

CONSUMING LINCOLN: ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S WESTERN MANHOOD IN THE
URBAN NORTHEAST, 1848-1861

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By

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“Don’t pursue a Ph.D. in history unless you have something to say,” was advise that resonated with me as an undergraduate history major. This dissertation is my way of speaking up and joining a broad conversation about the past. Of course, I did not write what follows by myself, more people than I realize assisted in countless ways. My greatest intellectual debt is to Eric Miller. As an undergraduate, Eric introduced me to authors who changed my life, patiently walked along side me as I struggled to find my own voice, and, most importantly, taught me how studying the past is a way to love my neighbor. Wang Xi encouraged me to write about Abraham Lincoln and the culture of refinement during my first semester of graduate school. I was fortunate to have Joseph Mannard advise me as I expanded this idea into an M.A. thesis. Looking back, I wince thinking of the amount of ink he expended correcting my drafts. If not for the guidance of Wang Xi and Joseph Mannard, I would never have developed this dissertation topic. While enduring the Ph.D., I am grateful for the friendship and assistance of: Joel Baehler, Mike Goodnough, Michele Curran Cornell, Jason Carruthers, Angela Riotta, Rob Faith, Greg Jones. Lesley Gordon provided important insight from the start of my dissertation. Elaine Frantz graciously pored over my drafts and provided thoughtful feedback. She not only ‘got’ what I was doing, but perceptively identified key themes that needed more attention. My dissertation is much better because of her. I am immensely grateful to my advisor, Kevin Adams. While I benefitted from his sharp eye and his masterful grasp of wide-ranging historiographies, it was his selfless ability to guide me that kept me encouraged during the entire Ph.D. process. As I juggled having a family and working outside academia, he showed grace while keeping me on pace. I am fortunate Kevin was willing to serve as my advisor.

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INTRODUCTION

Ask an American historian about the current state of Abraham Lincoln research and they will undoubtedly retort that the topic is beat; scores of scholars, after all, have mined Lincoln-related sources for over a century and a half. John Nicolay, who served as Lincoln's private secretary, said as much in 1903 when he curtly declined Ida B. Tarbell's request for an interview about the famed president because, "the study of Lincoln is complete." While an enormous primary source base concerning Lincoln has been gathered, few scholars have plumbed reactions to Lincoln using a cultural lens. This dissertation pulls from three fields of nineteenth century American history, using Lincoln scholarship, masculinity, and urban culture to uncover how Lincoln's manhood was perceived in the urban northeast. Even though immediate reactions to his boorish backcountry image were often unfavorable, this dissertation contends curiosity about Lincoln's western manhood facilitated his reception in, and around, New York City, Boston, Washington D.C., and Philadelphia. Building off established cultural practices such as the inculcation of alluring sights and popular print stories of western men—Lincoln's manhood proved a compelling source of entertainment while subtly jarring longstanding ideals of what it meant to be a gentleman and statesman in the antebellum urban northeast. By considering how Lincoln's western manhood was contested, received, and approved, this dissertation uncovers the cultural context Lincoln negotiated while also identifying the imbedding and perpetuation of consumption in the urban northeast. I contend that a consumerist orientation surmounted and

coopted an established refined tradition in the urban northeast and, in the process, altered the perception of Lincoln's western manhood in the urban northeast.¹

Despite the pools of ink spilled over writing something new about Lincoln's life, studying him from a gendered angle has received little attention. Scholars affirm that a refined manhood was the dominant ideal during the nineteenth century, an ideal that Lincoln did not fit.² Most Lincoln scholars instead place the sixteenth president in the tradition of the sturdy yeoman: frugal, industrious, and independent.³ But this does not match the impression northeast society had of the former-railsplitter. What historians have hinted at—but not developed—is the divide

¹ Kathleen Brady, *Ida Tarbell: Portrait of a Muckraker* (New York: Putnam's, 1984), 96.

² This dissertation benefits from various approaches to the study of manhood in the nineteenth century United States. Lorien Foote uses the Union Army to discern the stratified notions of manhood between soldiers and officers. Amy Greenberg probes imperial efforts through the lens of two opposing views, restrained manhood and martial manhood. Thomas Augst and J.M. Opal examine the different concepts of morality and ambition between the city and agrarian communities. Augst, with an astute eye, traces how men's concept of morality shifted once they were transplanted from the farm to the city. Both Richard Bushman's *Refinement of America* and Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz's *The Kingdom of Matthias* shed light on the reception of genteel manhood as it moved outside the city. Nicole Etcheson meanwhile argues that political manliness in the Old Northwest represented a blend of Southern and Northern manly ideals. Lorien Foote, *Gentlemen in the Roughs: Violence, Honor, and Manhood in the Union Army*. New York: New York University Press, 2010); Amy S Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005; Thomas Augst, *The Clerk's Tale: Young Men and Moral Life in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003); Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996); Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, *The Kingdom of Matthias* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992).

³ Ken Deitreich's 2006 dissertation, "Honor, Patriarchy and Disunion: Masculinity and the Coming of the American Civil War," devotes part of a chapter to a gendered investigation of Lincoln. This brief overview of Old Abe's manly virtues, however, provides only a shallow narrative of Lincoln's life before his Presidency. Lincoln scholar Kenneth J. Winkle demonstrates that Lincoln personified the folklore of a self-made man. Self-making not only informed his manly identity, but it also inspired him to try his luck beyond the Old Northwest and seek political success in Washington. Lincoln's actions symbolized a hybrid of traditional attributes like courage and responsibility and career ambition informed by the burgeoning capitalist economy during antebellum America. Michael Thomas Smith shifts the conversation by exploring Lincoln's manhood as it relates to his political career. Smith presents a political Lincoln that melded the virtues of industrious masculinity with a restrained manliness reminiscent of classical genteel qualities. These qualities, Smith contends, "coexisted" to form a manhood that found wide appeal during his Presidency. This dissertation will disagree with Winkle and Smith's claim that Lincoln assimilated to the genteel world. In contrast Deitreich, Winkle, and Smith all lack a grasp of masculinity scholarship. Kenneth Winkle, "Abraham Lincoln, Self-Made Man," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 21 (Summer 2000), 1-16; Ken Deitreich, "Honor, Patriarchy and Disunion: Masculinity and the Coming of the American Civil War." PhD. Dissertation, West Virginia University, 2007; Michael Thomas Smith, "Abraham Lincoln, Manhood, and Nineteenth-Century American Political Culture" in Andrew Slap and Michael Thomas Smith eds., *This Distracted and Anarchical People: New Answers for Old Questions about the Civil War Era North* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013).

between perceptions of western manhood, cultivated in fierce landscapes, and the deportment of men in the cosmopolitan northeast. Whereas men in cities often looked to Europe for codes of deportment, in the backcountry manliness was built on physicality and self-sufficiency. As Richard Bushman puts it, “City and country represented the extremes of two contrasting ways of life.”⁴ Co-existing ideas of manhood were, and still are, constantly morphing and evolving. To study nineteenth century manhood, as Gail Bederman puts it, “is to unmask this process and study the historical ways different ideologies about manhood develop, change, are combined, amended, contested—and gain the status of ‘truth.’” Part of the complexity with studying manhood concerns regional differences regarding proper definition of it.⁵ Using Lincoln I probe how perceptions of western men in the urban northeast were appropriated to entertain audiences while butting against engrained ideas of manhood.⁶

In the pre-Civil War North, “East” and “West” were words frequently used as geographic and social demarcations in speech, personal writings, and print media. In the perception of northerners, the approximate geographic line of the Appalachians winding from Maine to Tennessee distinguished the two regions. Lincoln once offhandedly referred to this borderline in 1848 at the Whig Convention in Worcester, Massachusetts, admitting in a seemingly self-deprecatingly and disarming manner that he was not familiar with “this side of the mountain.”⁷

⁴ For an earlier distinction between rural and urban see: Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973); C. Dallett Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessities: A History of Manners in America, 1620–1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6; Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*, 354.

⁵ Gail Bederman, *Manliness and Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880–1917* (University of Chicago Press, 1995), 7; Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (1996; New York: Free Press, 1997), 5.

⁶ Lizabeth Cohen illustrates how politics was approached with a “consumer mentality” during the mid-nineteenth century. Cohen cogently details how politics and a consumer culture blur together to. Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumer’s Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2003), 201, 220.

⁷ Arthur P. Rugg, “Abraham Lincoln in Worcester,” *Worcester Society of Antiquity*, Proceedings, 25 (1910): 12.

More importantly, the mountain chain often referred to as the Alleghenies in the nineteenth century, served as the perceived point of separation between urbanity and western coarseness—though contemporaries realized that pockets of the “West” held genteel women and men. Henry B. Rankin, a friend of Lincoln and author, observed, “In the estimation of thoughtful Americans east of the Alleghanies all that they knew of Mr. Lincoln justified them as regarding him as only ‘a Western stump orator.’” The transience of the northwest availed itself to fluid social dynamics and practicality by mid-century. While the delineating line of the mountain range was not as neat a divide, to be sure, it is still critical for grasping the regional cultural contexts.⁸

A geographic and cultural divide—between the urban northeast and the sparsely populated northwest—operated in tandem to shape perceptions of manhood. Men bred in the urban northeast were socialized in or near genteel manners, taste, and morals. While this dissimilarity was more imaginary than real, this perception of refinement, according to Richard Bushman, “created a standard for exclusion as well as a mode of association.” For these urbanites the adjective “western” insinuated rowdy behavior, rugged independence, and want of civility.⁹ A refined mode of assessing society and people even transcended political party in the northeast as aspects of refinement were not yoked to any one political group in antebellum America. Some westerners acquired, in fact, enough cultivation to shed this western label. Chief Justice and Secretary of Treasury, Salmon P. Chase, for example, espoused refinement in appearance and manner to the extent that a distinction was made between him and other western men like Lincoln. According to Hugh McCulloch, his predecessor at the Department of

⁸ Henry B. Rankin, *Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 249.

⁹ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, x. For eastern impressions of western manhood see: Stephanie McGuire, “The Contradictions of Western American Manhood as Seen Through 1858-1866 Immigration to Pikes Peak.” M.A. Thesis, University of Colorado. 2016.

Treasury, “Although the larger part of his [Chase] early life was passed in the West, he was not ‘westernized.’”¹⁰ Chase displayed all the trappings of refinement and conversed in a proper manner while Lincoln, on the other hand, was considered western. The mid-nineteenth century French tourist, Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne, wryly described the regional difference between the East and the West in 1866. He writes, “In the huge, agitated body of American culture, the western states are like robust arms that nourish the body by their labor. As for New England, she is the head, the seat of intelligence and thought.”¹¹ Although reactions to Lincoln overwhelmingly confirm that he was unable to pass as a refined gentleman because he so thoroughly personified the hardy frontiersman, the social and cultural milieu he entered was not inflexible as a burgeoning city landscape full of spectacles arrested attention and nurtured the desire to experience authentic western men during the mid-nineteenth century.

Although some historians have drawn attention to Lincoln’s western persona, the story of how his manhood simultaneously entertained and clashed with the ideal of a gentleman politician has not yet been told. Patricia Hochwalt Lynne’s “Lincoln's Western Image in the 1860 Campaign” (1964) poignantly argues that newspapers and biographies immediately advanced Lincoln’s western image after he won the Republican ticket.¹² Earlier, Wayne C. Williams’s *A Rail Splitter for President* (1951) offers extensive primary source evidence concerning the resistance northeastern newspaper editors had towards Lincoln’s nomination. More recently Lincoln scholars—the most distinguished being Michael Burlingame and Harold

¹⁰ Hugh McCulloch, “Memories of Some Contemporaries,” *Scribner's Magazine* vol. 4 (September, 1888): 279-95, 285.

¹¹ For a history of the divide between the East and the West see: Alan Taylor, *American Colonies* (New York: Viking, 2001); Mahoney, *Provincial Lives*, 113,114; Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne, *A Frenchman in Lincoln's America* (Chicago, Illinois: Lakeside Press, 1974), II: 189.

¹² Patricia Hochwalt Lynne, “Lincoln's Western Image in the 1860 Campaign,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 59 (June 1964): 165-181; Wayne C. Williams, *A Rail Splitter for President* (Denver: University of Denver Press, 1951). Although many northeastern editors derided Lincoln, Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune* prove a notable exception to this trend.

Holzer—have also commented on how the press presented Lincoln as westerner. But still unwritten are the non-political reasons behind the northeast’s interest in his western manhood. This dissertation does not consider Lincoln’s political arguments or how his logic was received; instead it examines the ways he entertained audiences. Consistently performing as a western stump speaker instead of a gentleman lecturer affirmed his authenticity, making his more appealing to urban audiences.¹³

While this dissertation prods a perceived demarcation between an urban East and bucolic West in antebellum America, it is not intended to challenge the value of the North and South binary, especially for the study of manhood. By shifting attention to a divide between the northeast and northwest this dissertation benefits from and complicates the existing North and South scholarly framework. Antebellum social relations along the Atlantic seaboard stretching from the Old South and northeastern were imbued with the art of civility inherited from Europe.¹⁴ Even men of the middling classes and men born outside of families with means, attempted to appear refined in all things since the economic and social payoff was great. The popular differences distinguishing men of the urban northeast from the Old South—namely that northern men were perceived as industrious and valued of higher education while southern men, on the other hand, were portrayed as always striving to prove their honor and prized leisure—

¹³ An extensive Lincoln source base offers a richly gendered subtext of Lincoln’s western manhood embedded in print material, objects, and spectacles. Ultimately, the perception of western men as amusing in the urban northeast attenuated European codes of gentility during the late antebellum period. Harold Holzer, *Lincoln and the Power of the Press: The War for Public Opinion* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014); Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, unedited version (online at [www.knox.edu/documents/pdls/Lincoln Studies](http://www.knox.edu/documents/pdls/Lincoln%20Studies)), pp. 1737, 1738.

¹⁴ The seminal work on Southern honor and defense of honor is: Bertram Wyatt-Brown, *Southern Honor: Ethics and Behavior in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). Lorien Foote discusses the different role honor in the North held than in the South. Foote, *The Gentlemen and the Roughs*, 78-79. Timothy J. Williams and Amy S. Greenberg complicate the singular notion that honor guided concept of manliness in the South. Timothy J. Williams, *Intellectual Manhood: University, Self, and Society in the Antebellum South* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood*.

were not stark. The tenets of refinement offered symbols that transcended a divide between North and South—at least in the late antebellum urban mind.¹⁵

In contrast with eastern refinement, common notions of humor, physicality, and appearance existed in the West. Urban northeasterners supposed that the West, a region reaching all the way to the northern and southern parts of the Mississippi Valley, was governed by social norms that differed markedly from those along the northern and southern Atlantic seaboard. Unlike rigid social divides based on class, education, and heritage in the East, the West held the promise of an egalitarian promise mid-nineteenth century men. As Isabella Bird, a refined English tourist who traveled through the West and penned her observations in 1854 noted, “It is impossible to give an idea of the ‘western men’ to any one who has not seen one at least as a specimen.” She was enthralled by the “yarns” told in the “extraordinary vernacular” with a “racy and emphatic manner” to boot. In appearance, she observed, “Their bearing is bold, reckless, and independent in the extreme,” a sharp contrast to the appearance and behavior of northeastern men.¹⁶ An absence of social codes governing a sense of human boundaries and bodily control made the frontier seem fiercely democratic and unpredictable.¹⁷ Men from the Upland South and

¹⁵ Refined society in the South and North shared ideas of refinement. Eric Foner points out that northern aristocrats looked favorably on southern gentility as a shared sense of taste and sense of distinction provided unity. Kenneth Greenberg traces the language of the manifestations of the language of honor, which was understood as a reflection of inner character. Men of honor prized good taste and public behavior that indicated their true honor, yet there existed an underlying fear, according to Greenberg, that the public would see the truth behind their “mask.” Stephanie McCurry skillfully shows that Southern white men were yoked together is a shared white manhood. Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 46-47; Kenneth S. Greenberg, *Honor & Slavery: Lies, Duels, Noses, Masks, Dressing as a Woman, Gifts, Strangers, Humanitarianism, Death, Slave Rebellions, The Pro-Slavery Argument, Baseball, Hunting, and Gambling in the Old South* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997); Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Honor Sachs, *Home Rule: Households, Manhood, and National Expansion on the Eighteenth-Century Kentucky Frontier* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015).

¹⁶ Isabella Bird, *The Englishwoman in America* (London: John Murray, 1856), 156-157, 325.

¹⁷ Elliott J. Gorn, “‘Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch’: The Social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry,” *The American Historical Review* 90 No. 1 (February, 1985), 18-43; John Kasson describes Lincoln’s manners and “relaxed boundaries” around the body, like fighting, as behavior that “remained on the margins of the booming capitalist society.” Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, 15-16. David Hackett Fischer defines the

the West, socially fluid regions that valued virile ability, were, in fact, often yoked together in the mind of urban northeasterners before the Civil War. The division between Union and Confederate states crystalized a seething regional divide.

This dissertation centers on the reception of Lincoln in the urban northeast rather than the South because New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia ushered in a modern approach to consumption. Absent from this dissertation is an in-depth discussion of the Civil War or politics of slavery. Although both are seminal to nineteenth century history and inherently enmeshed in this dissertation, neither were driving forces behind the consumption of Lincoln's western manhood in the northeast. Rather, Lincoln's association with the West proved eye-catching in northeast cities throbbing for newer entertainment—starkly different milieus than existed in the South. When Lincoln visited the urban northeast before his presidency, audiences categorically identified him as western even though he shared qualities of behavior, appearance, and speech with upland southerners. Even with his well-known Kentucky heritage, none of my sources from the northeast identified him as a southerner, despite the parallels between the antebellum southwest and northwest. Further, his free-labor politics affirmed the impressions that he was reared in the northwest. Thus, urbanites associated Lincoln with the West, and cast a condescending gaze upon Lincoln's unkempt, sun-beat, sinewy frame. Every aspect of his speech and conduct, sans his knowledge, struck eastern audiences as typifying western life.

early nineteenth century southern backcountry as “a vast area roughly the size of western Europe, extending 800 miles south from Pennsylvania to Georgia, and several hundred miles west from the Piedmont plateau to the banks for the Mississippi.” Fischer identifies how this large swath of land was more egalitarian noting that there existed a “fundamental differences in social manners and expectations.” He writes: “In the backcountry, rich and poor men dealt with one another more or less as social equals. They wore similar clothing, and addressed each other by first names. They worked, ate, laughed, played, and fought together on a footing of equality.” David Hackett Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 635, 755-756. For more on the blurring of social relations in the southwest and northwest backcountry see; Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest*.

Eastern populaces that saw, listened, wrote about, or depicted Lincoln perceived him as a representative western man.¹⁸

This dissertation does not center on one social or economic group, rather it contends that attitudes towards consumption related to Lincoln cut across class lines in the urban northeast. Refined society—those in the northeast of means, education, and lineage—demurred at Lincoln’s western manhood while simultaneously deeming him an amusing object of consumption. In sum, transcending social class, political, or religious affiliation brought to view the force a collective shift towards consumption leveraged. Lawrence Levine’s seminal study of social class and entertainment forcefully shows that theater, concerts, and art were both participatory and chiefly egalitarian in cities for most of the nineteenth-century. “The theater in the first half of the nineteenth century,” Levine writes, “played the role that movies played in the first half of the twentieth: it was a kaleidoscopic, democratic institution presenting a widely varying bill of fare to ad classes and socioeconomic groups.”¹⁹ While taste, wealth, and lineage tore apart social groups, mass entertainment knit them together. Politics provided a form of participatory entertainment, which was far from just a cerebral civic exercise.

Western manhood, then, gained a footing in northeastern society as a source of entertainment. While the exact onset of a consumer society is a point of contention among historians, Peter N. Stearns marks the 1850s as the decade when it took form in major Europe and American cities. He cites the growth of events for spectators and the increasing of reach of

¹⁸ Concerning the frontier Harry Laver, “away from the time-and tradition-encrusted politics of the East. In places like Kentucky, on the boundary between familiarity and tentative anticipation, democracy flourished by mixing the East’s political ideals with the West’s social fluidity.” Harry Laver, *Citizens More Than Soldiers: The Kentucky Militia and Society in the Early Republic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), 67.

