness of the Union, not from the accumulation of new evidence.

Garry Wills's (1998) Pulitzer Prize-winning *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Changed America* was the first comprehensive articulation

of this new perspective. Wills meant his subtitle to be taken literally. Distinguishing between a Declaration of Independence affirming the equality of all men and a Constitution legitimating slavery, Wills claimed that Lincoln invoked the former to 'cleanse' the latter (Wills, 1998: 38). Lincoln knew that the Declaration's 'all men are created equal' referred to the equality of Englishmen in the colonies and mother country. He also knew that the 'new birth of freedom' implied the old birth of freedom that occurred in 1776 and ended in secession 85 years later. Concealing these truths, Lincoln, in an 'open-air sleight of hand,' transformed America into an egalitarian nation (Wills, 1998: 38). Wills's work received widespread and enthusiastic reviews from newspapers, whose book editors could not, or would not, see its miscalculations, one of which is evident in its very subtitle. What if Lincoln had failed to speak 'the words that changed America'? What if he had fallen ill on his way to Gettysburg, or before, or for some other reason failed to deliver his address? What would have become of the 'unchanged' America? Would it have become a fascist state? Socialist? Totalitarian? No newspaper reviewer bothered to ask. Meanwhile, Wills's unchallenged conclusions were piously reiterated in the academy's history and social science classes.

Journalists regularly interview proponents of the 'new' Gettysburg Address on public television and C-Span. Historian James Horton declared in the Great American Writers Series (C-Span 2, 18 June 2001) that Lincoln at Gettysburg put the Emancipation Proclamation into different words, highlighted the Declaration of Independence's celebration of equality, and redefined the Constitution in terms of it. The leading Lincoln scholars of the day made similar claims, revealing a likemindedness that reverberated upon itself. On 'Lincoln at Gettysburg,' an episode of the *Civil War Journal* (1994), one expert historian after another explained that Lincoln used the Gettysburg Address to tell the nation what the war was about. Their words, systematically paired with visual images, made the point unmistakably. The phrase 'conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal' (quoted intermittently throughout the documentary) was accompanied by pictures of slaves and black soldiers. Verbal references to 'a new birth of freedom' accompanied the same images of the same African Americans.

Documentary journalism has done as much or more than any other medium to revise American memory of the Civil War. Consider the television documentary 'Abraham and Mary: A House Divided' (2001). After a voice read the Gettysburg Address, Professor Margaret Washington explained that Lincoln's words expressed the great catharsis

that the American people had achieved. That Professor Washington felt no need to document her implausible claim about Lincoln's expressing Americans' sense of being purified of their inner racism exemplifies television journalism's commemorative bias.

Frequent media references to 'the unfinished work' to which Lincoln referred at Gettysburg bear mention in this regard. When national samples of Americans in 2000 and 2001 were asked to explain Lincoln's presidential greatness, the overwhelming proportion reflected journalism's Lincoln by mentioning emancipation and racial justice; only a small minority mentioned Lincoln's role in preserving the Union.

One of the most dramatic revisions of the Gettysburg Address accompanied the presidential inauguration of Barack Obama. As a 'media event' or 'high holiday of mass communication' (Dayan and Katz, 1992), the 2009 inauguration was framed by the regular invocation of Lincoln and the Gettysburg Address. On his way to Washington, the President-elect, never out of sight of the press, traced Lincoln's route from Springfield, Illinois. The night before the inauguration, Obama and his family made a point to visit the Lincoln Memorial. He wove the phrase 'New Birth of Freedom,' the inauguration's official theme, into many of the day's ceremonies (Lisi, 2009), which included his taking his oath on Lincoln's Bible, and a luncheon consisting of the food Lincoln enjoyed, served on replicas of plates purchased by First Lady Mary Lincoln (Ruane and DeBose, 2008). Three weeks later, on the bicentennial of Abraham Lincoln's birth, the Emancipation Proclamation and Gettysburg Address were read *sequentially* to Obama and the rest of the Ford's Theater audience (Marks, 2009).

The transformation of the Gettysburg Address could have resulted from: (1) new information, (2) proof that multiple versions of the Address are equally true, or (3) proof that the phrases emphasized in the Address today had approximately the same meaning as they did for Lincoln and his contemporaries. These hypotheses have yet to be validated. No additional information on Lincoln's motives for writing the Address has been discovered; instead, selected portions of the Address – most commonly, 'all men are created equal,' 'unfinished work,' and 'new birth of freedom' – have been sanctified. Multiple truths (as opposed to multiple perceptions) are unconvincing given evidence on what the occasion obligated Lincoln to say.

