

another plowmaker, marketing replicas of his "Moline Plow." A lawsuit ended in 1871 with a judgment against Deere for attempting to impose an "odious" monopoly. For the remainder of the century, farmers' associations and labor unions regarded him as a dominating industrial giant. Deere responded by devolving production and marketing to eight branch houses located across the continent.

This outstanding study in business history has been constructed from company archives, letters and papers kept by members of the family and business partners, and files of newspapers and trade journals. It is particularly illuminating on the close relations that bound industry to agri-

culture during the pioneering period of settlement in the Midwest. In Europe, mechanization of agriculture was mostly initiated and financed by large landowners and wealthy farmers. In America, the manufacturer took the initiative and actively promoted his product. It is unlikely that any other firm in the world produced as many steel plows in the third quarter of the nineteenth century as Deere and Company, and few businessmen took greater risks than John and Charles Deere. It is an enthralling story.

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Lincoln's Speeches Reconsidered

By John Channing Briggs

(Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005. Pp. xi, 370. Illustrations, notes, index, \$35.00.)

No one can read Abraham Lincoln's state papers without perceiving in them a most remarkable facility of "putting things so as to commend the attention and assent of the people," wrote Henry J. Raymond, editor of the *New York Times*, in 1864. Still, there has been no end of difficulty in understanding exactly how Lincoln's "facility" of expression managed to achieve the ultimate political goal of commanding "attention and assent." Almost all of Lincoln's surviving corpus of "speeches" are either texts he

wrote beforehand or transcripts of speech acts which a stenographer or reporter reduced to a written text, with or without Lincoln's knowledge or even approval. So, at the very beginning, we are on uncertain ground about what constitutes a Lincoln "speech"—is it a spoken act, or a written text? Historians are further burdened with uncertainty about the rhetorical style in which the spoken acts were cast. We have vanishingly few concrete descriptions of Lincoln in action on a platform, and thus lit-

tle way of understanding how Lincoln's patterns of delivery linked his words to the "assent" of his audience.

No wonder, then, that books devoted to unlocking the mystery of Lincoln's remarkable powers as a speechmaker tend to fall into three categories: like Waldo Braden's *Abraham Lincoln: Public Speaker* (1988), they make as much as can be made of the slim testimonies of Lincoln's voice and manner; like David Zarefsky's *Lincoln, Douglas and Slavery* (1990), they concentrate on the rhetorical strategies Lincoln favored; or, like Harry Jaffa's *Crisis of the House Divided* (1859), Garry Wills's *Lincoln at Gettysburg* (1992) or Ronald White's *The Eloquent President* (2005), they offer extensive, almost Talmudic, commentaries on Lincoln's texts. Because John Channing Briggs is an English professor, it comes as little surprise that his new foray into Lincoln as a speechmaker falls very much into the third category—and given the sheer volume of such commentaries, this is very likely to bring an involuntary sigh to the lips. That would be a mistake, for Briggs's book turns out to be one of the most effective examples of the Talmudic-commentary style, and indeed, one of the best books on Lincoln as a *rhetor*.

Briggs wisely avoids the pitfall of assuming that eloquence is a given. His first chapter, on rhetorical contexts, considers (in the style of Kenneth Cmiel's *Democratic Eloquence*) just what place oratory had in a nineteenth-century republican environ-

ment, both on the giving and the receiving ends. Context also governs Briggs's first commentary—on the 1838 Lyceum Speech—as he carefully compares Lincoln's analysis of the problem of preserving "republican institutions" from "mobocracy" with contemporaneous speeches by Martin Van Buren and Andrew Jackson. He also has a particularly acute ear for picking up obscure parallels, such as the apostrophe, "Hail fall of Fury! Reign of Reason, all hail!" in Lincoln's 1842 Washington Temperance Address, and the salutation of the Witches in *Macbeth*, so that Lincoln "fittingly greets the demise of a *Macbeth*-like tyrant within the drinker" (p. 74). The gem of the book, however, may be the one chapter not devoted to a single speech, but instead to a theme—"Presidential Eloquence and Political Religion"—which examines the strands of religious rhetoric and allusion in Lincoln's speeches.

There are, unhappily, two great drawbacks to the intensity with which Briggs scans Lincoln's texts. The first is that the further Briggs moves into examining texts, the less we learn about them as "speeches" and the more completely the book becomes an exercise in textual commentary. The other is that twelve of the thirteen chapters are devoted to Lincoln before his inauguration; the last chapter must gallop panting through the First Inaugural, the Gettysburg Address, and the Second Inaugural so that the book can live up to its title.

And yet, even within those confines, Briggs's *midrash* on the Gettysburg Address manages to do as much in ten pages as Garry Wills did in his entire misbegotten book. In fact, taken generally, *Lincoln's Speeches Reconsidered* does a finer job than any of the other commentaries on Lincoln's speeches (Jaffa alone except-

ed), and its reading will repay richly the serious student of Lincoln and of American political ideas in general.

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Darkest Dawn

Lincoln, Booth, and the Great American Tragedy

By Thomas Goodrich

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005. Pp. x, 362. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$35.00.)

Dark Union

The Secret Web of Profiteers, Politicians, and Booth Conspirators that Led to Lincoln's Death

By Leonard F. Guttridge and Ray A. Neff

(Hoboken, N. J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2003. Pp. vi, 282. Illustrations, note on sources, index. \$24.95.)

Thomas Goodrich's *Darkest Dawn: Lincoln, Booth, and the Great American Tragedy* is a well-researched account of the events surrounding Lincoln's assassination. Like the best historical works, the book effectively weaves a deep and broad collection of sources into a unified narrative that smoothly propels readers along the path of events from the fall of Richmond in April 1865 to the commitment of Mary Todd Lincoln in May 1875. Goodrich, in sum, is as effective a storyteller as he is an historical researcher.

Goodrich tells the well-worn story of Booth's assassination of Lincoln, and his subsequent capture and

death. He also traces the response of major political leaders like Secretary of War Edwin Stanton, on whose authority hundreds of citizens—many of whom had nothing to do with the assassination—were arrested and imprisoned in a climate of anger and suspicion. But what makes the book particularly valuable and interesting is the author's focus upon the emotional and often violent reactions of ordinary people. In locales North and South, citizens expressing sympathy with Booth or satisfaction with Lincoln's assassination were likely to find their lives quickly ended by grief-stricken, angry fellow citizens. Among the many acts of summary