¹⁹ Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 21.

mass-produced goods as evidence.²⁰ According to Stearns, “A consumerist society involves large number of people staking a real portion of their personal identities and their quest for meaning—even their emotional satisfaction—on the search of acquisition of goods.”²¹ Dell Upton adds to our understanding by proposing forth that consuming evolved into the pursuit of obtaining something both desirable and intangible. This highly sensory experience helped democratized consumption among all classes, which was previously afforded only to the wealthy. For Upton, this new form of consumption proceeded from A.T. Stewart’s department stores on Broadway, popularly known as the “marble palace.” At Stewart’s the leisure activity of gazing at merchandise behind display glass flourished and became known as window-shopping as the capitalist economy in New York City and other cities along the Atlantic seaboard actively stimulated desire.²² Consumer society, then, not only assumes the production of goods made available to the masses, but also that consumption of goods and services, like spectacle entertainment, extended beyond mere subsistence. More than the actions and behavior of purchasing, consumerism inculcated a mode of negotiating public life that shaped the social imaginary of the late antebellum northeast. Social pressure to display proper taste could not have animated a vigorous consumer culture alone during this period. Interest in Lincoln’s western

²⁰ Peter N. Stearns, *Consumerism in World History: The Global Transformation of Desire* (New York and London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2006), ix, 13, 46-49, 56, 63. Stearns claim that a central feature of consumerism is supported by Celia Lury. The features of a consumer society, according to Lury, are marked by the availability of goods, expansion of shopping and leisure, increasing visibility of different forms of shopping and leisure pursuits, and a growing visibility of the consumption of leisure practices: Celia Lury, *Consumer Culture* (London: Polity Press, 1996).

²¹ Peter N. Stearns, “Stages of consumerism: recent work on the issues of periodization,” *Journal of Modern History*, 69:1 (1997), 105.

²² Dell Upton, "Inventing the Metropolis: Civilization and Urbanity in Antebellum New York" in Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat, eds., *Art and the Empire City: New York 1825-1861* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 23-24.

manhood served as a part of an expanding consumer desire, enabled by new technology and mass-production.²³

While historians have pointed to technology as the cornerstone of a robust, modern consumer economy, a seismic cultural shift in thinking about consumption proved just as important.²⁴ It should not be assumed that the innovation which enabled images to rouse emotions, mass-printed tales to fascinate, and consumer goods to fuel a longing for ever-expanding production during of the late antebellum period was destined to be considered culturally appropriate form of leisure. Consumerism encompasses more than the act of purchasing; it stokes appetites for the newer and more sensational. As Colin Campbell points out, “It is the desire to desire, the wanting to want which is its [consumerism’s] hallmark.” The new hedonism that Campbell identifies became more obvious with the use of electricity and staging to induce awe by department stores and advertising in late nineteenth century American cities. William Leach and T.J. Jackson Lears argue that the mechanics of consumerism touched the core of human desire. For Lears, modern consumption eventually ushered in a “restless desire for status, sexual partners, and precious furnishings.” Similarly, Leach identifies that this form of consumerism “fostered the cult of the new, democratized desire and consumption, and helped produce a commercial environment steeped in pecuniary values.”²⁵ And not unlike Lears

²³ Technology and changing approaches to viewing images fostered the availability of cheap print and decreased the price of leisure entertainment. Frank Trentmann writes that “historians now need to contextualize the different forms and functions of consumption, and the affiliated social visions and political systems competing with each other at the same time.” Frank Trentmann, “Beyond Consumerism: New Historical Perspectives on Consumption,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 39, no. 3 (2004), 373-401; Robert G. Dunn, *Identifying Consumption: Subjects and Objects in Consumer Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 8-9; Steven Miles, *Consumerism as a Way of Life* (London: Sage, 1998). Michael North writes about the early twentieth century, “audiences begin to consume imaginative and symbolic materials as they had previously consumed material goods.” Michael North, *Reading 1922: A Return to the Scene of the Modern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 208.

²⁴ For a synopsis of the urban and technological transformation of Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia between 1840 and 1860, see: Shelley Streeby, *American Sensations: Class, Empire, and the Production of Popular Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 10–13.

²⁵ The Industrial Revolution and the change of production do not adequately explain the behavior and mentality that ignited consumerism. Traditionally, the state and church stood as a uniform front against excess and

or Leach, sociologist Zygmunt Bauman contends that an “Ever increasing volume and intensity of desire” is a central feature of consumerism in the twenty-first century.²⁶ In short, a consumer taps into a deeper desire for captivation and novelty. Shared rituals intended to indulge the senses with fascination and novelty offer a lens into a collective social imaginary.²⁷

The social imaginary, as Charles Taylor explains, is a “set of ideas about society that is intertwined with everyday practices.” It is a useful theoretical tool because, unlike focusing on intellectuals, the imaginary uncovers the meaning behind the practices and expressions of a given society. As historian Michael McKeon puts it, “Broadly speaking, the modern social imaginary is one that comes into being through its own agency rather than through any external force.”

exciting the passions—at least for the middling and lower classes. The wheels of a modern consumer spirit were set in motion ideas that emerged from Arminianism, a strand of Protestantism, and the Romantic Movement to usher in a new hedonism that prioritized stimulating the senses and emotions. An appreciation for strong and novel sensations emerged as a result and chafed against a prickly Calvinism that preached rejecting any hint of indulging the flesh. The dovetailing of these two movements created a general consensus about consumption that transcended the religious and secular. John Sekora observes about early modern Europe, “Until the nineteenth century it was customary for sumptuary laws to be read from the pulpit in every church at least once a year—a daunting task, since ordinances regarding dress alone often ran more than one hundred duodecimo pages.” While Romanticism encouraged reflection of self and emotion, Arminianism offered a rationale for shaking loose from the stiff bonds of church sponsored self-denial. John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1977), 61; For an analysis of sumptuary laws see: Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (New York: Harper Collins, 2016). Campbell skillfully probes seventeenth and eighteenth century America history to offer a convincing conclusion for why this type of consumer mentality took root. The Arminian influence inspired Cambridge Platonists and latitudinarian Anglicans, from which Wesley Methodism was conceived. As a result, sensation emerged part-in-parcel with Methodism, especially after the Great Awakening swept America in riveting style. As Campbell shows, a key strand of consumerism—lust for sensation—is found in the Protestant heritage of early America. For a discussion of how the Methodist denomination fit into Campbell’s thesis see: Joseph Stubenrauch, *The Evangelical age of Ingenuity in Industrial Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 89-90. For more insight into the consensus between the religious and secular in favor of consumerism at the end of the nineteenth century see; Leach, *Land of Desire*. For the Early American Puritanism that advocated moderation, simplicity, and denying pleasing sensation see: Perry Miller, *The New England Mind: The Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1939).

²⁶ A consumer mentality is summed up by Colin Campbell as a “longing to experience in reality those pleasures created in the imagination, a longing which results in the ceaseless consumption of novelty.” Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 205; Zygmunt Bauman, *Consuming Life* (London: Polity Press, 2007), 8-9.

²⁷ I use a consumer imaginary as a theoretical approach in this dissertation since it taps into a subconscious desire impelling people to act. A consumer culture is too broad for this study. It, in sum, describes the acquisition of goods not for the sake of meeting a need, but out of providing pleasure. While a consumer society, on the other hand, describes organized around consumption and conspicuous display of commodities. In a consumer society, which was first championed by Thorstein Veblen, individuals win social standing and gain identity through their consumption.

Studying consumption from the angle of a collective imaginary teases out what people found meaningful, because as C.S. Lewis once remarked, “the imagination is the organ of meaning making.” An imaginary, upon infiltrating a social group is, according to Marlon Xavier, “expressed in a corpus of images and representations,” a point that Benedict Anderson flushes out in, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. For Anderson, the “mass ceremony” of reading newspapers and novels were the main conduits of a widely shared imaginary. As such, a social imaginary or imaginaries are particularly fluid—shifting and organic. Numerous imaginaries can exist at once and individuals are not bound to operate according to a social imaginary.²⁸

Applying this framework to the reception of Lincoln in the urban northeast, a consumer imaginary served as the mind’s eye, a filter through which his western manhood was animated.²⁹ As a compelling source of entertainment, the objectification and spectacularization of Lincoln’s western manhood bled into the realms of politics and traditional ideas of manhood. Responses to

²⁸ Michael Warner affirms that modernization gave way to social imaginaries. Warner writes, “The modern social imaginary does not make sense without strangers. A nation or public or market in which everyone could be known personally would be no nation or public or market at all. This constitutive and normative environment of strangerhood is more, too, than an objectively describable *gesellschaft*; it requires our constant imagining.” Warner then distinguishes between social imaginaries of a concrete, embodied audience, like at a play or speech, and an audience connected despite not sharing the same physical space, like print circulation. This dissertation engages with both types of imaginaries Warner describes to argue that a consumer imaginary as it relates to Lincoln’s western manhood was entrenched in the urban northeast during the late antebellum period. Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (New York: Zone Books, 2005), 76; Michael Warner, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, eds., *Varieties of Secularism in a Secular Age* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010). Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 107; C.S. Lewis “*Bluspels and Flalansferes: A Semantic Nightmare*,” *Rehabilitations, and Other Essays* (Oxford: Geoffrey Bles, 1939), 265; Marlon Xavier, “Consumption dreams: how night dreams reveal the colonization of subjectivity by the imaginary of consumerism,” Dissertation, University of Alabama Birmingham, 2013; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York, Verso, 1983; revised edition 1991), 35.

²⁹ As an expression the social imaginary resonates with and evokes a pre-ontological understanding that permeates a given society. This use of a consumer imaginary applied to the filter audiences in the urban North perceived Lincoln’s western manhood from matches Charles Taylor’s definition. Cornelius Castoriadis identifies the social imaginary of capitalism reorients the “activities and values” in western society. As a result, activities and objects understood through this imaginary are condensed into commodities. Castoriadis, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (London: Polity Press, 1987), 359-363; Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004), 23-30.

Lincoln's western manhood, expressed through signifying language and common practices, evidenced that a consumer imaginary existed in the urban northeast. While scholars have pointed out that a "social imaginary oriented around the realization of individual consumer desire" strongly influenced late nineteenth century America, this dissertation submits such a development was afoot a half century earlier, as values of consumption shaped a social imaginary taking root in the urban northeast during the mid-nineteenth century. The spectacle, reading materials, and talisman pertaining to Lincoln's western manhood indicate that a consumer imaginary was shaping desire, entertainment, and society in the process.³⁰

A consumer imaginary, then, sharply contrasted with the motivation to purchase or emulate proper taste. While conspicuous consumption was spurred on out of the obligation to meet social expectations of proper taste, a consumer social imaginary flourished premised on individual gratification flourished as well. Regardless of whether the reaction to western manliness was disgust or reverence, tales, images, or the sight of bona fide frontiersmen drew attention. Aided by technology, western manhood was appropriated through fascinating exhibitions, reading material, and images that it transcended cultural taste. A central trait of consumerism is its ability to embed itself in quotidian choices, making it an impetus for individual rather than collective action. Sociologist Robert G. Dunn classifies consumerism as "an ideology that seductively binds people" to find self-worth in acquiring items and seeking new sensations.³¹ This extends beyond the act of purchasing goods; sociological theory identifies consumerism as the practice of actively seeking to stimulate the senses through

³⁰ Marlis Schweitzer teases out the role of fantasy shaping the social imaginary of women in the consumption of fashion. She describes that this social imaginary was "oriented around the realization of individual consumer desire." Schweitzer, *When Broadway Was The Runway: Theater, Fashion, and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 52, 163.

³¹ Robert Dunn, *Identifying Consumption: Subjects and Objects in Consumer Society* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 8.

pastimes such as music, exhibits, or performances. Therefore, a consumer desire for entertainment served as a lens through which Lincoln's western manhood was viewed in the urban northeast. Nevertheless, the notion of western manhood was not fixed in the urban northeast, and, at times, was disputed. In fact, consumption of Lincoln's western manhood, then, spurred evolving perceptions of both Lincoln and western manhood.³²

My contention that northeastern audiences saw Lincoln's western manhood as a source of entertainment stands on the shoulders of studies about how race, music, and the cityscape itself were all woven into the fabric of consumer culture. As Ben Pitcher writes in his book, *Consuming Race*, "Consumption is a way of thinking about this practice of 'doing' as a material and symbolic engagement." This "doing" includes everything from absorbing visual and auditory public displays, like musical performances and viewing museum exhibits, what Carolyn Landau in her study of the consumption of music calls the "digestion" of the melody and lyrics.³³

³² One way historians have furthered the study of manhood is through considering how society and "self-made men" existed in both the urban northeast and the rural Northwest is through lives dedicated to dogged pursuit of economic and social improvement. While Harry S. Laver, Wendy Gamber, and Kristen Tegtmeier Oertel consider the violent and physically grueling lives laboring men led, this lore filtered to the urban areas east. And, in the opposite direction, Timothy R. Mahoney tracks how a genteel ethos gradually moved from the antebellum northeast to the Old Northwest. Mahoney lucidly shows the ways genteel society rejected the seemingly banal aspects of frontier life. Men in the backcountry partook in fraternal activities of drinking, gambling, physical sports, and jocular banter with little concern of appearing respectable. Civilized society sneered at these pastimes. Although white northern laborers shared a privileged racial status regardless of where they lived in the North, the divide between laboring western men and proper northeastern gentlemen was stark. Harry S. Laver, *Citizens More Than Soldiers: The Kentucky Militia and Society in the Early Republic* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007); Michael E. DeGrucio, "Unmade: American Manhood in the Civil War Era" (PhD. Dissertation from the University of Notre Dame, 2007); Wendy Gamber, *The Boarding-house in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); Kristen Tegtmeier Oertel, *Bleeding Borders: Race, Gender, and Violence in Pre-Civil War Kansas* (Louisiana State University Press, 2009); Catherine Allgor, *Parlor Politics: In Which the Ladies of Washington Help Build a City and a Government* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2000), 51.

³³ Ben Pitcher relates, "The process of consumption encompasses a wide range of activities in which consumption is caught up in human practices of meaning making, where what is consumed gets taken out of old contexts and put into new ones, where those meanings are transformed through use." Pitcher borrows from anthropologist Arjun Appadurai's approach to consumerism. Appadurai contends that consumption is an, "eminently social, relational and active rather than private, atomic or passive." Ben Pitcher, *Consuming Race* (Routledge, New York, 2014), 27-28, 33; Arjun Appadurai, "Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value," in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 31; Carolyn, Landau, "My own Little Morocco at Home: a Biographical Account of Migration, Mediation and Music Consumption," in Jason Toynbee's and Byron Dueck's eds. *Migrating Music* (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), 38-50.

Likewise, Dana Brand explains a collective excitement to indulge in novelties of sight and sounds. She relates, “If the fundamental cultural fact of the nineteenth century was understood to be the development of great cities, the representative modern subjectivity was understood to be that the city dweller, the passive yet compulsive consumer of a rapidly and perpetually changing spectacle.”³⁴ The city blurred consumerism and rousing visual sights, ushering in a modern approach to negotiating urban landscape. City-goers were relentlessly beckoned to daydream, to actively seek the new, and to place a priority on gratifying their senses.³⁵ Between 1848 and 1861 the novelty of Lincoln’s western persona in the northeast arrested gazes and excited imaginations.³⁶

By highlighting Lincoln’s western manhood editors, biographers, image-makers, and entrepreneurs directed the compelling force of a burgeoning consumer imaginary. Northeastern audiences similarly took an active role in the process through purchasing Lincoln related items and flocking to catch a glimpse of him. At the same time, the rise of scientific, modern thinking led viewers to evaluate printed images with a critical eye. Rather than taking a deferential posture, images and artifacts were vigorously studied and even touched, if possible. The adept eye and perceptive touch were the aptitudes necessary for navigating the contours of the urban northeast cultural landscape. Although scholars dispute whether the individual viewing

³⁴ Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 4.

³⁵ As Vanessa Schwartz illustrates in late nineteenth century Paris, the “spectacularization” of city life resulted in representation to become “interchangeable with reality.” Ultimately, “spectacularizing became the means through which reality was commodified” as Parisians sought “the real” in mediated form. *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in fin-de-siecle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 2, 10, 11). For an analysis of how tourism blurs commodification and visual sights see: John Urry, *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London, Newbury Park: Sage Publications, 1990). John Urry argues that the city is a spectacle to be experienced by all the senses in; Urry, “*Sensing the City*,” in *The Tourist City*, Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein eds. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 71–86.

³⁶ Colin Campbell writes, “The modern consumer will desire a novel rather than a familiar product because this enables him to believe that its acquisition and use can supply experiences which he has not so far encountered in reality.” Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism*, 89.

experience represented the fulcrum of modern visual culture or mid-nineteenth century culture, antebellum writers and designers of visual displays were the catalyst that provoked their audiences to flutter with excitement.³⁷ To be clear, Lincoln did not stand afar directing his reception in the northeast, not even unwittingly. Rather, media curators and audiences alike determined the perception of Lincoln's manhood. Instead of placing significance on the viewer or the media creator, I suggest that urban northeastern audiences and media curators of Lincoln acted cooperatively in spectacularizing and commodifying his western manhood.

Pinning down how a consumer imaginary operated using Lincoln is an elusive objective, since urban northeast audiences were not single-minded in their approach to Lincoln. Viewing Lincoln as a novelty did not go unchallenged though, since the refined tradition mounted the most serious threat to the expansion of this imaginary. Intimately, however, this resistance was ultimately slyly appropriated by the hand of consumer capitalism. The covert, ubiquitous nature of a consumer imaginary commingling with political, entertainment, eulogy, and rituals complicate studying its infiltration into collective thinking. To underscore this imaginary is to identify a persistent impulse to gratify. Once imbedded, the habits of a consumer imaginary pervaded cultural, political, and religious practices. This dissertation is, in a small way, an attempt to draw attention to its compelling influence on a region using Lincoln's western manhood.

³⁷ Jonathan Crary uses "observer," rather than "spectator," emphasizing the individual's part in "complying" with certain codes of seeing, whereas the latter is more commonly used to emphasize the passivity of "looking" on as the passive recipient of the mass spectacle. The observing subject is "both a product of and at the same time constitutive of modernity in the nineteenth century." Overall, this emphasis on subjective vision is part of a shift toward modernity. Nicholas Daly, on the other hand, points to mid-nineteenth century novels to argue that authors drew out an emotional response from the reader. He argues that "fragmentation, shock, and dispersal" were the unique mechanisms of modernity's novelty. For Daly, mid-nineteenth century writers deliberately used "fragmentation, shock, and dispersal" as literary mechanisms to attract an audience and tap into the lucrative literary market. Jonathan Crary, *Suspensions of Perception: Attention, Spectacle, and Modern Culture* (Cambridge: MIT, 1999), 9; Nicholas Daly, *Sensation and Modernity in the 1860s* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 200-201.

Chapter one traces reactions to Lincoln's appearance during his speaking tours to the New York City, Boston, and the greater New England region prior to his presidency. I contend that viewers saw Lincoln as a visual sensation in the same light as a Barnum exhibit on display. His western dress, height, and awkward body motion proved to entertain audience while simultaneously clashing with the polished statesman. Chapter two argues that northeastern audiences treated Lincoln's political speeches as a variety of western stump speeches in both 1848 and 1860. Attendees anticipated the ability of Lincoln's humor to regale them with humor contrary to other phlegmatic political addresses. An unpolished oratory full of colloquial yarns and wit proved entertaining nonetheless to norther audiences. This desire to gather and listen to Lincoln, despite resistance from traditional refined society, signaled a deeper consumer imaginary burrowing in the region. Chapters one and two illustrate that the novelty of Lincoln's western appearance and speech in the flesh proved a compelling source of entertainment in the urban northeast.

Chapters three and four trace the mediation of Lincoln's western manhood in the urban northeast. Entrepreneurs and publishers harnessed a consumer imaginary to craft Lincoln as an axe swinging pioneer to spark enthusiasm and profits. Chapter three discusses how print media sculpted Lincoln, little-known in the northeast prior to 1860, to fit the romantic ideal of a western man—heroic and physically imposing. Novels, theater, and images of western life were a prism through which northeastern audiences imaged Lincoln following Lincoln's Republican nomination for president on May 18, 1860. Portrayed in this light, he also drew barbed reviews due to the air of coarseness western men projected. Chapter four centers on the sensory entertainment associated with Lincoln's western manhood in the urban northeast during his first presidential campaign. Marches through city streets and firework displays by the Wide Awakes,

Lincoln likenesses, and Lincoln related materials reified western manhood in the minds of the northeast. Merchants and entrepreneurs peddled Lincoln-related items—they avowed authentic—that exuded a grittiness that smacked of western life to eager buyers. In the process, the popularity of Lincoln autographs, lithographs, and rails that he supposedly chopped buttressed a celebrity culture, thereby anchoring the urban northeast deeper in a consumer imaginary.