Journalists have always pressed the meaning of old facts to the service of new problems, but in the minority rights context (Skrentny, 2002) these facts had to be utterly distorted in order to be made relevant. Such is the failing of journalism's 'redactional culture' (Jones, 2009: 133): reinterpretation of established facts trumps the discovery of new ones.

During the twentieth century, journalism produced two versions of the Gettysburg Address – an early version that consecrated the 3,155 Union dead by invoking the ideals of Union and democracy, and a later revision that depicts Lincoln at Gettysburg eulogizing the fallen as martyrs for emancipation. That the emancipationist account of the Gettysburg Address corresponds to an abrupt rise in articles on slavery is therefore no coincidence. The Lexis-Nexis evidence is abundant, but one source, the *Washington Post*, is representative. In 1980 and 1985, a total of 11 articles on American slavery appeared; in 1990 and 1995, 37 articles; in 2000 and 2005, 94 articles. In 2010 alone 51 articles appeared. Rising interest in slavery and emancipationist interpretations of the Gettysburg Address are aspects of the new journalism's celebration of diversity, racial equality and inclusion.

Context and truth

Adjudicating between emancipationist and traditional versions of the Gettysburg Address requires recognition of journalism's traditional shortcoming, namely, failure to contextualize properly the events on which it reports. A touching speech that affirms the equality of all men makes sense to a society that disdains invidious distinctions of race, ethnicity and religion, but it would have made no sense to Abraham Lincoln's society where such distinctions were the very foundations of social order. It would have made no sense to the political officials sharing the Gettysburg Cemetery platform with Lincoln – particularly governors representing states with strong Democratic constituencies: Governor Horatio Seymour of New York, Governor Joel Parker of New Jersey, Governor William Denison and former Governor David Tod of Ohio, and Governor Augustus Bradford of Maryland. Soldiers from these four states, largely antiwar and at best neutral toward slavery, filled 41 percent of Gettysburg's graves.

Lincoln had no reason to torment his listeners by expressing a conviction they did not share. He was not prepared to tell them, in the midst of thousands of fresh graves, that they had been tricked, that the purpose of the war was different from what they believed it to be. Most soldiers believed they were fighting to save the Union, and the last thing Lincoln wanted to do, especially in south-central Pennsylvania – a 'stronghold of rebel sympathizers' (*Indianapolis Daily Journal*, 23 November 1863: 2) – was to give the impression to bereaved families that he had manipulated their young men into dying to free blacks for whom they had no interest, let alone compassion. To do so would have transformed a solemn event which unified a grieving people into

a partisan rally that divided people by exploiting rather than honoring their dead. That Lincoln knew as much, that he wrote a eulogy that would please the Democratic and Republican press alike but hide his true abolitionist feelings, is a comforting thought today, but it is inconsistent with the fact that he was prepared on more than one occasion to renege on his Emancipation Proclamation if President Jefferson Davis would have abandoned his secession plans (Lincoln, 1953 [1863], 6: 410; Pease and Randall, 1925 [1850–64]).

Adversary culture

From the early to the mid-twentieth century, journalists interpreted Lincoln's Address as a call to honor the fallen, continue to fight in the face of suffering, and perpetuate democratic government. Not until the civil rights movement did historians imagine that Lincoln's goal at Gettysburg was to redefine the war as a fight for emancipation. This revision, the least authentic stage of interpretation, occurred in the context of significant changes in all American institutions, including journalism. Journalistic conventions of objectivity dominating the first half of the twentieth century remained during the second half, but the journalistic values that underpinned the establishment of those conventions did not. An adversarial culture of two complementary orientations emerged: (1) skepticism toward the nation's government, tradition, mores and privileged strata and (2) sympathy for the poor and for racial and other excluded minorities. Michael Schudson's (2008) commentary on *Why Democracies Need an Unlovable Press* embodies the adversary position. Democracies, he contends, need 'journalists who get in the face of power'. Decontextualizing events, fixating on conflict and distrusting politics enable the press 'to maintain a capacity for subverting established power' and promoting appreciation of minority rights, alternative viewpoints, and the lives of other people, 'especially those less advantaged than themselves' (Schudson, 2008: 100, 50, 12). Gettysburg Address revisionism is symptomatic of this adversary movement, for its newest reading gets 'in the face of power,' and promotes appreciation of those 'less advantaged than ourselves.'

Conclusion

As a repository of facts, journalism's relation to memory is archival. As an interpreter of facts, journalism's relation to memory is cultural. Journalism as a cultural system inherits and/or revises traditional

conceptions in terms of which people develop their perspectives on and knowledge about life (Geertz, 1973: 89). National crises express best how journalistic culture works. During World War II, for example, the press drew on Lincoln's words to legitimate war against Germany and Japan, to explain the immediate reasons for fighting it, clarify the values at stake, console the bereaved and inspire others to sustain the fight. To say that journalists write the first draft of history is therefore to say too little; rather, they explain the meaning of history for their readers and for their respective generations. This point takes us into deeper waters.

Whether or not print capitalism is a sufficient condition of nationhood, as Benedict Anderson (1991) claims, journalism, with or without the word capitalism, is a primary carrier of national memory. Journalism is a time machine not only because it preserves *contemporary* events for posterity but also because it brings to presence the experiences of the *past*. Having traced the way successive generations of media have represented the Gettysburg Address, one is struck that previous generations of journalists interpreted the Address as Lincoln's listeners understood it, but selectively in light of some predicament, while the present generation has undertaken wholesale revision rather than selective reinterpretation of the original. If distortion were merely a problem of different generations getting different parts of the story right and the rest wrong, it would be a simple matter of synthesizing partial truths. However, journalism's adversary culture differs from that of previous generations, inducing journalists, no less than historians, to undertake, without documentation, the wholesale warping of American memory.

Two concepts, 'framing' and 'keying' (Goffman, 1974), are the means by which journalism, revisionist and conservative alike, conducts its memory-work. Journalists invoke a primary framework when they select an event preceding the one they interpret and identify the latter's meaning by keying it to the former. For example, newspaper and television commentators assigned historical meaning to President John Kennedy's assassination and funeral by keying them to Lincoln's. Journalism makes this transformation public: Lincoln becomes a nineteenth-century Kennedy; Kennedy, a twentieth-century Lincoln. The framing-keying relation realizes its function by a literal crossing of ideational wires – a forced juxtaposition such that the story of one event is an appropriate frame through which to interpret another.

In the present case, 'forced juxtaposition' results from a six-step keying process: (1) *selection*: to sustain the drive to racial equality, a specific event, the Gettysburg Address, is invoked as a primary framework; (2) *scanning*: the content of the Gettysburg Address is scrutinized with

a view to finding the words and phrases most relevant to the issue of African Americans' distress; (3) *event alignment*: emphasis on relevant similarities and ignoring of dissimilarities allow Lincoln's Address to be read as foreshadowing the civil rights and racial equality movements; (4) *identification*: contemporary journalists deploy Lincoln at Gettysburg as a model for their efforts to publicize and gain sympathy for the black struggle; (5) *values alignment*: journalists conceive their writings and Lincoln's eulogy as efforts toward the same moral goal; and (6) *idealization*: they conceive the Gettysburg Address to be akin to a sacred scripture, commanding recognition of black suffering and participation in efforts to hasten reform. This six-step process generalizes readily to many other if not most cases of journalism and collective memory. The power of this process, undertaken by print and video journalism, is indicated by the extent to which readers and viewers believe it authentic, feel and judge it appropriate, and see themselves in it.

The Gettysburg Address is at present unique because adversary journalists must revise it thoroughly, or report historians' revisions, before keying into it any current predicament. The adversary culture with which these journalists have affinity arose during an antinomian era hostile to ethnic, racial, gender and class boundaries. Leftward-leaning journalists are adversary culture's leading agents, and they have enlarged the collective memory by revealing heretofore ignored historical information; but they have distorted at least as much as they have uncovered. As the reformist strain of adversary culture asserts itself, the notion of truth, once essential to the understanding of journalism and collective memory, 'appears to have fallen off the agenda of communication scholars' (Tenenboim-Weinblatt, 2009: 101). Accordingly, journalists can now say, with little fear of contradiction, that on 18 November 1863, in the midst of the carnage of war, Abraham Lincoln left his work, his desperately ill son, and his fragile wife for two days in order to make a speech at Gettysburg Cemetery – not to recognize massive Union casualties (all white men) but to affirm the ideal of racial equality. For adversary journalism, then, the cost of affirming racial equality in the present is to distort a eulogy for the war dead delivered 150 years ago.

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