In Chapter five, this dissertation shifts to Lincoln's western manhood during his presidency. Lincoln's manhood jarred against presidential tradition, stimulated public fascination, and ultimately served to eulogize him. I contend that a consumer imaginary broadened the idea of celebrity to include a western man elevated to the highest rank in Lincoln. In the process, Lincoln's lack of decorum broke with the tradition of presidential refinement and ceremony. Irritated, refined society pushed back against Lincoln's unkempt appearance as President as an affront to propriety and tradition. Still, an enthusiasm to see, read, or purchase items associated with his western manhood overwhelmed any opposition to his lack of refinement. The epilogue concludes the dissertation by considering how a consumer imaginary as it was linked to Lincoln extended beyond the urban northeast in 1865. Lincoln's postmortem popularity stirred northern audiences to purchase, view, and read writings about his western manhood. Consuming proved a widespread means to commemorate Lincoln. As an object of fascination, western manhood was popularly coopted by refined men through hunting, donning western garb, and traveling west after Lincoln's death.

CHAPTER ONE

Exhibitions of Western Manhood: The Visual Delight of Lincoln Prior to his Presidency in the Urban Northeast

In 1861, an anonymous author for the British periodical, *Literary Budget*, reprimanded the distinctly American craze for entertainment. Issuing the piercing pronouncement: “We owe the epithet ‘sensation’ to the candid or reckless vulgarity of the Americans. It is intended to express that quality in art, circumstances, entertainments, politics, and social events, which rouses and gratifies their constitutional excitability,” the author captures the type of ‘sensation’ an eager public indulged by fixing their gaze on Lincoln when he appeared before urban northeastern audiences in 1848 and 1860. Northeastern audiences responded to the physique, dress, and body motion of the Illinoisan as comical, fascinating, and crude at once. Lincoln was regularly dismissed by respectable society, despite holding esteemed titles like lawyer and congressman, on account of his façade transfusing the vulgarity of the backcountry into genteel society. Nevertheless, audiences of all stripes—respectable society included—were overwhelmingly captivated by the entire image Lincoln made. This chapter probes how audiences responded to the sight of Lincoln and the next chapter considers how audiences

responded to his voice, humor, and the stories he told during his both speaking tours in 1848 and 1860.¹

Lincoln's first opportunity to address audiences in Boston and the surrounding region came in 1848. An invitation extended to a little-known Whig Congressman from Illinois aimed at energizing support for Zachary Taylor presidential run in New England, Lincoln's 1848 tour lasted ten-days and canvassed Boston and the surrounding areas beginning in Worcester on September 12, 1848. Eleven and a half years later, Lincoln was invited back to the urban northeast to speak at Cooper Union New York City on February 27, 1860. After his speech at Cooper Union, Lincoln visited his son Robert at Phillips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire and obliged ten requests to speak in New Hampshire and Connecticut before heading back to Illinois on March 11, 1860.² Although Lincoln never intended to speak anywhere besides Cooper Union when he set out from Illinois, news of his visit spread rapidly across the urban east coast. After a handful of editors and local party leaders contacted him in New York City, Lincoln embarked on a piecemeal speaking tour of New England towns and cities, resembling his tour of Massachusetts in 1848.³ The *New York Times* first publicized his trip following Cooper Union on February 28, by informing the readership that "noted political exhorter and prairie orator, Abe Lincoln" was on his way to Providence to address an audience. As with his Cooper Union performance, Lincoln was received as a thrilling spectacle at each stop.⁴

Even before he secured the Republican nomination for president in 1860, and despite a rigid cultural binary that divided men as gentleman and non-gentleman, northeastern audiences

¹ "Sensation Literature," *Literary Budget* 1 (November, 1861): 15.

² Lincoln spent time in Philadelphia for the Whig National Convention and passed through New York City in the fall of 1848, though few records remain from these visits. Jacobs, "Abraham Lincoln on the New Haven and the Boston and Albany," 42.

³ Edwin L. Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1929), 35

⁴ "Providence, R.I." *New York Times* February 28, 1860

were provoked by Lincoln's body and general air of being out of place at first blush. His hackneyed western appearance and mannerisms smacked of a dearth of political tradition.⁵ Lincoln, every inch roundly western, aroused an intrigue akin to the response to a popular exhibit at Barnum's American Museum evoked among patrons during his two speaking tours to the urban northeast in 1848 and 1860. Urban antebellum exhibits attracted patrons with perplexing and, often, unnerving sights. Unusual specimens placed on exhibit incited the masses to pay an entry cost to quench their curiosity and wonder. Similarly, urban audiences approached Lincoln from this same cast of mind. George Haven Putnam, an early-nineteenth century historian, among other things, succinctly captured how Lincoln clashed with perceptions of the eastern gentleman. He wrote that the uncouth aura radiating from him, "made a picture which did not fit in with New York's conception of a finished statesman."⁶ It was precisely that Lincoln juxtaposed the image of a finished statesman that made him an immediately novelty. Northeast observers gauged Lincoln—a coarse frontiersman in their mind—from a position of superiority, allowing themselves to be entertained while assessing him with a critical eye. In this chapter I argue that antebellum urban northeastern viewers encountered Lincoln's body, gesticulations, and dress as visually rousing exhibits. A burgeoning consumer imaginary enabled Lincoln, as an

⁵ Western men, in turn, thought the smug conceit among polished gentlemen exposed their corruption. As Thomas J. Malone writes, "people of the West looked with suspicion on fine clothes; and canny politicians." Malone, "Clothes that Lincoln Wore," *Commonweal* February 6, 1929: 395. Malone's "Clothes that Lincoln Wore," was also published in: *The Milwaukee Journal*, February 12, 1929; Benjamin Barondess, *Lincoln's Cooper Institute Speech* (New York: The Civil War Round Table of New York, 1954), 77; Johnson, *Illinois in the Fifties*, 169; Francis Brown, *The Every-day Life of Abraham Lincoln: A Biography from an Entirely New Standpoint, with Fresh and Invaluable Material* (New York: N. D. Thompson Publishing Company, 1887), 313; George Haven Putnam, *Abraham Lincoln: The People's Leader in the Struggle for National Existence* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1909), 43-44.

⁶ George Haven Putnam, *Abraham Lincoln: The People's Leader in the Struggle for National Existence* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1910), 45-46; Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 48,49.

ostensibly western man, to entertain audience in the context of an exhibit while simultaneously clashing with the gentleman statesman ideal.

Both of Lincoln's invitations to speak in Massachusetts and New York City were extended, in part, to offer urban northeastern audiences the rare opportunity to catch a glimpse of a thoroughly western politician. As Harold Holzer writes about his invitation to speech in New York City, "Lincoln was an 'entire stranger' to the East."⁷ More than a political rally, Lincoln's presence on these stages was viewed in the same light as theatrical entertainment or a hair-raising exhibit. For William Schouler, the editor of the *Boston Atlas*, a widely circulated Whig newspaper, Lincoln was the attraction the New England Whig cause needed in the fall of 1848. Schouler's invitation to Lincoln was extended on the heels of a Whig initiative to revive dwindling enthusiasm and draw large crowds to party rallies for Zachary Taylor's presidential campaign in Massachusetts.⁸ Likely only seeing Lincoln for the first time a year earlier at the Whig National Convention in Philadelphia, Schouler saw an opportunity to attract crowds by putting Lincoln's outlandish charisma on display.⁹ Nathaniel Wheeler Coffin and Philip Greely, secretaries of the Whig State Central Committee, circulated a letter among Massachusetts Whig leaders and "influential gentlemen," of whom Schouler was one, outlining a plan to bolster the party in September of 1848. Coffin and Greely warned that if the organization of local Whig committees in "every town and school district" is not reinvigorated they will find their "banner trailing in the dust." The letter charged local party leaders to "promote" the cause with "greater

⁷ Harold Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union: The Speech That Made Abraham Lincoln President* (Simon & Schuster: 2004), 53.

⁸ Despite the apparent lack of Whig excitement, it was all but certain that the Whig candidate Zachary Taylor would win the presidency. In Whig circles it was said that "all h—ll cant stop his election." Even Schouler himself wrote to a friend in May that "victory is sure with him [Taylor]." William Schouler to "Colonel" in Roxbury May 1848, Schouler Papers, MHS.

⁹ Although two other men, Junius Hall and William Hudson, were instrumental in orchestrating Lincoln's Massachusetts speaking tour, Schouler coordinated most of Lincoln's boarding and speaking arrangements.

zeal and activity” in the form of public meetings and by enlisting “speakers or lecturers” in order to generate “zeal and interest on the part of those who are true Whigs.”¹⁰ Further motivating Massachusetts Whigs were jeers from Democratic opponents that their political brand had run dull, or, as one Democratic editor put it, was “old fashioned and out of date.”¹¹ Putting Lincoln, an eye-catching stump speaker, on display promised to entertain the crowds in a fervently Whig region that had grown stale with tradition.¹²

Just like the geographical barriers between the regions East and West, impressions of manhood between the two regions were sharp. Lincoln’s performance only confirmed in the minds of the New Yorkers present that he represented western manhood writ large. A prairie orator, to the cosmopolitan intelligentsia, was at best suspicious, yet his uniqueness piqued the interest of the broader public. Newspaper announcements for Lincoln’s speeches in the urban northeast made of his success in the frontier to attract audiences. On Lincoln’s ten-day speaking tour through Massachusetts in 1848 the *Boston Evening Traveler* ran a notice praising Lincoln as the “Champion of the West” and the *Exeter News-Letter* similarly hailed him as the “Champion of the North West.” Advertisements for political gatherings resembled those for exhibits debuts or theater performances. The *Daily Courant Hartford* followed a notice for the little-known Lincoln to speak in Hartford by adding, “There will be great curiosity to see and hear him, and a

¹⁰ Circular Letter from the Secretaries of the Whig State Central Committee to Whig Members and influential gentlemen Boston, September 1848, Massachusetts Historical Society. Boston, Massachusetts (hereafter MHS).

¹¹ Lincoln scholar Louis Warren posits that Lincoln and Schouler interacted at the Whig National Convention in Philadelphia crafted editorials to praise Lincoln’s political acumen and likely overstated his reception to bolster his image during his tour. Louis A. Warren, “Lincoln in Boston,” no. 667, *Lincoln Lore* (January 12, 1942): 1-2; “Taylor State Convention-Old Hunkerism in its Glory,” *Simi-Weekly Republican*, September 15, 1848; “Meeting at Worcester,” *Boston Courier*, September 14, 1848; Jordan Fiore, *Abraham Lincoln Visits The Old Colony* (Taunton, Massachusetts: The Old Colony Historical Society, 1978), 8; Lincoln’s visit is detailed in: Basler ed., *The Collected Works*, II, 1-5.

¹² Despite the apparent lack of Whig excitement, it was all but certain that the Whig candidate—Zachary Taylor—would win the presidency. In Whig circles it was said that “all h—ll cant stop his election.” Even Schouler himself wrote to a friend in May that “victory is sure with him [Taylor].” William Schouler to “Colonel” in Roxbury May 1848, William Schouler Papers, MHS.

rousing turn out is inevitable” on September 10, 1848.¹³ Almost twelve years later when Lincoln spoke in New York and throughout New England he was greeted with the same excitement to behold a tall Illinois politician on stage who elevated his station in life through toil.

Off stage, among refined society, Lincoln drew reproach for his ignorance of propriety in appearance and conduct. The well-to-do who claimed respectability sought to distance themselves from Lincoln, despite finding the curious Illinoisan fascinating. He wore his on his sleeve, which was far beneath the standards of respectable decorum and taste. Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace point out that if a man aspired reception in elite social circles, “the best way to do so was by *acting* in a refined manner—displaying graceful manners, polished conversation, a self-assured bearing, a genteel sensibility.” Appearing much the opposite stunned his hosts and many audiences. The poor condition of a man’s clothes was not merely an indicator of absentmindedness; it was, in fact, a tacit mark of character. In putting their reaction into words audiences frequently used ‘awkward’ and ‘ungainly’ to describe Lincoln’s cumbersome gait and graceless mechanics. As George Haven Putnam noted about eastern audiences reacting to Lincoln appearance at Cooper Union, “The first impression of the man from the West did nothing to contradict the expectation of something weird, rough, and uncultivated. The long, ungainly figure...the large feet and the clumsy hands of which, at the outset at least, the speaker seemed to be unduly conscious.”¹⁴ Once Lincoln stepped out of public view and into the gentries’ private parlors Lincoln’s height put him at an immediate

¹³ Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 81, 104.

¹⁴ Dell Upton also affirms the importance of visually communicating civility. Concerning the increasingly importance of symbols in antebellum New York City, Upton writes, “The respectable and those who aspired to respectability adopted new codes of refinement that identified them to one another visually.” Dell Upton, “Inventing the Metropolis: Civilization and Urbanity in Antebellum New York” in Catherine Hoover Voorsanger and John K. Howat, eds., *Art and the Empire City: New York 1825-1861* (New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2000), 27; Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 730; George Haven Putnam observations of Lincoln in: Charles Beneulyn Johnson, *Illinois in the Fifties; Or A Decade of Development* (Champaign, Ill: Flanigan-Pearson, 1918), 170.

disadvantage for gaining respect. On stage or along the city street, Lincoln's unrestrained, and seemingly unconscious, swinging of his legs and arms arrested attention by tapping into consumer imaginary, while also smacking of coarseness. One New York observer concluded that "his manner exceedingly awkward."¹⁵ The *New York Herald*, among others, detected that Lincoln was "rather unsteady on his feet" contributed to Lincoln's awkwardness before the New York audience at Cooper Union.¹⁶ The sight of Lincoln awkwardly managing his long limbs struck sophisticated audiences as strange and—not altogether pleasing to the eye—drew an intrigued condescension.

More than just a glib expression, the word awkward possessed a harsh meaning in antebellum American. According to Hensleigh Wedgwood's *A Dictionary of English Etymology* (1859), the word applied to a person who exhibited "perverse," "impolite manners," and "clumsy," or "deviant" behavior. One South Carolina newspaper found the bearing of a person when walking of such importance that the editor felt the need to address the subject directly. Since the appearance of a person was a lens into their character, individuals out of necessity according to the editor, should study their gaits. The movement of the limbs is a window into "the heart and mind." The editorial concludes with warning about people who, "Move along in an awkward, ungainly gait, that would be extremely laughable imitated by a clown."¹⁷ The use

¹⁵ "Letter from New York," *The Burlington Free Press*, March 3, 1860.

¹⁶ The initial impression of Lincoln as an awkward man is apparent in Gustave Koerner's recollection of him. Koerner recorded in his journal, "It must be said that his appearance was not very prepossessing. His exceedingly tall and very angular form made his movements rather awkward." Thomas J. McCormick ed., *Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896* Vol. 1 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: The Torch Press, 1909), 443-444; Hy B. Turner, *When Giants Ruled: The Story of Park Row* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 62.

¹⁷ Cecil B. Hartley informed impressionable men that "Awkwardness can proceed but from two causes; either from not having kept good company, or from not having attended to it. In good company do you take care to observe their ways and manners, and to form your own upon them. Attention is absolutely necessary for this, as, indeed, it is for everything else; and a man without attention is not fit to live in the world." Hensleigh Wedgwood, *A Dictionary of English Etymology* (London: Paternoster Row, 1859), 83-84; Charles Richardson, *A New Dictionary of the English Language* (London: William Pickering, 1844), 48; Joseph E. Worcester, *A Pronouncing, Explanatory, and Synonymous Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston: Hickling, Swan, and Brown, 1855), 71; "Walking," *The Independent Press* [Abbeville South Carolina], June 29, 1860; Brown, *The Every-day Life of*

of ungainly or awkward in popular print—whether newspapers or books—signaled to readers that the man these adjectives applied to was of the lowest sort.

Newspapers circulated the popular conception of an awkward person. The *Evansville Daily Journal* published an article about Irish policemen during a White House New Year’s reception, an occasion of pageantry for prestigious politicians and wealthy gentry. Everyone, according to the author, took offense that Irish men with “repulsive Hibernian countenances” were present. “Each one” the author fumed, “wore that ungainly, awkward air, common to an exalted hod-carrier in good clothes.” Being in their vicinity, the author exclaimed, “was absolutely humiliating.” Similarly, when the words “ungainly” and “awkward” were applied to Lincoln they were used to marginalize him along with descriptions of his unkempt appearance and pedigree as a manual labor. Fabric or cut of clothing made little difference if observers could immediately identify that the body control and manners of the wearer were “awkward” and “ungainly.” Both descriptors clearly demarcated Lincoln as socially aberrant in comparison to refined Boston or New York City gentlemen.¹⁸

Lincoln’s own self-consciousness furthered his awkward air among specimens of gentlemanly decorum. Lincoln’s quietness and embarrassment derived from how precisely he knew gentlemen were grading him. Robert C. McCormick, the main organizer of Lincoln’s Cooper Union speech, found his first impression appalling upon his arrival to the city on February 25, 1860. “He received us cordially,” McCormick recalled, “apologizing for the awkward and uncomfortable appearance he made in his new suit.” McCormick continued, “His

Abraham Lincoln, 78-79. Cecil B. Hartley, *The Gentleman's Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness; being a Complete Guide for a Gentleman's Conduct in All His Relations towards Society* (Boston: G. W. Cottrell, 1860), 54.

¹⁸ Isabella Bird observed that men in Boston had a “respectable appearance.” Isabella Bird, *The Englishwoman in America* (London: John Murray, 1856), 390-393; “The Irish at the White House,” *The Evansville Daily Journal*, January 8, 1856.

form and manner were indeed very odd, and we thought him the most unprepossessing public man we had ever met.”¹⁹ Henry Bowen, the editor for the *New York Independent*, had a visceral response to Lincoln. The day after Lincoln arrived in the city Bowen met Lincoln at his office on Broadway. Bowen was instantly struck by how he radiated a sense of uneasiness, which was accentuated with his rough manners and wrinkled suit. “In the first view of him,” he remarked, “there came to me the disheartening and appalling thought of the great throng which I had been so instrumental in inducing to come.” As one of the organizers of Lincoln’s speech, Bowen feared he would receive blame for inviting the distasteful rail-splitter to the city.²⁰ Fellow organizer, James A. Briggs, undoubtedly shared the same poor impression. Briggs and his Whig colleague Gideon Welles occasionally discussed the appearance of young Whigs in their correspondence during late 1840s. For them good character and boldness was associated with attention to their image and a controlled bearing among other gentlemen and ladies.²¹ The sight of a frontier politician exuding the coarse features of the West arrested any wondering eye scanning the cityscape.²²

The speech organizers who met Lincoln upon his arrival in the urban northeast gave scathing appraisals of his initial appearance. In 1848, most genteel, northeastern men aligned with the Whig cause and evaluated Lincoln based upon their scrupulous standards. As Daniel Walker Howe points out, “The political culture of the coastal and urban areas was more elitist” in antebellum America. Rigid and exclusive, the genteel tradition in the northeast was at odds

¹⁹ A letter by McCormick concerning his first meeting with Lincoln in New York City on April 29, 1860 was published under: “Abraham Lincoln’s Visit to New York in 1860,” *Littell’s Living Age* (May 20, 1865), 327-333; Helen Nicolay, *Personal Traits of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Century Company, 1913), 226.

²⁰ Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), 230; Henry Bowman quoted in: Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union*, 75.

²¹ Gideon Welles would meet Lincoln when he visited Hartford almost a week later, March 5, 1860. Gideon Welles to James A. Briggs from “Washington City” April 11, 1848; Gideon Welles to James A. Briggs, August 24, 1846. James A. Briggs Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland, Ohio.

²² Holzer, *Lincoln at Cooper Union*, 71.

with the broad male support necessary for political relevancy in antebellum America, which produced inherent tensions. Before Lincoln's first appearance at the Whig Convention at Worcester City Hall in 1848, he and his Whig colleagues attended a dinner at Levi Lincoln's mansion. Levi, a man described as "a fine specimen of a gentleman of the old school," relished throwing dinner parties with fine dining ware and fine wine. Lincoln, the lone western politician in attendance, was noticeably uncomfortable handling the elegant dishware and following expected etiquette. Later, as president, Lincoln confessed that the meal that evening was "by far the finest I ever saw in my life." What was left etched in Lincoln's mind was the painful awareness that he did not belong among the prominent guests. Future *Atlas* newspaper editor, Charles T. Congdon, observed these Massachusetts Whigs leaders, "claimed all the decency, refinement, wealth, and cultivation of the state, if not of the United States."²³ This was apparent to one of the guests that evening, Joseph Gardner, who remembered that Lincoln "kept very silent" that evening, a statement any friend of Lincoln's from Illinois would have attested was uncharacteristic. A longtime friend of Lincoln from Illinois, Joseph Gillespie, wrote that the future president "had a realizing sense that he was generally set down by city snobs as a country Jake." Gillespie continued, "He [Lincoln] never felt his own utter unworthiness so much as when in the presence of a hotel clerk or waiter."²⁴

How Lincoln broke from the ideal image of refined manhood in the urban northeast may have been most evident at Matthew Brady's studio on Broadway just one day before he spoke at Cooper Union. As it happened, Lincoln arrived at Brady's studio while George Bancroft, an

²³ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace estimate that 75 to 90 percent of merchants, industrialist, and bankers active in party politics in New York City were Whigs. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 681; Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 33; Charles T. Congdon, *Reminiscences of a Journalist* (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1880), 60-61.

²⁴ Cindy R. Lobel, "'Out to Eat': The Emergence and Evolution of the Restaurant in Nineteenth-Century New York City," *Winterthur Portfolio* 44 no. 2/3 (Summer/Autumn 2010), 193-220; Joseph Gillespie Papers. ALPL, Springfield, Illinois.

archetypical gentleman, was getting his photograph taken on February 27, 1860. The dichotomy between the two men as they exchanged pleasantries was glaring. Bancroft, who began his extensive political career under Martin Van Buren's presidency and became a well-recognized scholar by 1860, contrasted perfectly with the categorically western Lincoln. Standing together, the sight of the two men caught the eye of McCormick. "The contrast in the appearance of the men was most striking," he detected, "the one [Bancroft] courtly and precise in his every word and gesture, with the air of a trans-Atlantic statesman; the other [Lincoln] bluff and awkward, his every utterance an apology for his ignorance of metropolitan manners and customs."²⁵ During the shoot Brady attended to Lincoln's outfit and, after the photograph was developed, a retouch artist softened some of Lincoln's harsh facial features. Brady later said that Lincoln's size, graceless manner, and slovenly dress gave him "great trouble" presenting the former rail-splitter in an elegant light.²⁶

Upon spending time with the Illinoisan, politicians and gentlemen who shared party affiliation grew strong feelings of disparagement towards the way he presented himself. Later in his life George Monroe reflected on how fortunate he was to oversee the travel of the future sixteenth-president, but in that moment Lincoln underwhelmed and irritated him. Schouler reached out to George Monroe to host the Illinois congressman's visit to Dedham and then escort him from Dedham to Cambridge on September 20, 1848. In demeanor Lincoln was painfully ill-at-ease in Monroe's company. Monroe was struck by how "out of sympathy with his surroundings" the Illinoisan was. This became apparent when Monroe accompanied Lincoln on the train ride from Dedham to Cambridge. On the train Lincoln did what he had done many

²⁵ McCormick, *Littell's Living Age*, 329-330.

²⁶ George Sullivan, *Picturing Lincoln: Famous Photographs that Popularized the President* (New York: Clarion, 2000), 28-33; Roy Meredith, *Mr. Lincoln's Camera Man, Mathew B. Brady* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1946), 57-62.

times before while traveling in Illinois, shedding his coat and sat in his white button up shirt. Monroe felt embarrassed by this undress, the exact act was labeled a “slovenly habit” by the *Cambridge Chronicle* earlier that same year.²⁷ Upon arriving in Dedham Monroe invited him to *soirée* to mingle with a few refined Dedham gentlemen before his speech. Here, to Monroe’s bewilderment, Lincoln grew more uncomfortable, further countering the conception of a politicians’ appearance. Monroe, and the other Whigs who met Lincoln that night, were concerned that Dedham onlookers would find his social bearing disagreeable. Monroe recounted with incredulity that midway through his speech, “he loosened his necktie, and soon after he took it off altogether.” This was a breach of refine decorum that northeasterners would have recognized. According to Cecil B. Hartley’s 1860 *Gentleman’s Book of Etiquette*, a man should “Never hitch up your coat-sleeves or wristbands” because it is “a sign of very bad breeding.”²⁸ Yet this violation did not diminish Lincoln’s reception, rather it made him more intriguing.

Newspaper reports and notices for Lincoln’s speeches cued in their readership to his lack of respectability. Not only was his name in print always followed by the information, “from Illinois,” but also with the title “Hon.” preceded his name. While “Hon.” was a title of respect, it simultaneously signaled Lincoln’s distinctiveness. Titles made clear demarcations in social position, thereby systematizing deference. John Williams’ *Readable Dictionary* (1860) defined the title of esquire as, “Heads of ancient families are considered esquires by prescription; and hence, has originated the use of the word in the present day.” Honorable is defined as a title of “respect,” with no mention of lineage claims.²⁹ The 1847 article, “Self-made Men,” in the

²⁷ Mary Alexina Smith, “My Fortune’s Made,” *Cambridge Chronicle*, February 24, 1848.

²⁸ Cecil B. Hartley, *The Gentleman's Book of Etiquette, and Manual of Politeness; being a Complete Guide for a Gentleman's Conduct in All His Relations towards Society* (Boston: G. W. Cottrell, 1860), 54.

²⁹ John Williams, *The Readable Dictionary, or Topical and Synonymic Lexicon* (Columbus: Follett, 1860), 172, 318.

Knickerbocker Magazine referred to these ambitious men as “Hon.”—including the author—never as “Esq.”³⁰

Jackson Turner Main’s research affirms that in New England titles of honorable and gentleman could be gained by aspiring young men with a laboring father, while esquire—the more prestigious label—was almost unattainable because of the requirement of proper lineage.³¹ The *New England Historical and Genealogical Register of 1856* extensive report of regional men illustrates Main’s thesis. Every successful man identified as “self-made” was never followed by “Esq.” regardless of political post or profession occupation. New England specifically, and the northeast generally, was the last region in the country to keep the title of esquire before it faded from use by the late nineteenth-century.³² By 1848, the title evolved into a broader meaning of respect, especially for lawyers; yet the traditionally refined New England region maintained the social distinction between honorable and esquire. Even though Lincoln’s pedigree as a lawyer and congressman warranted the title “Esq.” according to the traditional criteria, his underwhelming lineage and lack of refinement inhibited him from receiving it. The epithet “from Illinois” without following Lincoln’s name with “Esq.” cunningly signaled to easterners that Lincoln was unequivocally a western man and lacked the taste of an urbane statesman.³³

³⁰ Samuel G. Drake ed., *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register*; Hon. Zadock Pratt, "Editor's Table: Self-Made Men," *Knickerbocker Magazine* 29 (1847): 80-84.

³¹ Jackson Turner Main, *The Social Structure of Revolutionary America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1965), 217, 218-19, 231-32.

³² Edward A. Freeman, "Some Points in American Speech and Customs," from *Longman's Magazine* republished in: *Good Literature: A Literary Eclectic Weekly*, *New York City* 4 no. 106 (January 20, 1883).

³³ John Russel Bartlett references Webster’s *Dictionary* and *The New York Commercial Advertiser* to affirm the idea that the title “Esq.” had grown nearly universal as, “merely an expression of respect.” John Russel Bartlett, *Dictionary of Americanism* (New-York: Bartlett and Welford, 1848), 129; Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New Haven: Hamlen, 1841), 836; Thomas Edlyne Tomlins, *The Law-Dictionary, Explaining the Rise Progress and Present State of the British Law* (London: Clark and Longman), 1: Tomlins explains, “Esquires and gentlemen are confounded together by Sir Edward Coke. He there observes that every esquire is a gentleman, and a gentleman is defined to be one *qui arma gerit*, who bears coat of armour; the grant of

The notion that etiquette, or the lack of it, revealed men’s interior character was embedded in the cultural fabric of society. During his congressional service Francis Brown described Lincoln’s entire external appearance—coat, shirt, pants, hair—as “decidedly shabby.” Brown reasoned that most people would have been “rather shy of being seen in his company, from the awkward and unseemly appearance he presented” in Washington D.C.³⁴ This was evident in newspaper editorial, “Portraits for the People. The Raw Western Member” published in *The National Era* of Washington D.C. on February 18, 1847. The article uncannily described Lincoln-esque bumpkin congressman among the nation’s most talented statesmen. With inflated prose the author, James A. Houston, evaluated this western congressman with scathing precision. Houston professed that this type of man addressed congressional audiences in such an uncouth manner that he rolls up his coat sleeves—sleeves that are “emphatically” too small, slackens his “neck cloth,” and keeps one hand in his pocket. His vocabulary reveals that he is not capable of more than “balderdash,” since he merely blabbers in the “language of commonsense.” The “marvel” of this man is his shameless “everlasting stream of talk.” Yet, notwithstanding his “rather *outré*” table manners, outside of his political duties, Houston admitted he proved a “highly entertaining animal.” Houston assured readers that this westerner’s “coarseness, conceit, and ignorance” would soon enough be swallowed up by “moral progress,” with “high refinement” and “Christian civilization” conquering congressman’s baseness.³⁵

which adds gentility to a man’s family.” *Political Dictionary Forming a Work of Universal Reference* (London: Charles Knight and Co, 1845), 847; *The Atlas*, September 19, 1860.

³⁴ Francis Brown, *The Every-day Life of Abraham Lincoln: A Biography from an Entirely New Standpoint, with Fresh and Invaluable Material* (N. D. Thompson Publishing Company, 1887), 197; Samuel Rodman’s diary entry for September 15, 1848 is found in Zepharriah Pease, ed., *The Diary of Samuel Rodman: A New Bedford Chronicle of Thirty-Seven Years: 1821–1859* (New Bedford: Reynolds Printing Co., 1927), 287; Fiore, *Abraham Lincoln Visits The Old Colony*, 3; Thomas, ed., *Lincoln, 1847-1853*, 93.

³⁵ James A. Houston wrote under the pseudonym “John Smith the Younger.” James A. Houston, “Portraits for the People. The Raw Western Member,” *The National Era*, February 18, 1847.

Houston followed this piece with another portrait of a congressman, “The Chivalric Southern Member.” Originally published in the *National Era*, the article was then republished on the front page of the *Cambridge Chronicle* under the “Popular Sections.” Houston contrasted the Chesterfield model of “dress, manners and general air” with the rusticities of the western congressman. While the southern member presides in the House of Representative he frequently listens in “undisguised contempt to the empty declamation of the Western Boanerges.” Houston directly places the western member and the southern one in stark contrast. The southern politician’s style of oratory sharply departs from backwoods stumping; “His elocution discovers careful cultivation, and his gestures are easy and appropriate.” The only character flaw Houston finds with the gentleman is his sectional belief in slavery.³⁶ By embodying western sensibilities, Lincoln emphatically contrasted with gentlemanly qualities of southerners. Significantly, Houston appreciation of the southern gentlemen was part of a larger trend by urban elites in the North. Along the Atlantic seaboard southern gentlemen, fastidiously trained in the art of gentility, were held in high regard. Fictional and travelers accounts of southern society spread the notion of their scrupulous civility, elegant leisure, and claims to honor in the antebellum northeast. This fondness for southern gentility among urban northern society makes more sense when one recognizes both region’s shared indebtedness to English and French codes of manliness.³⁷

³⁶ James A. Houston, “Portraits for the People. The Raw Western Member.” *Cambridge Chronicle* reprinted from the *National Era*, February 23, 1847; James A. Houston, “The Chivalric Southern Member” republished from the *National Era* under “Popular Sections” in the *Cambridge Chronicle* on April 15, 1847.

³⁷ As Ritchie D. Watson affirms, “gentlemen, like their English counterparts, sought to attain qualities of fortitude, temperance, prudence, justice, liberality and courtesy.” Watson D. Ritchie, “Gentleman,” *The Companion to Southern Literature: Themes, Genres, Places, People*, eds. Joseph Flora M. and Lucinda Mackethan (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001) 292-293; John Mayfield, *Counterfeit Gentlemen: Manhood and Humor in the Old South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2009); John Pendleton Kennedy, *Swallow Barn; or, A Sojourn in The Old Dominion* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1860); Daniel R. Hundley, *Social Relations in Our Southern States* (New York: Henry B. Price 1860); Emmeline Gros, “The Southern Gentleman and the Idea of

Prior to traveling east Lincoln was not unaccustomed to being disparaged based upon the impression he initially made. Pockets of refined society, after all, were sprinkled west of the Allegheny mountains, and Lincoln often encountered them. These encounters resulted in genteelly trained eyes scrutinizing Lincoln's incivility. One of the first experiences Lincoln had of contempt for his appearance occurred in 1837. John Stuart, Lincoln's law partner at the time, sent him to represent John W. Baddeley. Baddeley, a gentleman born and bred in England, had recently arrived in the small town of Buckles Grove, Illinois. Lincoln's immediately struck Baddeley as a morally corrupt buffoon. According to Hill, Baddeley thought Lincoln gave the impression "of a rustic on his first visit to the circus." Baddeley's disparagement of Lincoln turned into a feeling of being disrespected that a coarse backwoodsman intended to represent him. He immediately discarded Lincoln and found another attorney.³⁸ Years later, during Lincoln's publicized debates with Douglas two native Germans editors recorded their harsh impression of the former rail-splitter. Henry Villard, raised in Bavaria before immigrating to the northwest in 1853, at the age of eighteen, worked for newspapers in Ohio and Illinois before finding journalism work after 1858 for the *New York Herald*, *New York Times*, and *New York Tribune*. With a keen grasp of the cultural difference between the northeast and northwest, the Bavarian native was puzzled by Lincoln's un-brushed hair, poor attire, and clumsy body movement during his coverage of the Lincoln-Douglas debates.³⁹ "It seemed to me," he recalled many years later, "incomprehensible and outrageous that the uncouth, common Illinois

Masculinity: Figures and Aspects of the Southern Beau in the Literary Tradition of the American South," (PhD. Dissertation, Georgia State University, 2010).

³⁸ Frederick Trevor Hill, *Lincoln, the Lawyer* (New York: The Century Co., 1906), 80; Henry C. Whitney, *Life on the Circuit with Lincoln* (Boston: Estes and Lauriat, 1892), 34.

³⁹ Larry D. Mansch, *Abraham Lincoln, President-Elect: The Four Critical Months from Election to Inauguration* (Jefferson, North Carolina: MacFarland, 2005), 82.

politician... should carry the day over the eminent and tried statesman [Douglas].”⁴⁰ A similar assessment of Lincoln’s oddity was made by another native German journalist, Carl Schurz, before Lincoln’s debate with Douglas in Quincy, Illinois, on October 13, 1858. In front of approximately 10,000 spectators, Lincoln, Schurz observed, wore “a rusty black dress coat with sleeves that should have been longer” and pants that “permitted a very full view of his large feet.”⁴¹ Schurz further commented that although familiar with the northeastern politicians he had seen, “none whose looks seemed quite so uncouth, not to say grotesque, as Lincoln’s.”⁴² Lincoln made such a harsh initial impression on refined society that Lincoln’s friend and biographer, William Herndon, wrote, “[e]verything seemed to be against him” from the start of the Douglas debates.⁴³

The urban eye in late antebellum America was especially adept at locating and pondering the unusual presence of Lincoln’s western manhood in urban space, regardless of whether it occurred on the stage or the street corner. New York City and Boston, the mise-en-scène of spectator entertainment, steeped pedestrians in magnetizing sights. As Dana Brand puts it, the tantalizing images of people and stores along Broadway led “seamlessly into the similarly various and odd spectacle of Barnum’s museum.” City entertainment, particularly boxing and the theater, helped prime onlookers for Lincoln’s presence. He was received not as a political or social equal to genteel statesmen, but all found him entertaining, albeit cloddish. Audiences in these cities expected burlesques, not dignified speeches. And, in turn, the general populace readily consumed the sight of the former rail-splitter as a source of entertainment in 1848 and

⁴⁰ Henry Villard, *Memoirs of Henry Villard, Journalist and Financier, 1835-1900* (New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), I: 137-138.

⁴¹ William C. Harris, *Lincoln’s Rise to the Presidency* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 138.

⁴² Carl Schurz, *The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz*, Vol. 3 (New York: McClure, 1908), I: 90-91.

⁴³ William Herndon wrote, “He [Lincoln] was careless of his dress, and his clothes, instead of fitting neatly as did the garments on Douglas...hung loosely on his giant frame.” Herndon, *Herndon’s Lincoln*, 248.

1860. Attendees were thoroughly humored by gaping at the towering western politician. His apparent obliviousness to decorum, peculiar sartorial taste, unwieldiness, coupled with his kinetic appendages on stage created an uncommon, curious scene that arrested attention.

Before Lincoln was introduced, he often sat patiently to the side of the podium facing the crowd as they filtered in to the auditorium during both 1848 and 1860 speaking tours. At Cooper Union roughly fifteen hundred patrons filtered into the auditorium as a diffident Lincoln sat perched. Walking towards their seats attendees gawked at the folded Lincoln facing them. Joseph Hodges Choate, a prominent New York attorney, noticed that as the audience entered they were immediately taken by the sight of the seated Illinoisan. Choate described it as “a vast sea of eager upturned faces greeted him, full of intense curiosity to see what this rude child of the people was like.” Speaking at Exeter, New Hampshire on March 3, 1860, Marshall S. Snow, a student and peer of Lincoln’s son Robert at Phillips Exeter Academy, recalled the appearance of Lincoln planted on the platform. Snow remembered later in life that Robert’s father “sat down in a chair reserved for him, and, after some difficulty, succeeded in arranging his long legs under or about the chair. My eyes were all for Mr. Lincoln.” As Snow studied Lincoln he was taken by his appearance on stage. “His hair was ruffled, his neckwear was all awry, he sat somewhat bent in the chair, and altogether presented a very remarkable, and, to us, disappointing appearance.”⁴⁴ Before he even rose to speak, a sea of studying eyes examined the singular speaker facing them on stage. In response, attendees were overcome by the fascinating yet grotesque image the seated Lincoln made.

Once introduced, spectators studied him as he rose to his feet and approach the podium. His long-limbs spilling out of his travel stained suite only confirmed their assumption that they

⁴⁴ Marshall S. Snow, “Abraham Lincoln: A Personal Reminiscence,” *Washington University Record* 4, no. 5 (March, 1909): 11-14.

were indeed about to watch a hackneyed, country bumpkin. Snow related his impression of the Illinoisan upon being introduced at Exeter in 1860. “Mr. Lincoln was presented to us. He rose slowly, untangled those long legs from their contact with the rounds of the chair, drew himself up to his full height of six feet, four inches, and began his speech.”⁴⁵ The sight of his long, brawny body left an indelible impression on his audiences. Following an address before a Cambridge audience in 1848, a member of the Boston Whig Club reported after seeing Lincoln in the flesh that, “It was altogether a new show for us—a western stump speaker. His form, his height, proved him native to that climate.” The correlation between Lincoln’s western heritage and his height was also recognized by one of his earliest biographers, Isaac N. Arnold. At the age of twenty-one, Arnold left his native New York City to begin his career as an attorney and politician in Chicago. Drawing from his familiarity with the social context of both the northeast and the northwest and his experience in Lincoln’s own professions—law and politics—Arnold had a strong understanding of the social climate circulating around Lincoln. He observed that Lincoln’s appearance in 1849 marked him as “a very tall specimen of that type of long, large-boned men produced in the northern part of the Mississippi valley.” Arnold continued; “He would have been instantly recognized as a western man, and his stature, figure, dress, manner, voice, and accent indicated that he was from the Northwest.”⁴⁶ Studies of adult male height in the nineteenth century confirm that men from western regions were generally taller than northeastern men in 1848. The average northeastern man was around five feet six or seven inches by mid-century, which also corresponded to the average height of black male adults.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Snow, “Abraham Lincoln: A Personal Reminiscence,” 11-14.

⁴⁶ For an analysis of physical appearance and manliness in antebellum politics see: Nicole Etcheson, “Manliness and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1790-1860,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 15, no. 1 (1995): 59-77; Isaac Arnold, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, 1885), 83.

⁴⁷ Economist Scott Alan Carson argues that white males who labored outdoors in turn produced more vitamin D and, as a result, grew taller than men who performed more work in-doors from predominately urban regions. John Murray’s research about male height, collected from Amherst College yearbook, affirms Carson’s

Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne, a French tourist to the northeast, made a similar observation about western men in 1864. While traveling through the North he penned in his journal:

There are, moreover, two distinct types of among the residents of Washington: the Easterners who are much like us Europeans—the most distinguished among them unconsciously copy British ways—and the Westerners who, almost to a man, are six-foot giants, coarse featured, robust in build, and have mops of hair as thick as horses’ manes. The later are more countrified and their manners are less polished, but they have in their favor an originality and a certain aura of sheer power that I find admirable.⁴⁸

Once the initial astonishment at Lincoln’s towering height and gigantic limbs subsided his sartorial taste came into the audiences’ focus. His mis-sized, crumpled clothes immediately stigmatized him as lacking the most rudimentary debonair sensibility. Accustomed to politicians with a gentlemanly air and polish, the audience could sense the former rail-splitter’s insecurity over his slovenly appearance. Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace propound in their meticulous study of nineteenth century New York City that “a gentleman conveyed social superiority through consummate tailoring and impeccable grooming,” an impression confirmed by contemporaries in this city. Charles Cooper Nott Sr., an organizer of Lincoln’s Cooper Union visit, wrote, “His [Lincoln’s] dress that night before a New York audience was the most

findings of the average male height in the northeast around 1848. Murray determines that the average Amherst male student born in the 1830s was nearly five feet seven inches. Interestingly men in France were much shorter on average. Most French men were between five feet two inches and five feet six inches. In France, most men during this period were between five feet two inches and five feet six inches. This is likely why Lincoln, standing six feet four inches, might have had a stronger homosocial bond with taller men. Tarbell writes that Lincoln had an “almost immediate association” with men of similar height, an indicator of their western heritage. Scott Alan Carson, “Demographic, Residential, and Socioeconomic Effects on the Distribution of the Statures of Whites in the Nineteenth-Century U.S.” *Mathematical Population Studies*, 18 no. 17 (2011); John E. Murray, “Standards of the Present for People of the Past: Height, Weight, and Mortality among Men of Amherst College, 1834-1949,” *The Journal of Economic History*, 57, no. 3 (1997): 585-606; Gilles Postel-Vinay and David E. Sahn, “Explaining Stunting in Nineteenth Century France” *Economic History Review*, 63, no. 2 (2010): 315–334; Scott Allan Carson, “Demographic, residential, and socioeconomic effects on the distribution of nineteenth-century African-American stature,” *Journal of Population Economics* 24 (2011):1471–1491; “Taylorism in Chelsea,” *Daily Republican*, September 22, 1848; Fiore, *Abraham Lincoln Visits The Old Colony*, 56.

⁴⁸ Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne, *A Frenchman in Lincoln's America* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1974), II: 341.

unbecoming that a friend's ingenuity could have devised for a tall, gaunt man." Nott further observed, "no man in all New York appeared that night more simple...more conscious of his own defect than Abraham Lincoln."⁴⁹ Helen Nicolay, daughter of Lincoln's Presidential Secretary John Nicolay, affirmed that Lincoln grew self-conscious on his visit, which was undoubtedly sensed by the audience. "The probability" she wrote, "is that he was fully aware of the worst aspect of his personal appearance, and regretted it; and had no notion of its best." Another organizer of Lincoln's to Cooper Union speech, Henry Bowen, recalled that when he first set eyes on Lincoln, "I faced a very tall man wearing a high hat and carrying an old fashioned, comical-looking carpet-bag. My heart went into my boots as I greeted the tall stranger. His clothes were travel-stained."⁵⁰

During the Illinois congressman's first speaking tour of the urban northeast in 1848, he not only appeared in clothes that did not fit properly, but he was prone to shed his jacket soon after speaking—a careless act for a gentleman. According to Snow, Lincoln "dressed in a loose, ill-fitting, black frock coat, with black trousers, ill-fitting and somewhat baggy at the knees."⁵¹ Despite stepping out of the train in New York City wearing a new suit on February 25, 1860, it was severely wrinkled, travel stained, and fit poorly. Satires of western men in eastern print frequently portrayed them habitually wearing crumpled clothes, a characterization Lincoln's Republican hosts would have been aware of. Colleagues and friends noted that Lincoln's coat and shirt never, according to one recollection, "laid nap" while he was on the law circuit or in

⁴⁹ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 456; Rankin, *Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln*, 253; Eveline D. Brainerd, "The Cooper Union Meeting," from: "Cooper Union Scrapbook," The Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection, Indianapolis, Indiana (unpublished).

⁵⁰ Helen Nicolay, *Personal Traits of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Century Company, 1912), 226; Henry C. Bowen, "Recollections of Abraham Lincoln," in William Hayes Ward, ed., *Abraham Lincoln: Tributes from His Associates* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1895), 27.

⁵¹ Snow, "Abraham Lincoln: A Personal Reminiscence," 11-14.

Congress, a peccadillo that Lincoln paid no heed of.⁵² A piece of popular literature, Alice Cary's novel, *Pictures of Country Life* (1859), used wrinkled clothes to help identify frontier men. Cary's upbringing in Cincinnati no doubt sparked the muse for one of her characters, Lemuel, a truly western man. She carefully expounded upon for the sake of identify Lemuel's western heritage was his wrinkled shirt. Lincoln's wrinkled clothing proved particularly noticeable to northeastern audiences. As Richard Stott writes about the mid-nineteenth century North, "It is noteworthy how often improved dress was cited as a critical factor in reformed demeanor. In an era in which appearance was seen as a key to character, clothes helped to make the man. A slovenly appearance symbolized slovenly attitudes."⁵³ Appearing neat, in pressed clothing, was a *de rigueur* indicator of antebellum civility for men.

Even before Lincoln began to speak, his entire image comprised to give the audience an impression of a man, not "prepossessing." Notably women at Cooper Union auditorium were heard giggling once the former-rail splitter took the lectern to speak.⁵⁴ When Lincoln took the stage at Exeter, George G. Fogg, the editor of Concord, New Hampshire's *Independent Democrat*, looked on regretfully. Seeing Lincoln walk to the stage and feeling the weight of the responsibility of inviting him to speak that night, Fogg's "heart sank within him."⁵⁵ Snow also

⁵² Malone, "Clothes that Lincoln Wore," *Commonweal* February 6, 1929: 395.

⁵³ Historian Richard L. Bushman claims that men in urban antebellum settings, "Carried the marks of their social position on their backs." Not only was their social rank on display, but whether they were from provincial states. Alice Cary, *Pictures of Country Life* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1859), 21; Richard Stott, *Jolly Fellows: Male Milieus in Nineteenth-Century America* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 9), 72; Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 73; Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, 4.

⁵⁴ John Walker Harrington wrote that many were "drawn to the hall out of curiosity." Joseph Hodges Choate, "Abraham Lincoln at Cooper Institute," in Nathan William MacChesney, ed. *Abraham Lincoln: The Tribute of a Century, 1809-1909* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Co., 1910), 278; John Walker Harrington, "Lincoln Won Acclaim of City that Knew Little about him by Cooper Union Address in 1860," February 11, 1934, from: Unpublished "Cooper Union Scrapbook," The Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection, Indianapolis, Indiana; "He is far from prepossessing in persona appearance." John B. Clarke, *Daily Mirror and American*, March 7, 1860.

⁵⁵ Franklin Benjamin Sanborn penned that at Exeter, "His [Lincoln's] first appearance was not prepossessing." Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, *Recollections of Seventy Years* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1909): I: 25.

recalled the moments before Lincoln spoke at Exeter: “We sat and stared at Mr. Lincoln. We whispered to each other: ‘Isn’t it too bad Bob’s father is so homely? Don’t you feel sorry for him?’ Our feelings were mingled ones of curious interest in the face of this melancholy looking man and of sympathy with our friend, his son.” The overwhelming impression of Lincoln was one of severe disappointment, yet all eyes were fixed on him.

Soon after Lincoln began to speak, observers were unexpectedly struck by the droll sight of his body in motion. Before a public with a large appetite for consuming marvels, Lincoln’s animated body gratified viewers for up to two-hours, all the while holding their attention. It was not the substance of political oratory that engrossed audiences at least at first, to be sure. The *Bristol County Democrat and National Magazine* recorded how amusing the sight of Lincoln was in 1848. The Democratic editor averred that Lincoln’s Whig political views were “inferior,” but the combination of Lincoln’s “gesticulation,” “management of his voice,” and “comical countenance” that “all conspire to make his hearers laugh at the mere anticipation of the joke before it appeared.”⁵⁶ As one onlooker commented, “He pleases not the artistic eye with his flowing gesticulations or his studied poses. Many a school boy, and dancing master in the country, are his superiors in these accomplishments.”⁵⁷ Never static before northeastern audiences, Lincoln’s pacing body and gesticulating limbs magnetized all eyes present. To dramatize a political point Lincoln would frequently lean forward towards the audience and extend his arms, according to one witness, “as though he would embrace the whole crowd.” Fogg was dumbfounded by how the Illinois won over the crowd. According to his friend, Franklin Benjamin Sanborn, Fogg “could scarcely trust his eyes when he saw this hesitating and almost grotesque speaker commanding the audiences.” Snow echoed the same amazement, “Not

⁵⁶ *Bristol County Democrat*, September 29, 1848.

⁵⁷ “Letter from New York,” *Gazette & Courier* [New York], February 28, 1860.

ten minutes had passed” after Lincoln began addressing the crowd, “before his uncouth appearance was absolutely forgotten by us boys, and, I believe, by all of that large audience.”⁵⁸ The New England correspondent for the *New York Herald* averred, “Abram Lincoln” has “an unusual degree of energy” on March 15, 1860.⁵⁹ Laughter was the common response to Lincoln’s awkward, bizarre presence on stage.

Lincoln’s comical and wiry presence were qualities antithetical with statesmen in the well-schooled region. The *New York Herald* noted, “a peculiar characteristic of his delivery was a remarkable mobility of his [Lincoln’s] features, the frequent contortions of which excited the merriment which his words alone could not well have produced.” The humor, according to the *Herald*, was rooted in the appearance Lincoln made while speaking.⁶⁰ The unconventional way he moved his body on stage caught the attention of sixteen-year-old Samuel Hadley in 1848. Although Hadley was sympathetic to the Democratic Party, he attended a Whig rally in Lowell, Massachusetts because a bulletin for the Illinois politician speaking sparked his curiosity. Hadley was first struck by Lincoln’s height upon walking into Massachusetts hall. Fixated on the “comical way” way Lincoln physically engaging his audience. Hadley, drawn to the energy of Lincoln on stage, noted that the Illinoisan frequently “shook his sides.” Interestingly, Hadley was not of voting age when he heard Lincoln, but he was not alone here, as the “gallery was filled with ladies who joined in the laughter” that night. This full-bodied style of delivery speeches was consistent with how Lincoln stumped in the Prairie State. Joseph Gillespie, Lincoln’s longtime friend from Illinois, overheard a man quip after Lincoln spoke before an

⁵⁸ Snow, “Abraham Lincoln: A Personal Reminiscence,” 11-14; Sanborn, *Recollections of Seventy Years*, 25.

⁵⁹ “The Campaign in Connecticut,” *New York Herald*, March 15, 1860.

⁶⁰ “The Presidential Campaign: Another Republican Orator on the Stump,” *New York Herald*, February 28, 1860.

Illinois audience that he was a “perfect waster of the science of mechanics.” Old Abe’s energy was contagious as he paced across the stage, giving audiences a genuine show of western politicking.

As Hadley noted, women too watched eagerly and laughed in an uninhibited manner at the wigwagging Illinoisan. In both 1848 and 1860, women comprised a large portion of Lincoln’s audience. Richard Butsch points out, mix-gendered audiences were common in the antebellum urban North.⁶¹ John B. Clarke, editor of Manchester, New Hampshire’s *Manchester Mirror*, noted that Lincoln addressed “an immense crowd of ladies and gentlemen.” Gauging the mood that evening, Clarke remarked, “Everybody, it was thought, would at least have the curiosity to see and hear him.” At Exeter, Snow recalled, “The hall, which was a very large and handsome one for a village of only about twenty-five hundred inhabitants, and which would seat eight or nine hundred people, was filled early in the evening. Ladies, as well as gentlemen were there, and both political parties were well represented.” A local Exeter newsletter reported, “Town Hall, which was well filled with an enthusiastic audience, with a sprinkling of ladies.” A *New York Tribune* reported a similar sight at Manchester, New Hampshire. “Men, women, and children,” the correspondent observed, packed Smyth’s Hall to hear “Abe.”⁶² Two women in the audience when Lincoln spoke at Concord, New Hampshire—Delia A. Varney and Claribel Gerrish—were struck by the climatic build-up of Lincoln’s address on March 1, 1860.

⁶¹ Joseph Hodges Choate observed that the audience at Cooper Union comprised, “All the learned and cultured men of the city, editors, clergymen, statesmen, lawyers merchants.” Joseph Hodges Choate, “Abraham Lincoln at Cooper Institute,” in Nathan William MacChesney, ed. *Abraham Lincoln: The Tribute of a Century, 1809-1909* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Company, 1910), 277; *The Ladies’ Repository*, vol. 19, 1859, 113; Lisa J. Shaver, *Beyond the Pulpit: Women’s Rhetorical Roles in the Antebellum Religious Press* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 106-108.

⁶² A large number of women attended Lincoln’s performance at Phoenix Hall. At Exeter, Judge David Cross recalled that more than a 1,000 people were in the auditorium; half were Democrats and many standing because all the seats were filled. “Manchester Correspondence,” “Campaign in New Hampshire,” *Tribune* [New York], March 2, 1860; Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 34, 53-4; Percy C. Eggleston, *Lincoln in New England* (New York: Stewart Warren, 1922), 10; Snow, “Abraham Lincoln: A Personal Reminiscence,” 11-14.

According to both women, once the topic shifted to slavery Lincoln's eyes widened, he drew toward the audience, and as his long arm swooped down he exclaimed that the peculiar institution in the western states would be "squelched." It was exactly because Lincoln was a "curiosity" that audiences, regardless of age or sex flocked to see him.⁶³ And women, like their male counterparts, did not merely attend, they left entertained.

Editors were keen to mention his height to their eastern readership. After a well-attended speech in Chelsea, Massachusetts, Schouler published his observation of Lincoln in the *Atlas* on September 19, 1848. It was "one of the tallest meetings on Saturday night that they have yet held," he penned. The word play on Lincoln's height carried an association with him as western man. As demonstrated earlier, Illinois men were notorious in the urban northeast for their height and Lincoln only furthered this impression. The excitement to see a genuine Illinoisan stumping on stage proved such a compelling show that attendees arrived to view him, many with no political intentions in 1848 and 1860. George Down recounted his astonishment as a ten-year-old with Lincoln's massive form in Manchester, New Hampshire on March 5, 1860. "One night father came home," Down recalled, and told him they were going to "see the tallest man I ever would see." Upon entering the hall, he was instantly shocked by Lincoln's gigantic arms and legs. Once the performance concluded, "Abraham Lincoln grabbed my hand and gave it such a grip," to young Down's astonishment.⁶⁴ The *Hartford Courant* avowed that everyone, "even a

⁶³ A large number of women attended Lincoln's performance at Phoenix Hall. At Exeter, Judge David Cross recalled that more than a 1,000 people were in the auditorium; half were Democrats and many standing because all the seats were filled. 'Manchester Correspondence,' "Campaign in New Hampshire" *Tribune* [New York], March 2, 1860; Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 34, 53-4; Percy C. Eggleston, *Lincoln in New England* (New York: Stewart Warren, 1922), 10.

⁶⁴ The ten-year-old George B.N. Down of Manchester is mentioned in: Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 63; "When Lincoln Spoke at Exeter," *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society*, 1 (Winter, 1957), 418-20.

ten year old boy in that crowd at the City Hall,” left that Lincoln’s performance in Hartford “satisfied.” Spellbound youth regularly approached Lincoln afterward for his autograph.⁶⁵

Some of the spectators who packed into a venue were so gripped by Lincoln that simply seeing and hearing the Illinoisan did not provide enough satisfaction, leaving a few wanting a more corporeal experience. James Babcock, editor for the *New Haven Palladium*, detected with a sense of wonderment how Lincoln brought to life, “the wildest scenes of enthusiasm and excitement that has been in New Haven for years.”⁶⁶ After his March 6, 1860 address in New Haven, throngs approached the bred-in-the-bone western man, clasped his large hand, and asked for his autograph. The acts of shaking Lincoln’s hand and attaining his autograph took the spectator experience to new heights. After some addresses Lincoln stayed up to forty-five minutes shaking hands and signing his name.⁶⁷ These acts become more frequent after Lincoln won the Republican nomination in May of 1860.

After the Cooper Union speech, word that the Illinoisan stump speaker was set to appear in Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut spread rapidly among small communities. Determination to see the Illinoisan illustrates how much he compelled northerners. After the Concord performance *Coos Republican* editor Edward H. Rollins reflected the general sentiment: “It is worth a long walk to see the man.”⁶⁸ One of those who embarked on a long trip to see Lincoln was eighteen-year-old Warren James Prescott. After Prescott’s father got wind that Lincoln was coming to the nearby town of Exeter, an “excitement” seethed between them. Not discouraged that Exeter was a four-mile walk each way on poorly maintained roads, Prescott

⁶⁵ “The speech of Mr. Lincoln at the City Hall,” *Hartford Courant*, March 6, 1860; Eggleston, *Lincoln in New England*, 21; Jacobs, “Abraham Lincoln on the New Haven and the Boston and Albany,” 22.

⁶⁶ *Palladium* [New Haven, Connecticut], March 7, 1860.

⁶⁷ Page writes, “After the speech, the press to shake Lincoln’s hand lasted for three quarters of an hour.” *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 58, 110.

⁶⁸ Edward H. Rollins, the editor of the *Coos Republican*, wrote about Lincoln, “It is worth a long walk to see the man.” *Coos Republican* [Lancaster, New Hampshire], March 6, 1860.

strapped knee-high calf-skinned boots on and marched the long distance with his father and neighbor. Overcoming stretches of deep mud, they arrived with sore feet at the venue. Like most, Prescott was disheartened by the initial impression Lincoln made. Yet, a few minutes into his performance, Prescott was drawn to the “comical” way Lincoln raised his eyebrows while telling stories. Afterward, Prescott summarized the evening as “very droll.”⁶⁹ Prescott’s account emphasized his excitement and the effort required to see Lincoln. The *New Hampshire Statesman* similarly commented on the rain and mud spectators weathered to see Lincoln at Concord, New Hampshire. Attendees, the paper observed, “will never regret the inconveniences experienced in order to be present.”⁷⁰ Such an interest grew to view Lincoln in the flesh that arduous journeys to witness him were not uncommon.

Sometimes, interest in seeing Lincoln was assisted by Republican Party organizers. For example, the Republican Club of Providence managed to arrange transportation for locals who missed seeing Lincoln in their town days prior on February 28, 1860. The *Providence Journal* alerted locals that the Providence & Worcester Railroad provided a special arrangement from Providence to Woonsocket for Lincoln’s address on March 8, at a cost of fifty-cents. One of the earliest historians of Lincoln’s 1860 visit to New England, Percy C. Eggleston, noted that four to five hundred people and a full band traveled from Providence. “On the whole,” Eggleston observed about the trip, “there was no end to the enthusiasm until midnight,” roughly the time the train arrived back at the Providence station.⁷¹ The journey to the venue was not the only obstacle to see Lincoln speak, securing a seat proved difficult. Once spectators arrived the wait

⁶⁹ According to the *Exeter Newsletter* the night Lincoln performed, “Town Hall, which was well filled with an enthusiastic audience, with a sprinkling of ladies.” From Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 104.

⁷⁰ “Great Gathering in Phoenix Hall.” *New Hampshire Statesman* [Concord, New Hampshire], March 3, 1860.

⁷¹ Eggleston, *Lincoln in New England*, 22; “Excursion. Grand Republican Rally at Woonsocket,” *Providence Journal*, March 12, 1860.

outside the auditorium lasted up to two hours and, once inside, many found only standing room available.⁷² The *Evening Press* of Hartford described this scene: “City Hall was full last night, pressed down, shaken together and running over—and hundreds came and went unable to get within hearing distance.”⁷³ The impact of Lincoln’s arrival disrupted routines and injected carnivalesque spirit into communities. At times, conflicting public events suffered for Lincoln’s presence. Lincoln’s visit to Dover on March 2, 1860, coincided with James M. Buckley’s weekly Methodist prayer meeting that regularly drew seventy-five congregants, but that evening only thirteen attended as the rest opted see Lincoln instead.⁷⁴

Even off stage, the urban public set their eye on Lincoln’s form out of curiosity and amusement. An example of this attention occurred during Lincoln’s visit to Henry Ward Beecher’s Church in Brooklyn on Sunday, March 11, 1860. Henry Bowen offered Lincoln a seat on his pew at Beecher’s congregation, a tremendously popular minister in the North at this time, as a gesture of hospitality after the Cooper Union speech. The location of Bowen’s pew was conspicuously near the pulpit, a position reserved for those with both wealth and honor. Once Lincoln entered the church his height and general western air collected the congregants’ notice. George Lincoln, who was in attendance that morning, recounted, “Members of the congregation will never forget the sight of the singular looking man, as he arose at prayer time, and stood overlooking the heads of the entire audience.”⁷⁵ Lincoln was an intriguing sight for a

⁷² Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 77-78.

⁷³ According to *The Evening Press*, “The City Hall was full last night, pressed down, shaken together and running over—and hundreds came and went unable to get within hearing distance.” “Republican Mass Meeting at the City Hall!” *The Evening Press* [Hartford, Connecticut], March 6, 1860; Doyle Dewitt, *Lincoln in Hartford* (Hartford, Connecticut: Civil War Centennial Commission, 1961), 10.

⁷⁴ Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 79.

⁷⁵ George Lincoln to Cephas Brainerd, February 13, 1890; Tenafly, New Jersey. From the Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana; Stephen M. Griswold, *Sixty Years with Plymouth Church* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1907). About Beecher’s congregation see: Richard Wightman Fox, *Trials of Intimacy: Love and Loss in the Beecher Tilton Scandal* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999), 21.

congregation that enjoyed sermons that resembled mass spectacles. Nineteenth-century historian, Norman Fox, noted, “In Beecher’s church the appearance is too much that of a lecture congregation. They appear to have come to be entertained and amused.”⁷⁶ Places of worship in antebellum cities increasingly mirrored the design of theater entertainment. Rather than elevating the minister church pulpits were placed on a level plain with congregants—rendering a setting more akin to the revivals that swept across the northeast rather than the rigidity of the early modern church.⁷⁷ City amusements ranging from Beecher’s church service to Barnum’s museums were well attended with individuals eager to catch an intriguing sight during the late antebellum period.

Notwithstanding the excitement Lincoln created, the politically earnest bristled at the mirth surrounding Lincoln, believing his theatrics detracted from substantive matters. The *Providence Daily Post* reported about one instance of Republican perturbation after Lincoln’s Woonsocket speech, March 9, 1860. The editor observed, “many of [Lincoln’s] Republican friends were disappointed,—first as to his general appearance, and secondly, his lack of ability.” Listing Lincoln’s appearance first and his ability second indicates the cultural cache placed upon manly refinement for a politician in the northeast.⁷⁸ Even his Republican allies sometimes hesitated to welcome the Illinoisan. John B. Clarke, noted that: “Some [of Manchester’s populace] were not so much amused and gratified [with Lincoln],” so much so that some Republican leaders even refused to meet him altogether after his address in Manchester on March 1, 1860. The reason for the snub, according to Eggleston, was “A man indeed that the

⁷⁶ Norman Fox, “A Look at the Congregation,” *The Work in Tremont Temple: A Historical Discourse* (Boston, Union Temple Baptist Church, 1871), 24-25.

⁷⁷ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 30.

⁷⁸ *Providence Daily Post*, March 10, 1860.

sparsely settled West might consider of some prominence but he would not go in the East.”⁷⁹ A similar response occurred at Concord, New Hampshire. Upon taking the stage, a portion of the audience left the hall because his lack of genteel appearance and air that, in the words of historian Edwin Page, “seemed ridiculous or even repellant” to the Concord audience.⁸⁰

Democrats, on the other hand, needled their political rivals that Lincoln’s buffoonish appearance was merely a cheap ploy to entertain audiences. His size, misfit clothes, animated limbs, tallness, and general air enthralled audiences, even Democrats in attendance. Lincoln’s smiling inducing theatrics confirmed to the Democratic *Boston Post* that he was merely “one of the main props of the sectional party.” The Democratic editor of the *Dover Gazette*, Joshua Lane Foster, lampooned Lincoln for never knowing what to do with his hands or feet. “They are always in his way, and he [Lincoln] has not learned how to reduce them to his service,” lamented the editor. Foster ends his piece with a harsh summation of Lincoln’s performance: “[It was] the most arrant mass of sophistries and jugglery which could well be conceived.” After lambasting Lincoln’s behavior and stories, the *Manchester Union Democrat* claimed these vary qualities, “secure him a kind of popularity with that portion of the people of the West.” Democrats simply attributed Lincoln’s political rise to the ineptitude of the philistines residing in Illinois electing an uncivilized stump speaker. Though Democratic editors scoffed at the appearance Lincoln made on stage, their reports affirmed that audiences were rapt by his oddity.⁸¹

Apart from the vulgar overtones with burlesque entertainment, Lincoln still fascinated urban populaces, even members of elite social circles. After his Cooper Union speech on

⁷⁹ When Eggleston invited prominent Republicans to dine with them, “He was met with a poor response and a chilling lack of interest.” Eggleston, *Lincoln in New England*, 20.

⁸⁰ Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 41.

⁸¹ Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 53-4, 80, 85; *Boston Post*, February 28, 1860; *Dover Gazette*, March 10, 1860.

February 26, 1860, followed by a whirlwind speaking tour through New England, Lincoln returned to New York City on March 11, to catch a westbound train.⁸² During this brief layover Lincoln received an invitation to tea with Hiram Barney's family, which included his wife's sister, Julia Aspinwall Tappan. Tappan, the daughter of Lewis Tappan, penned her careful examination of Lincoln's appearance and body motion with childlike verve to her nephew William Barney, a Harvard University student. Her reaction to the lanky former rail-splitter mirrors those who viewed him over his two-weeks speaking tour through Massachusetts in 1848. She wrote to her nephew, "[would Lincoln] not be known for an American in any part of the world? He is six feet four inches in height, and impresses one with awkwardness of manner." Her attention then shifted to his dirty hands and his ability to weave peculiar yarns into the flow of conversation. Ultimately, she concluded her analysis by observing that William's father, Hiram, whose dress and employment placed him among the most esteemed men in New York, "gentleman so uncommonly his [Lincoln's] opposite." The animated prose and the precision of Tappan's assessment in the letter expressed the depth of her intrigue. She continued; "I could not help telling him [Lincoln], as he took leave, that I was very glad to have had the opportunity to see him." Simply hearing him, reading reports, or studying his printed speeches was not gratifying to Tappan. It was beholding the strange, yet amusing, exhibit of Lincoln's western manhood in the flesh that captivated her and northeastern audiences in 1848 and 1860.⁸³

⁸² On February 28, Lincoln left New York City at eight o'clock in the morning bound for Providence. He returned to the city on March 11, after completing a grueling circuit that included: Manchester, New Hampshire; Concord, New Hampshire; Dover, New Hampshire; Exeter, New Hampshire; Hartford, Connecticut; New Haven, Connecticut; Meriden, Connecticut; Woonsocket, Rhode Island, Norwich, Connecticut; and Bridgeport, Connecticut in that order. Warren Jacobs, "Abraham Lincoln on the New Haven and the Boston and Albany," in *Railway and Locomotive Historical Society* no. 33 (February, 1934), 42.

⁸³ A month and a half later Julia Aspinwall Tappan would attend Emerson's lecture on manners that she found "excellent." Julia Aspinwall Tappan to William Barney, New York, March 25, 1860; Julia Aspinwall Tappan to William Barney, New York, May 13, 1860. William Barney Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois (hereafter ALPL); James A. Briggs to S. P. Chase, March 17, 1860, Salmon P. Chase Papers in: *Diary and Correspondence of Salmon P. Chase, American Historical Association, Annual Report, 1902*

The budding practice of gazing upon the intriguing and perplexing in the urban antebellum North, contrasting the long-established culture of refinement directed viewers to disparage primitive and vulgar sights, grew out of a consumer imaginary. Lincoln's western manhood under the eyes of northeastern audiences, a region accustomed to gentlemanly decorum and statesmen that espoused European cultivation, entertained the masses yet butted against the image of a gentleman. Fastidious eyes were ceaselessly evaluating a man's genteel standing in urban settings. Edgar Allan Poe captured the careful evaluation urbanite men endured in his 1840 short story, "The Man of the Crowd." Perched at a London coffee house, the narrator of Poe's story scours each man passing by "with minute interest the innumerable varieties of figure, dress, air, gait, visage, and expression of countenance." Drawn from a genteel tradition that first emerged from the Early Modern European courts, a discerning taste that reflected a careful eye wielded cultural freight. As Norbert Elias relates, "courts rationality is generated by the compulsion of the elite social mesh; by it people and prestige are made calculable as instruments of power." Cardinal virtues of gentility included: internalized self-restraint, Smoothness, delicacy, and a rigid adherence to order.⁸⁴ It was this long established ideal of refinement that equipped audiences with a finely attuned optic, one they used to evaluate Lincoln from. Reactions to Lincoln teased out the coexistence of a consumer imaginary and a deep-seated culture of refinement in the urban northeast. According to Karl Kippolla urban theater patrons were at once fascinated and repulsed by western figures on stage at once, writing, "eastern elites

(Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1903), 481.

⁸⁴ According to Paul Keen genteel proved a slippery term for "an ideal of taste." Paul Keen, *Literature, Commerce, and the Spectacle of Modernity, 1750-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 130; Elias, *The Court Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1983), 111; C. Dallett Hemphill, "Class, Gender and the Regulation of Emotional Expression in Revolutionary-Era Conduct Literature," in Peter N. Stearns and Jan Lewis, eds., *Emotional History of the United States* (New York, 1998), 37-39; Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, 147-182; Bushman, *The Refinement of America*.

simultaneously patronized and elevated the West.”⁸⁵ Boston, New York City, and the northeast more generally were cloistered from the coarse frontier, especially the rugged behavior and appearance that characterized western men. Just like Barnum’s displays, Lincoln generated attention because he was an unusual and perplexing spectacle that did not fit neatly into the category of politician, laborer, lecturer, lawyer, or frontiersman. As Jeanne Halgren Kilde explains about the mid-nineteenth century: “What audiences demanded, the nascent entertainment industry tried to provide. The situation accorded well with democratic politics. Given the theatrical focus on popular desires, it is not surprising that the theatres in which elites and laborers met provided a literal stage for political outburst.”⁸⁶ Crowds flocked to see Lincoln—an authentic western man—out of both political and entertainment motivation.⁸⁷

⁸⁵ Karl M. Kippola, *Acts of Manhood: The Performance of Masculinity on the American Stage, 1828-1865*. (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

⁸⁶ Jeanne Halgren Kilde, *When Church Became Theatre* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 30.

⁸⁷ Ideas of manhood in the transient antebellum West were more fluid than they were in the more traditional cities on the Atlantic seaboard. Nicole Etcheson argues that two ideas of manliness awkwardly combined in the West. “Manliness meant a man was candid as well as brave. Gentlemanliness was a guarantee of integrity.” These two, she argues were “complementary characteristics because they both typified difference aspects of honor.” But in Boston, Philadelphia, and New York City ideas of western manliness was held at a distance from favored personifications of manhood. Jonathan Glickstein notes the opinion of manly labor in the urban northeast. “In antebellum America generally,” he writes, “middle-class attitudes encompassed some definite disdain for manual labor.” Their mutual repugnancy of each other was rooted in perceptions of the morality of their work. There existed an appreciation of the independence of independent labor, but a derision towards of their lack of civility also existed. Gregory L. Kaster writes, “Even as manliness rhetoric proudly proclaimed workingmen’s ‘manly spirit,’ on another level it figured their manhood as alarmingly wanting.”

Both western men and manual labors generally shared a lack of European fashioned refinement. The superiority gentlemen felt over other, untrained men is illustrated by Richard Bushman, John Kasson, C. Dallett Hemphill. Bushman illustrates this in a vignette of the eighteenth century physicians Alexander Hamilton’s travels out west. Although Hamilton was quick to take advantage of western strangers’ hospitality he was aghast dirty hands, tattered clothing, and the absence of showing deference. Ryan L. Dearinger nicely captures the opinion of western laborers by men engrossed in the genteel social circles. Using reaction to antebellum canal builders, Dearinger argues that the widespread opinion of these men was as dirt-ridden grunts due, in large part, to the tales of their immoral lifestyle. This led the British traveler James Silk Buckingham’s to deem that canal workers were “not merely poor, but... drunken, dirty, indolent, and riotous, so as to be the objects of dislike and fear to all in whose neighborhood they congregate in large numbers.”

Arthur K. Moore’s classic 1957 cultural work, *The Frontier Mind*, still stands as one of the foremost studies of western manhood. It is a keen lens into the western tales that urban, eastern audiences read. Moore nicely draws out the “romance” and “wilderness” myths of the frontier that circulated in print. Eastern society consumed fictional tales, like those written by Frederick Cooper and the lore about Daniel Boone for example, while holding some objection to western men as primitive. The consumption of fiction about western manhood provided a source amusement that remained a safe distance way. Moore argues that mid-nineteenth century novels portrayed western men, like the Kentuckian Daniel Boone, as both primitive and progressive. They were at once grotesque and

To communicate that Lincoln contrasted with the debonair statesman, editors labelled him as a sucker, a title that carried a demeaning connotation. A broadside circulated by the Taylor and Fillmore Club in Cambridge boasted “a mass meeting” with “popular speakers,” including the “hon.” congressman from Illinois, throughout the city on September 20, 1848. When he arrived, the city was humming with a festive spirit for the Whig meeting. By the evening a procession set off from Roxbury with an entire band and Whig banners hoisted high to Cambridge City Hall. The following day the *Atlas* published a letter describing Lincoln’s presentation. The author begins by averring that Lincoln appears as “a capital specimen of a ‘Sucker Whig,’ six feet at least in his stockings and in every way worthy to represent that Spartan band of the only Whig district in poor benighted Illinois.” Similarly, the *Taunton Daily Gazette* proclaimed, “Mr. Lincoln is a genuine Sucker” that same day. Although Lincoln shared a stage with eastern statesmen and advocate for the same party he, as a sucker, was not accepted as respectable.

Although ‘sucker’ was initially used to describe Illinois settlers as early as the late eighteenth century, it grew in popularity during the 1840s due to land speculators purchasing expansive portions of the state. The men who fell prey to these “jobbers” selling parcels of land in Illinois for an exurbanite prices became popularly known as suckers. Although

virtuous. Their lack of civility and education was held in tension with their natural courage of spreading Manifest Destiny. Nicole Etcheson, *The Emerging Midwest: Upland Southerners and the Political Culture of the Old Northwest, 1787-1861* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1996), 35; Kenneth Cmiel traces these two types of manhood in the rhetoric of American literature; Jonathan A. Glickstein, *Concepts of Free Labor in Antebellum America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991); Gregory L. Kaster, "Labour's True Man: Organized Workingmen and the Language of Manliness in the USA, 1827-1877." *Gender and History* 13, no. 1, (April, 2001): 24-64; Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992); John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990); C. Dallett Hemphill, *Bowing to Necessities: A History of Manners in America, 1620-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Ryan L. Dearing, "Violence, Masculinity, Image, and Reality on the Antebellum Frontier," *Indiana Magazine of History* 100, (March, 2004): 26-55; Kenneth Cmiel, *Democratic Eloquence: The Fight over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991); Arthur K. Moore, *The Frontier Mind: A Cultural Analysis of the Kentucky Frontiersman* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1957), 185, 140-141, 212.

northeasterners termed a finagler of cheap goods a ‘yankee,’ the ridicule of a sucker was more severe. Unlike the demeaning term for a street conniver in yankee, sucker implied a moral baseness, ignorance of city life, and general stupidity.⁸⁸ Popular stories exposed the disparaging connotation the term carried, since a sucker was typically contrasted with the polished gentleman. One short yarn from 1845, tells of a “gentleman” asking a sucker for onions but the sucker turns him away because the correct pronunciation of the root confused the country bumpkin who only knows them as “*ing-ins*.” Another story circulated in newspapers across the North during the late 1840s opens with a young fop-like Virginian and an “Illinois Sucker” traveling on the same steamboat. The southern gentleman cannot resist attempting to comb the sucker’s disheveled hair, dust his boots, and straighten his coat. Frustrated, the sucker chastises the pretentious gentleman for his “first family of Virginia” pedigree. In their back and forth discourse the author uses the discrepancy in their language to illuminate their dissimilarity. The sucker’s speech is verbose and full of mispronounced words while the Virginian’s uses sophisticated, but few, words. In a similar story from 1845 about a sucker traveling East stops at a New England restaurant. The dignified patrons and owner, offended by the traveler’s poor table manners, decide to have fun with the western guest instead of kicking him out. While the sucker clumsily slurps down his meal of oysters the owner wryly informs him the oysters are alive and, as they travel from his mouth to his stomach, they are slowly nibbling away his innards. Alarmed, the sucker turns red and then sprints out of the restaurant.⁸⁹

⁸⁸ “Whig Rally!” (Cambridge: S.N. 1848). A broadside accessed from the Antiquarian Society, Worcester, Massachusetts. Hauranne, *A Frenchman in Lincoln’s America*, II: 76; “The Whigs’ of Cambridge,” *Cambridge Chronicle*, September 21, 1848.

⁸⁹ “Old Virginian vs. Suckerdom,” *Evansville Journal*, June 5, 1849; “Swallowing Oysters Alive” was a popular story reprinted across the country. For example, see, *New York Times*, June 3, 1845.

A sucker was vernacular for an easily deceivable man with a dearth of genteel taste. The use of the word to describe Lincoln captures how editors gave his Whig rhetoric a condescending nod all the while sneering at his inferior civility. Illinois men grew a reputation for their crudeness in behavior, language, social deportment, and gullible nature.⁹⁰ Newspapers were the primary means for spreading the lore that thousands of grogeries peppered the Illinois plains. The impression that “suckers” were drunkards and lacked social acumen made them the butt of jokes. Stories portrayed dimwitted, shabbily attired slobbs traveling into large cities as easily prey for fast-talking thieves. By the mid-1850s the term spread to the trusting dopes confidence men tricked out of money. In New York confidence men targeted “suckers” from the country. These bumpkins were ragged on in print for their gullible nature and inability navigate city life.⁹¹

The chord that the sight of Lincoln’s western manhood struck with audiences indicated the onset of a budding consumer imaginary, one that prized indulging visual curiosity despite smacking of vulgarity. Instead of dismissing Lincoln as unrefined—the well-established genteel response to men of rude appearance—urban audiences accommodated him by turning out in droves to eagerly view him as a form of entertainment. This was part of a changing perception

⁹⁰ “Whig National Convention,” *The National Era*, June 15, 1848; Leverenz, *Manhood and the American Renaissance*, 157; John Russell Bartlett, “Patent Safe Game or Operation,” in *Bartlett’s Dictionary of Americanism* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1859), 311-312; Sandage, *Born Loser*, 83; Ray A. Billington, “The Frontier in Illinois History,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 43 (Spring 1950): 28-45; “Whig National Convention” *The National Era*, June 15, 1848; “The ‘Sucker’ State,” *The Lancaster Gazette*, March 9, 1849.

⁹¹ Among Illinoisans this derogatory label of a “sucker” was redeemed of its deprecation. Prairie State politicians proudly identified as suckers and spoke of their region as “Suckerdom.” Appealing to this argot was done lightheartedly to amuse audiences. Westerners using the term in the East disarmed opponents by acknowledging their regions deprivation of refinement and education. Illinoisan employed “sucker” to avow a humble satisfaction in their homeland. A song sung in Illinois taverns illustrates it’s reappropriation. Under the title, “Sucker State,” author, Frank Berry, writes, “Respectfully dedicated to all Suckerdom.” The song is anthem of both the place and the manhood that is Illinois nurtures. “Suckerdom” is defined in the song in contrast to the Northeast. It begins, “Let Yankees sing of...punkin pies and pots of greens, We’ll sing a song of Sucker state, Other prairies wide.” The meaning of the term, like the men who used it, differed by region. Amusing crowds was Lincoln’s strength, but winning approval as a reputable statesman was a struggle for him. Webster and Chauncey Allen Goodric defined “sucker” as, “a cant name for an inhabitant of Illinois” in *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1848), 988; Frank Berry, *Sucker State Song & Chorus* (St. Louis: Balmer & Weber, 1855).

of viewing. Large throngs of people in the urban North morphed from an unnerving mob into a beguiling spectacle. Visual consumption, imparted from a burgeoning consumer imaginary, took root. “By the mid-fifties,” Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace write, “throngs of ‘window shoppers’ were promenading up and down Broadway delighting in the goods.” Ironically, the window shoppers themselves becoming part of the entertainment. Demand grew for photographs of street life, authentic depictions of city life.

Flourishing urban entertainment spread the practice of viewing the extraordinary, though foreboding, displays of manly virility for all social classes. Barnum stood at the helm of this practice, both profiting from this form of entertainment and directing it. As a seminal figure of urban antebellum entertainment his exhibits forcefully advanced a consumer imaginary. Boston and New York, entertainment epicenters during the late antebellum period, did not cease offering newfangled visual spectacles—whether along city streets or on stages. Gratifying such this form of entertainment drew protest from the gentry, especially Europeans reflecting on urban America. Henry David Thoreau identified this craving for amusement three years before Lincoln arrived in the Boston. “There is an incessant influx of novelty into the world,” he penned from his Walden, Massachusetts cabin.⁹² John Fanning, an armchair historian and keen recorder, observed in 1846 that the city pedestrians, painted brick, church bells, and much more all created the spectacle of New York City. The culmination of these sights and sounds, Fanning penned “It gives entertainment to the imagination.”⁹³ An 1858 *New York Times* exposé, “Our City Amusement,” investigating the leisure practices of local city residents, verified Thoreau’s

⁹² Kathleen Brady, *Ida Tarbell: Portrait of a Muckraker* (New York: Putnam's, 1984) 96; Henry David Thoreau, *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1854); Richard L. Bushman writes, “The mythic cities in the United States in 1850 were Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Country people thought fashionable life reached the pinnacle there.” *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 370.

⁹³ John Fanning Watson, *Annals and Occurrences of New York City and State in the Olden Time* (Carlisle, Massachusetts: Applewood Books, 1846), 73; Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 668, 690, 691-692.

assertion. According to the author, print, music, lectures, theater, circuses, and exhibits were not only a “necessity for every class,” but for both men and women. This desire to view curiosities bubbled up in the recesses of a collective imaginary, resulting in crowds to flock to see an eye-catching western man in Lincoln during his two speaking circuits through the northeast in 1848 and 1860.⁹⁴

Eager to satisfy the craving for gaze at baffling curiosities, P.T. Barnum’s exhibits of barbarous men and the sport of boxing rapidly grew in popularity. Barnum ingeniously designed his exhibits for the American Museum on Broadway or his traveling exhibits to exceed sheer novelty; he set his sights on boundary-blurring spectacles for audiences to ponder.⁹⁵ Neil Harris describes this stimulating effect as the “operational aesthetic.” He posits that Barnum’s methodically fashioned exhibits tapped into the public’s desire to understand and speculate about the ambiguous. It was, according to Harris, “an intellectual exercise.” Likewise, concerning urban entertainment in the antebellum North, Michael Pettit maintains that “Just as the ‘ordinary man’ was expected to participate in the politics of the republic, the political culture demanded that the individual observer take responsibility for assessing the authenticity of these sorts of spectacles.”⁹⁶ The polarizing reactions to Lincoln’s sight, sounds, and—his general air—roused contemplation.

⁹⁴ “Our City Amusements,” *New York Times*, December 3, 1858.

⁹⁵ As an entertainment entrepreneur Barnum’s vision included blending spectacle with politics. Matthew T. Sneddon describes his perspective; “Barnum showed what brought Americans to a museum—a combination of curiosity, entertainment, wonder, skepticism, and to some degree, a desire to learn something new—and he found in technology and nature abundant resources for carrying this out. Although a showman, Barnum was serious about representing America and convinced that museums were an powerful means of disseminating knowledge and civic lessons.” Matthew T. Sneddon, “Representing Tradition in an Age of Progress: Technology and American Identity in Exhibitions and Museums, 1824–1952” (PhD. Dissertation, University of Washington, 2009), 80-81.

⁹⁶ Michael Pettit, *The Science of Deception: Psychology and Commerce in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 10.

Each exhibit was intended to make patrons active participants; giving them the responsibility of studying the unusual and perplexing exhibits—often cringe inducing displays of malformed or barbarous men. Rather than detailing the exhibit, Barnum routinely provoked viewers to discern and judge an “inferior” being on display. Whether Africans or Native Americans, viewers approach the exhibit as the superior peering at the unusual—if not vulgar—creatures of the natural world. Reflecting on his craft in later in life, Barnum noted, "At the outset of my career I saw that everything depended upon getting people to think, and talk, and become curious and excited over and about the 'rare' spectacle."⁹⁷ English tourist Isabella Bird chronicled about the showman’s exhibits; “the collection of horrors and monstrosities attached, which appears to fascinate the vulgar gaze; a dog with two legs, a cow with four horns, and a calf with six legs.” Yet it was not just the baser sorts viewing these spectacles, but she observed that “persons of the highest station and education” also patronized museum. It was not the simple glance from the pedestrian that Barnum hoped to capture, he wanted to incite thought. The act of deciphering a liminal figure induced stares, and, as a byproduct, generated both discussion and a communal viewing experience.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ James W. Cook, like Neil Harris, suggests that it was from Barnum’s desire to make spectacles deeply perplexing that his genius flowed; ultimately making the museum a cultural mainstay between its opening in 1840 until 1860. James W. Cook, *The Arts of Deception: Playing with Fraud in the Age of Barnum* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 121; Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P.T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 72-89; P.T. Barnum, *Struggles and Triumphs; or, Forty Years' Recollections of P.T. Barnum, Written by Himself* (Hartford: J.B. Burr & Company, 1869), 76.

⁹⁸ Simone Natale points out Harris’ work reveals that “technical and scientific explanations were made recreational by appealing to the same popular taste that Barnum and other showmen cleverly exploited. Audiences were just as curious to learn about genuine curiosities as to question and discuss potential deceptions and frauds.” Simone Natale, *Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2016), 355; Isabella Bird, *The Englishwoman in America* (London: John Murray, 1856). Amy Hughes has cogently argued that the unusual display of the body in exhibits, like Barnum’s “what-is-it” display, “invited patrons to look differently in general. During the nineteenth century, displays of abnormal bodies fostered a methodology of viewing that emphasized the human in all kinds of spectacle.” Amy Hughes, *Spectacles of Reform: Theater and Activism in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 19.

The New York City attorney George Templeton Strong provides insight into Barnum's influence. Strong recounted his casual visit to Barnum's American Museum in his diary on March 2, 1860, just three days after Lincoln left the city for New England. While walking past the museum Strong decided to break from his business and behold the "much advertised 'What-is-it Display'" display, an adult African American male dwarf. What Strong saw blurred the lines between human and beast. In his diary he spent his ink describing what the public contended "it" was. The following day, unable to shake this deep inquisitiveness, he brought a friend with him to view the display again. This time Strong pontificated about the "anatomical details" of the creature and concluded that the exhibit was "a great fact for Darwin." Three months later Strong stopped into the museum again while sauntering uptown. "That specimen of showmen has resumed his function, and his ancient and seedy museum is instinct with new life," he penned about Barnum.⁹⁹ Strong's reaction offers interest into Barnum's seeming indeterminable exhibits. In 1861, Strong would study the newly elected Lincoln as he passed through New York City with the same verve. He would apply the same curiosity and fascination to the sight of Lincoln that he gave to Barnum's exhibits.

The safety of gawking at wondrous yet fear-inducing displays of men on stage, in an exhibit, or within the boxing ring, in part, induced northeastern audiences to see Lincoln—a towering, bawdy stump speaker—on stage. It was in this cultural climate of New York City that boxing rose to an unprecedented height. During spring of 1860, the six-foot two-inch Irish-American John C. Heenan traveled to England to fight Tom Sayers. *The New York Times*

⁹⁹ *The Diary of George Templeton Strong*, ed. Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan, 1952), entry for March 2 and 3 June 6, 1860. II. 12-13, 31; Neil Harris writes, "Barnum understood that people enjoyed the opportunity to debate the issue of falsity." Harris, *Humbug*, 125; Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 75.

averred that the eagerness among “All classes of people” to follow the fight—a claim also supported by *Harper’s Weekly*. The gentry viewers of the sport were known as the ‘fancy.’ The *Times* editor added the enthrallment of the bout led to “throwing completely into shade all political themes.”¹⁰⁰ In the May 1860, issue of *Harper’s* the Democratic national convention, which occurred at the same time as the fight, was buried in the back of the issue and only received a fraction of the coverage the fight did.¹⁰¹ The *Times* editor confessed that boxing “is not very creditable to our tastes or culture,” but the public interest, “is due partly to the fact that we are a very excitable people—always craving a sensation of some sort—and partly to the equally palpable and still important fact that Muscle is King.”¹⁰² On stage, Lincoln was not unrelated to a Barnum exhibit or boxing where viewers could examine the bizarre or watch men trading blows in safety without concern. This type of viewing offered entertainment on the patron’s terms. After Lincoln spoke to northeastern audiences could—if they chose—inspect him up close, shake his hand, and ask for his autograph on their terms.

Ultimately, Lincoln’s reputation as a western stump speaker generated anticipation for a burlesque show with a political focus, and, just like other shows in New York City, it was not free.¹⁰³ Even though political talks were typically free in the city, admission to hear Lincoln was

¹⁰⁰ Boxing progressed from deviant entertainment held in seedy taverns to generally accepted entertainment in New York City during the 1850s. City newspapers advertised sparing matches, on average, three to four times a week since official boxing matches were illegal in the city. Laws, however, did not stop illegal matches from regularly being held. According to Elliot Gorn, audiences were drawn to the exhibition of courage, adroit physicality, and the ultimate repudiation of femininity. It was largely believed that the men who were most suited and eager to engage in the brutal sport hailed, according to the *New York Times*, from the “Western and Southwestern frontiers.” Elliot Gorn, *The Manly Art: Bare-Knuckle Prize Fighting in America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), 22; “The New King,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1860.

¹⁰¹ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 756; Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2000), 136.

¹⁰² “The New King,” *New York Times*, April 28, 1860; Kasia Boddy, *Boxing: A Cultural History* (London: Reaktion Books, 2008).

¹⁰³ Charles Beneulyn Johnson, *Illinois in the Fifties; Or A Decade of Development* (Champaign, Ill: Flanigan-Pearson, 1918), 169.

set at twenty-five cents, the same price as admission to a minstrel show or Barnum's American Museum.¹⁰⁴ Relishing the spectacle of Lincoln's western manhood surmounted the instinct among New England or New Yorker populaces to show complete dismiss him for his lack of European civility. The perception of Lincoln as living curiosity reified the Illinoisan as one of many novel exhibits in the city—simultaneously viewed with condescension and amusement. In a milieu abounding with spectacles, provoking the erudite and plebian alike,

Audiences marveled at his size and awkwardness—as well as his humor and stories, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Clashing with eastern conceptions of manliness, audiences were intrigued by how a man who embodied the West in appearance and performance could also be a renowned politician. Lincoln, like a well-designed exhibit, proved more than a curious sight. He arrested attention because he disrupted established notions associated with gentlemen politicians. Embodying a western laborer while being a proven politician, evident in his unique blend of rational and colloquial discourse, Lincoln had an odd, yet magnetizing pull on audiences. Unlike other men from western states who gained national recognition as politicians, Lincoln did not develop a genteel taste. While this omission conventionally suggested immorality in the urban northeast, the eccentricities of a western man in Lincoln tapped into the crave for novelty and amusement gripping the urban northeast.

¹⁰⁴ Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750–1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 91

CHAPTER TWO

An Authentic Stump Speaker: Lincoln's Speeches in New York and New England Prior to his Presidential Candidacy

Charles Cooper Nott Jr. articulated the impression New Yorkers had of Lincoln leading up to his Cooper Union speech in late February of 1860. Drawing father's memories of escorting Lincoln to the Astor House after his Cooper Union speech, Nott Jr. relayed the impression that Lincoln was a particular sort of western politician, a stump speaker. "In the estimation of thoughtful Americans east of the Alleghenies," Nott Jr. surmised, "all that they knew of Mr. Lincoln justified them in regarding him as only 'a Western stump orator'—successful, distinguished, but nothing higher than that—a Western stump orator."¹ Crowds gathered to gawk at the sight of Lincoln during his speaking tours through the northeast in 1848 and 1860, as the last chapter contends, but, more than his appearance, his stump speeches charmed audiences throughout the northeast. Once Lincoln began speaking his western colloquialisms, stories, wit, humor, and rapidity of speech all captivated the urban eastern audiences that heard him. While the previous chapter probed how the image of Lincoln was perceived, this chapter concentrates on how Lincoln was heard.

¹ Henry B. Rankin, *Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 249.

Audiences flocked to listen to the congressman and politically minded lawyer from Illinois in 1848 and 1860 as they would a performance at a theater, yet it would not be until after Lincoln's presidential nomination in May of 1860 that Lincoln became a household name. Although Lincoln's colloquial manner of communicating had mass appeal in the urban northeast, refined listeners—even those of the same political party—found him disagreeable. Hearing a sincere stump speech, a talent Lincoln excelled at, gripped eastern audiences on both the political and theater stages. As Lincoln's political opponent Stephen Douglas once commented, “[Lincoln is] full of wit, facts, dates—and the best stump speaker, with his droll ways and dry jokes, in the west.”² Consequently, this western oratory style clashed with the refined notion of how a gentleman should address audiences. Nevertheless, and with much objection from refined New York City and New England that the stump speech was a vulgarity trivializing the erudite art of political oratory, the stump speech proved to win large audiences across the urban northeast at the end of the antebellum period.

Lincoln's invitations to the speak in the urban northeast were aimed at attracting crowds that might not otherwise attend a political lecture. This served the mission of Whigs and Republicans by reaching beyond their bases to win broad appeal. Curiosity among audiences eager to view an authentic show of western politics drew interest, among men and women, to see Lincoln. Interestingly, with the key exception of his Cooper Union speech, the pace and preparation for Lincoln's speaking tour in both 1848 and 1860 resembled the spontaneous nature of western stump speeches. Whig leaders hastily organized rallies that Lincoln spoke at in September of 1848. During a twelve-day span Lincoln—at the mercy of his hosts—toured the state speaking ten times. In late February and early March of 1860 Lincoln made eleven

² John W. Forney, *Anecdotes of Public Men* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1873), I: 179.

speeches across New England after Cooper Union within, none of which were planned before arriving in New York. The impromptu nature of his tour only allowed for venues to schedule Lincoln's stump speeches a day or two in advance. In sum, audiences gathered with a different intent than they would to hear a local statesman; they filled auditoriums to take in a genuine stump speaker.

Scholars point to these speaking tours as a moment when Lincoln displayed his oratorical virtues to the influential northeast. While Lincoln proved himself an adept political mind in the process, urban northeast audiences in 1848 and 1860 were taken by the amusing sight of him.³ At Cooper's Union, and the improvised speaking tour that followed, Lincoln drew audiences with his reputation as a western stump speaker. Due to a dose of national exposure from his debates in the Illinois backcountry with Stephen Douglas in 1858, Lincoln received an invitation to speak at Henry Ward Beecher's New York City congregation in October 1859.⁴ Upon accepting the offer, the location was changed to Cooper Union and date of the speech was slated for late February. A true western politician in Lincoln rivaled the nearby Broadway stages in terms of entertainment pleasure. The lure of Lincoln was, in part, hearing the curious presentation of a true western politician on the urban stage.

Before Lincoln received an invitation to stump Massachusetts in September of 1848, Massachusetts Whigs suggested Ohio Congressman Thomas Corwin to tour the state over the Illinoisan.⁵ Corwin's stump speaking regaled audiences in Connecticut just months earlier, igniting interest to see and hear him in the Old Bay state. Even before setting foot in New

³ I approach entertainment like William J. Mahar's argument in, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture*. Minstrels reflected a deeper proclivity for entertainment inundating the American ethos. In a similar way I use political meetings as a setting to tease out embedded cultural assumptions. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

⁴ Herndon, *Herndon's Informants*, 273.

⁵ Eggleston, *Lincoln in New England*, 21.

England portraits of Corwin circulated around the urban northeast. The *New York Herald* labeled Corwin in 1846, “the noisy, ranting stump-speaker of Ohio.” Corwin, according to the *Herald*, presented as “an excellent stump-speaker, a good mimic, a poor lawyer, a clever fellow in some respects and an adroit intriguer.” The rip-roaring Ohio crowd verified that he was “undoubtedly a real, ‘hurra,’ slash-and-dash speaker with B’hoys, but as to his statesmanship, as this writer truly remarks, he is not ‘distinguished for any claims.’” Once Corwin concluded, the *Herald* correspondent witnessed that Ohio populaces “go away well satisfied in listening to the stump harangues of ‘Tom, the Wagon Boy.’”⁶ The fame of Corwin in New York was as an entertainer, not as a politician of repute. Roughly a year later, in January 1848, the *New York Tribune* published a piece on Corwin’s ability as an entertain. A *Tribune* editor waxed, “Like the celebrated Garrick, the actor, he [Corwin] is endowed by nature with a face, one half comic—the other half tragic; and by the contraction of his muscles, his oddities and grimaces, he can make a crowd weep and laugh pretty much as he pleases.”⁷ Elaborating on this ability, the exposé probed Corwin’s ability to play upon the crowd’s emotions. “When he speaks, the sentiment he would convey, or the feeling he would express, is anticipated by the expression of his countenance. Fire dashed from his eye, as he in angry mood denounces iniquity or baseness.” Urban audiences were both humored and fascinated by reports of this raconteur style.⁸

⁶ “A Picture.—A Federal Letter Writer to the New York Herald,” *Kalida Venture* [Kalida, Ohio], December 31, 1846.

⁷ The reference is to David Garrick, a famous eighteenth century actor and director. For more information see: Kalman A. Burnim, *David Garrick, Director* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1961); “Cincinnati, Ohio, December, 1847,” *New York Herald*, January 12, 1848; For more information about Corwin see: Norman A. Graebner, “Thomas Corwin and the Election of 1848,” *Journal of Southern History*, XVII (1955), 161-179; Josiah Morrow, ed. *Life and Speeches of Thomas Corwin: Orator, Lawyer and Statesman*. (Cincinnati: W.H. Anderson & Co., 1896).

⁸ “Another American Portrait” republished from the *New York Tribune* in *The Star of Freedom* [Leeds, England], April 3, 1847.

Between March 25 and March 30, 1848 Corwin spoke at five towns in Connecticut; Middletown, Meriden, Hartford, Norwich, and Windham County. At Middletown, the public was so eager to hear the Ohio stump speaker that, according to the *New Haven Journal*, “many had to go away without hearing [him],” because it was impossible to enter the auditorium. The *New York Herald* reported that “At an early hour crowds began to move toward the hall in which was to be heard the ‘Wagon Boy,’” at Middletown. Those who managed to squeeze into the auditorium “listened to him with delight;” leaving “Highly gratified and pleased” with Corwin. Almost a month after his speaking tour of Connecticut the article, “Tom Corwin in the East,” circulated in newspapers across the North. In review of his speech at Hartford, the author overstated, “No report can be anything but a caricature of his speech.” Described as a “thrilling” speech met with “Roars of laughter” ignited by Corwin’s “flow of his splendid diction” and “brilliant wit,” all combined to create the “most gorgeous imagery” and “fascinated every hearer” in Hartford. The *Springfield Gazette*, after the editor witnessed his speech, claimed, “Mr. Corwin’s fame as a ‘stump-speaker’ is second to that of no other man in the country.”⁹ Audience were keen for a genuine stump speaker show.

The success of Corwin and the stories of stump speakers in the urban northeast helped ready spectators to view western politicians as entertainment. Charles Hudson, a friend of Lincoln’s and a Massachusetts Whig Congressman, was instrumental in getting the fellow Congressman to stump New England in 1848. Although little is known about Lincoln and Hudson’s relationship or the conversations that led Lincoln to stump in New England, Hudson thought highly of Lincoln’s oratory style. Like Lincoln, Hudson’s life followed an unorthodox.

⁹ “Tom Corwin in the East,” *The Carroll Free Press*, April 20, 1848; “The Wagon Boy in Connecticut,” *Springfield Gazette* republished in the *Hartford Courier*, March 27, 1848; “Corwin in Connecticut,” *New York Herald*, March 31, 1848.

He began his adult life as a farmhand, transitioned to a minister in the Universalist Church, and then to a career in politics. Upon reaching the post of Massachusetts Congressman in 1846, Hudson's strong history of manual labor and his absence of an elite New England education—rarities among Massachusetts politicians—resonated with western constituents even more than with those in his own district. His speeches displayed clear reasoning in accessible vocabulary without the erudite references that his northeastern colleagues made. His simple style proved unfavorable in Massachusetts with even Hudson's own biographer claiming that he "was not an orator." Still his published speeches were popular among western audiences. The key difference between the presentation styles of the congressmen was entertainment. Lincoln was quick to make his audience laugh, while Hudson's stoic demeanor was void of humor.¹⁰

Listeners in New England expected Lincoln to entertain in much the same way Corwin did. It helped that the buzzing atmosphere of Massachusetts the Whig rallies readied audiences for Lincoln's stumping style. Historian William F. Hanna describes the mood at Worcester before Lincoln addressed the crowd on September 12, 1848, as a "carnival atmosphere." Trains brought crowds to the Whig Convention from Boston, including the Boston Taylor Club and the Boston Brass Band complete with their own banners and flags. The Salem Taylor Club also marched outside the venue with their own music and banners. An editor for the *Boston Courier* observed that at the Boston rally, "The best spirits prevailed and a large number of people were in attendance." Before Lincoln's first speech in Boston on September 15, 1848, The Young Men's Whig Club kicked off the evening with a procession of Whig politicians marching with a

¹⁰ William Herndon, *Herndon's Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Lincoln* Douglas L. Wilson, Rodney O. David, Terry Wilson, Jesse William Weik ed., (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 21; Charles Hudson, *Character of Abraham Lincoln: President of the United States* (Boston: S.N., 1863); Henry M. Smith, *Charles Hudson: In Memoriam* (A Paper Read at the Meeting of Worcester Society of Antiquity, June 7, 1881).

brass band closely in tow through the downtown streets to the destination of Washington Hall. The *Boston Daily Atlas* promoted the Whig gathering by promising it would prove “a rouser.” The public anticipated a thrilling show and Lincoln met their desire to be entertained. The following day the *Atlas* pronounced their prediction fulfilled, by noting that the meeting was “full and enthusiastic.” The *Boston Courier* similarly noted that the crowd enjoyed “a very high treat” in seeing Lincoln that evening. How the event was advertised, reported about, and the audience description align with descriptions of lowbrow city entertainment. The parade-like scene at Boston’s Cambridge City Hall on September 20, 1848, appeared just like Washington Hall and excitement pulsed among the crowd. To kick-off the evening a Whig procession, complete with a full band and towering banners, marched over four miles from Roxbury to Cambridge all the while spilling over into the sidewalks. William Schouler, editor of the *Atlas*, noticed that, “There is a good deal of enthusiasm, and a good spirit prevails here.”¹¹

Unlike his stump speeches in Illinois, Lincoln fell under the scrupulous eye of respectable society when he spoke at Cooper Union specifically and throughout New England generally. As Oliver Wendell Holmes observed in 1852, “New York is getting to a great extent, to enjoy the metropolitan luxury of being taster to the country at large. Audience in many other places swallow for the most part what is put before them. But here much must be applied to the palate and rejected.” In this milieu, an epicenter of entertainment, city patrons were conditioned to

¹¹ “Mr. Lincoln’s Lecture,” *Atlas* September 21, 1848; *Taunton Daily Gazette* September 23, 1848; Hanna, *Abraham among the Yankees*, 27; The Whig Convention in Worcester is described in: “The Old Bay State Aroused,” *Burlington Weekly Free Press*, September 22, 1848; “Meeting at Worcester,” *The Boston Courier* September 14, 1848; Benjamin P. Thomas, ed., *Lincoln, 1847-1853, Being the Day-by-Day Activities of Abraham Lincoln* (Springfield, Illinois: The Abraham Lincoln Association, 1936), 91-92; “The Young Men’s Whig Club,” *The Boston Daily Atlas*, September 15, 1848; “Boston Whig Club,” *The Atlas* September 16, 1848; Fiore, *Abraham Lincoln Visits The Old Colony* (Taunton, Massachusetts: The Old Colony Historical Society, 1978), 9; *The Boston Courier* September 16, 1848; Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750–1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 37, 56.

consumer vast amounts of stimulating sights, sounds, and intellectual curiosities.¹² Steeped in practices of European civility, New Yorkers and New Englanders of repute looked upon the provincial prairie state of Illinois with conceit. Fitting the impression of a western man, Lincoln proved to accentuate the tension between entertainment and refined disparagement. For northeastern audiences in 1848 and 1860, Lincoln’s achievement as a prairie orator and his stature among the poor, unintelligent farmers of his state did not endow him with the gravitas to broach into the rank of gentleman. Although intriguing, Lincoln had never proven himself to the patricians of New York City or Boston.

Charles C. Nott Sr., a member of the Republican committee sponsoring the lecture, contacted Lincoln a few weeks before his Cooper Union to offer more information about audience he would speak before. Nott Sr.—likely concerned a vulgar stump speaker might harm the reputation of the committee—wrote to Lincoln, “These lectures have been contrived to call out our better, but busier citizens, who never attend political meetings. A large part of the audience would also consist of ladies.”¹³ Since the “better” and “busier” sort were expected to attend, it implied that the stakes were raised so, therefore, a second-rate act would not do. The notice for the Cooper Union speech ran in the *New York Times* both disparaged and played up Lincoln’s western origins. The *Times* idiomatically printed his name as “Abe” and labeling him a “prairie orator” while appealing to their readership to attend. In the same vein, William Cullen Bryant opened the evening at Cooper Union introducing as “an eminent citizen of the West.” It was clear from the introduction that the regional demarcation of the “West” defined Lincoln. Generally regarded as entertaining, complicated simply disregarding stump speeches as coarse.

¹² Oliver Wendel Holmes, “Mr. Oliver Wendell Holmes on Lecturing and Lecturers,” *New York Herald* October 29, 1852.

¹³ Charles C. Nott to Lincoln, February 9, 1860, in David C. Mearns, ed., *The Lincoln Papers* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., 1948), 229.

Though, according to refined society, the stump speeches smacked of vulgarity, they were nevertheless a scintillating amusement to all social classes.

Prior to his New York City visit, Lincoln tried his hand at the then fashionable lecture style prior to his Cooper Union speech by giving at least two lectures on science and progress in 1858 and 1859. Influenced by the likes of Walt Whitman, Lincoln desired to master the popular lyceum performance but fell well short of that goal. His attempts to dial back his stumping style of stories, body motion, and general western air when lecturing was widely acknowledged as a failure. The most scathing reaction Lincoln received for his lectures came from his friend William Herndon. In review of Lincoln's lecturing, Herndon bluntly stated, "I know that Mr. L was not fitted, qualified, in any way to deliver a lecture to our people, who were intelligent, well read, and well educated." The lecture had "no life, imagination, or fancy in it, no spirit" and even, according to Herndon, "injured Mr. L's reputation as a man of sense." Lincoln seemed to recognize that he was not gifted in the oratory skill and turned down numerous invitations to lecture after Cooper Union. In response to an invitation to lecturer in Philadelphia, Lincoln penned on April 7, 1860, "I am not a professional lecturer. Have never got up but one lecture, and that I think rather a poor one." Lacking an urbane sense of how to carry himself in social settings, he appeared especially awkward because lecturing required reigning in the injection of stories, humor, and his comic body motions. His proclivity towards this more familiar style worked against him when lecturing—though as a stump speaker these habits greatly worked in his favor.¹⁴

While the Cooper Union organizers, and Lincoln himself, hoped the educated New York patrons would receive the address as a well-crafted political discourse, the audience anticipated a

¹⁴ Jason Emerson, *Lincoln the Inventor* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2009), 22-27; *Evansville Daily Journal*, October 29, 1860; Basler ed., *Collected Works*, IV: 40.

curious western politician. Upon thoroughly researching Lincoln's Cooper Union speech Ida M. Tarbell noted, "Many have confessed since that they feared his [Lincoln's] queer manner and quaint speeches would amuse people so much that they would fail to catch the weight of his logic [at Cooper Union]."¹⁵ Isaac Arnold, a close acquaintance of Lincoln's, was in Cooper Union audience when Lincoln spoke. According to Arnold, the audience gathered due to the impression that Lincoln was a "Western prodigy," "prairie orator," and a "rough, uncouth, unlearned backwoodsman." Arnold further observed that the Illinoisan was largely unknown in the New York and the interest he roused among audiences was to "see and hear" him. As publisher, author, and historian George Haven Putnam attended Lincoln's Cooper Union speech in 1860. In his estimation, no one in attendance was under the impression the Illinois would impress the well-schooled audience with his erudition. Putnam wrote:

Lincoln's methods as a political leader and orator were known to one or two men on the committee, but his name was still unfamiliar to an Eastern audience. It was understood that the new leader from the West was going to talk to New York about the fight against slavery; and it is probable that the larger part of the audience expected something 'wild and woolly.' The West at that time seemed very far off from New York and was still but little understood by the Eastern communities. New Yorkers found it difficult to believe that a man who could influence Western audiences could have anything to say that would count with the cultivated citizens of the East.

Putnam put his finger on the tension surrounding Lincoln's northeast speeches. Audiences were drawn to him because he amused while simultaneously conveying the impression of ignobility.

¹⁵ Ida M. Tarbell, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln: Drawn from Original Sources and Containing Many Speeches, Letters and Telegrams Hitherto Unpublished* (New York, The Doubleday & McClure Company, 1900), I: 327.

His stumping mode of speaking won mass attention because attendees expected to see a “wild and woolly” show.¹⁶

Unlike a stoic lecture or genteel political oratory, urban northeastern audiences left thoroughly entertained after hearing Lincoln. Bulletins announcing Lincoln’s 1848 Massachusetts speeches made some mention that he hailed from Illinois, a fact that caught attention. Notices riffed off the renown of western politicians to draw audiences seeking yarns and comedy. The editor for the *Journal and Courier*, Alfred Gilman, made sure to include in his announcement of Lincoln visiting Lowell that Lincoln was one of the foremost “Western orators.”¹⁷ Gilman’s announcement caught the persuaded sixteen-year-old Samuel Hadley to attend. As Lincoln spoke Hadley noticed the entire audiences grew absorbed in his “amusing illustrations” and “funny stories.” The next day the editor for the *Courier*, penned that it is Lincoln’s peculiar presentation style at Lowell “so eminently distinguishes the Western orators” from the statesmen of the northeast. The event drew more than an earnest constituency, it appealed to the general non-voter as well.¹⁸ At Dorchester’s Richmond Hall the *Courier* reported a “full and enthusiastic” meeting on September 18, 1848. Toward the end of the Whig meeting local Dorchester attorney and the evening organizer, Nathaniel F. Safford, received word that a late addition to the evening speaking lineup was ready to take the stage. As Lincoln conspicuously sauntered behind Safford who stood at the podium, the name of the tall stranger from Illinois was whispered into Safford’s ear by another organizer so Safford could introduce

¹⁶ Arnold, *Life of Lincoln*, 157; Holland, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 206; Benjamin Barondess, *Lincoln's Cooper Institute Speech* (New York: The Civil War Round Table of New York, 1954), 77; Johnson, *Illinois in the Fifties*, 169; Francis Brown, *The Every-day Life of Abraham Lincoln: A Biography from an Entirely New Standpoint, with Fresh and Invaluable Material* (New York: N. D. Thompson Publishing Company, 1887), 313; George Haven Putnam, *Abraham Lincoln: The People's Leader in the Struggle for National Existence* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1909), 43-44.

¹⁷ “Whig Meeting,” *The Atlas*, September 18, 1848.

¹⁸ Samuel P. Hadley, “Recollections of Lincoln in Lowell in 1848” in *Contributions of the Lowell Historical Society*, vol. 1 (Lowell: Lowell Historical Society, Butterfield Printing Co. 1913), 369-373.

him to the crowd. Later in his life Safford recounted what ensued once the Illinoisan took the stage. Lincoln, he recalled, “brought down the house” with his fascinating humor, stories, and odd appearance to boot.¹⁹

Once Lincoln began to speak audiences were struck by his peculiar oratory style. His high-pitched, twangy voice tickled audiences as entirely western. As one patron at Cooper Union penned, “his [Lincoln’s] voice shrill and his tones unmodulated.”²⁰ The *New York Herald* noted that Lincoln had a “frequent tendency to dwindle into a shrill and unpleasant sound.” Even before he ventured to address audiences in New York or New England, the way he strung together words in quick succession and causal manner of speaking in Congress was reported on. A correspondent for the *Hartford Courant* observed Lincoln’s debut in the House in early January 1848. The reporter was especially taken by how Lincoln “displayed the rapidity of utterance” and his “striking figurative language,” which, according to the author, “are common to Western men.”²¹ John Clarke, editor of Manchester New Hampshire’s *Manchester Mirror*, detected that at Smyth’s Hall Lincoln was not eloquent, in a traditional sense, but still captivated the audience. “His voice is disagreeable, and yet he wins your attention and good will from the start,” Clarke observed.²² The sound of Lincoln’s voice, his high paced manner of speaking, and how he pronounced certain words differently than his northeastern audiences all signaled to listeners that Lincoln was altogether a different show than gentlemen politicians. The festive mood surrounding Lincoln’s speeches and the initial oddity of his speech primed audiences for the

¹⁹ George Madison Bodge, *Memoir of Nathaniel Foster Safford* (Boston, Printed for Private Distribution, 1893), 9-10; Herdon I: 285.

²⁰ “Letter from New York” The Burlington Free Press [Burlington, Vermont], March 3, 1860; “The Presidential Campaign: Another Republican Orator on the Stump,” *New York Herald*, February 28, 1860.

²¹ *Hartford Courant*, January 18, 1848.

²² *Manchester Mirror*, March 7, 1860.

curiosity of his western association. Laughing at Lincoln's speeches proved central to the Illinoisan's popularity in the region.

Newspaper reports made some reference to Lincoln humor or the crowd's laughing response in New England during 1848 and 1860. A *Middlebury Galaxy* correspondent noted in 1848, that "Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, spoke for some two hours in the Convention, with a speech replete with humor." In 1860, another correspondent for the *Hartford Courant* penned, "There was humor and fun interspersed, so as to keep everybody good-natured and smiling" about Lincoln's speech at Hartford, Connecticut. In Manchester, James Clarke noted, "He [Lincoln] keeps his audience in a smiling mood with their mouths open ready to swallow all he says."²³ Lincoln's humor was particularly entertaining in a region where refined statemen often refrained from injecting humor into their oratory. The festive political and humor filled environment suited the exciting display of a towering stump speaker. For audiences accustomed sophisticated genteel statesmen and steeped in a milieu where 'taste' marked interior character, Lincoln's speech proved provocative. An editor at the *Taunton Daily Gazette* echoed the synergy between crowd's enthusiasm and Lincoln's speech the following day. The paper observed that Lincoln was "full of humor," which generated "a good deal of enthusiasm during the performance" at Union Hall. Notwithstanding that Lincoln's colloquial nature would have been regarded as socially abhorrent in private parlors, on stage he proved an appealing attraction among a Bostonian crowd that prized entertainment. One man in attendance in 1848 recalled, "Our attention has been arrested in this quarter by the able speech of Hon. Mr. Lincoln of Illinois"²⁴ In this social milieu where middling white men endeavored to display gentlemanly

²³ *Daily Mirror*, March 7, 1860.

²⁴ "Massachusetts in the Field," *The Middlebury Galaxy* [Middlebury, Vermont], September 26, 1848; "The speech of Mr. Lincoln at the City Hall," *Hartford Courant*, March 6, 1860; *Daily Mirror*, March 7, 1860; Recollection from a "Hingham resident" in: Eggleston, *Lincoln in New England*, 21.

qualities in their deportment and speech Lincoln personified what print media had depicted as mythically virile and earthy at once.

By the end of his Cooper Union speech, many took notice of Lincoln's high political acumen, yet he did not strike the audience as possessing gentlemanly qualities. Keenly aware of his urban northeastern audience, one Lincoln referred to Mary Todd as "reading audiences," Lincoln attempted to shore-up his presentation at Cooper Union with more dignified references to George Washington and Thomas Jefferson to demonstrate cultured sophisticated political reasoning. Even after polishing up his speech, Lincoln nevertheless struck the Cooper Union audience as a western stump speaker. His subtle attempts at dignifying his speech landed flat on the refined New York audience, yet his entertaining style held their attention.²⁵ The audiences left believing they witnessed stump speech filled with comical stories heightened by his body language. Some found his anecdotes "incongruous," but by and large the smiles, laughter, and applause proved that the crowd was entertained.²⁶ One attendee noted that it would "provoke a

²⁵ The sophisticated Cooper Union audience—comprised of women and men—was not restrained in their reaction to Lincoln. Mason Brayman, a friend of Lincoln's from Illinois then living in New York City, sat towards the back of the auditorium. His daughter later recounted her father's worry: "I have often heard him say that he felt some secret apprehension in regard to Mr. Lincoln's free-and-easy style," noted Mason, "which though it exactly suited his hearty western audience, would hardly be understood by the critical audience who were there to listen to him for the first time." Interestingly, Lincoln appeared to dial back his typical Illinois carefree stumping style by tempering familiar humor and appearing with a solemn visage, to Brayman's surprise. Although Brayman thought Lincoln subdued, the audience found nothing tame about him. Brayman even wondered, "if he were indeed the same old neighbor, their own Abe Lincoln." The day after the performance Brayman detailed how Lincoln acted in a letter to William H. Bailhache, Co-editor of the *Illinois State Journal*. It struck Brayman as humorous, "To see a man who at home, talks along in so familiar a way, waking up and down, swaying about, swinging his arms, bobbing forward...standing up stiff and straight, with his hands quiet [at Cooper Union]." While Lincoln seemed rigidly calculated to those who had witnessed his Illinois stump performances, to the New York audience his hand gestures, anecdotes, western pronunciation of words, and wrinkled clothes appeared anything but subdued. If he attempted to appear more dignified it was lost on the New York audience who had never seen him perform before. By taking the podium at Cooper Union Lincoln took the mantle held by elite statesmen, like William Seward, but his association as a country bumpkin, including connotations of intellectual and polite inferiority were both obstacles and, due to its novelty, entertainment. Mason Brayman to William H. Bailhache, February 28, 1860 from, "Lincoln Before a New York Audience," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 49 (Summer, 1956), 214; Anonymous [likely Mary Gowdy. Mason's daughter] "Cooper Institute Speech," Tarbell Collection; Bonnie E. Paul, Richard E. Hart, *Lincoln's Springfield Neighborhood* (Mount Pleasant, South Carolina: Arcadia Publishing, 2008), 136-137.

²⁶ John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln: A History* (New York: Century Co., 1890), 224.

smile” to say that Lincoln appeared “eloquent” that evening.²⁷ James Clarke commented a few days later that “He [Lincoln] indulges in no flowers of rhetoric, no eloquent passages.”²⁸ For them, Lincoln’s achievement had yet to prove himself equal to New York patricians. New Yorkers gathered in anticipation of hearing a genuine stump speech at Cooper Union, despite Lincoln’s best efforts not to appear as a one. His notoriety in the northeast rested on his laurels as a stump speaker, an entertainment that the Cooper Union audience expected hear.²⁹

William Schouler applauded Lincoln’s “keen satire” for his ability to interject comical analogies into political arguments in 1848. One of the memorable satirical analogies he made that evening likened Martin Van Buren to a man with a pistol that fires from both ends. If Van Buren was elected, Lincoln predicted, then both his supporters and opponents would suffer fatal gunshot wounds. Lincoln’s exuberance in his voice and body language drew his audience into finding the western stump speaker intriguing. A few days later in Cambridge, Lincoln compared the Democratic Party to a yankee peddler. Wryly declaring that a peddler hawking promises pants that are, “large enough for any man, small enough for any boy.” The simplicity, humor, and relatable nature of his illustrations fell on the audience as unique. New England gentlemen were steeped in an oratorical tradition that prized sophisticated prose, wit, and humor and disparaged colloquial expressions. Still, audiences found Lincoln’s unencumbered approach of

²⁷ Henry B. Rankin, *Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1916), 249.

²⁸ *Daily Mirror*, March 7, 1860.

²⁹ Reports that surfaced long after the event noted that the audience was “wild with enthusiasm” and “spell-bound” after seeing the “captivating” Lincoln. But most of these reports—written after Lincoln’s martyrdom in 1865—are vague about why Lincoln initially appeared strange, but still emphasize how his brilliance quickly enveloped the crowd. Abram J. Dittenhoefer illustrated this by claiming, “after he [Lincoln] began to talk his awkwardness deified.” Still the hagiography surrounding Lincoln obscures an analysis of how cultural assumption of western stump speakers in the urban northeast. Despite Lincoln’s best efforts to appear more respectable before the New York audience, the crowd saw him as an idiomatic stump speaker. Brown, *The Every-day Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 316; Abram J. Dittenhoefer, *How We Elected Lincoln: Personal Recollections of Lincoln and Men of His Time* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1916), 14-15.

weaving stories, humor, and analogies into his presentation both eccentric and amusing. As the *Providence Journal* reported about Lincoln's comicalness in 1860, "He abounds in good humor and pleasant satire, and of gives a witty thrust that cuts like a Damascus blade."³⁰ Lincoln appealed to an increasingly consumer-minded public who were *habitués* of astonishing sights and being amused.³¹

Audiences did not find the content of Lincoln's humor offensive, though Lincoln's stump speech often struck respectable audiences as unbecoming for a political oratory. Still, the innocuous manner that he presented yarns to audiences avoided the scorn of highbrow attendees. "One characterizing feature of all the stories told by Mr. Lincoln on the stump," Ida Tarbell writes, was that while the "subject matter of some of them might not have been entirely unobjectionable, yet the manner of telling them was so peculiarly his own, they gave no offense even to refined and culture people. On the contrary they were much enjoyed." Benjamin Lindsey Jr., the editor of the Whig newspaper *Daily Mercury*, reported that the crowd at New Bedford on September 14, 1848 was "enlivened by frequent flashes of genuine, racy western wit."³² Interestingly, Lindsey notes that the New Bedford crowd was "enlivened" rather than offended by Lincoln's "racy" language. To his eastern listeners, Lincoln's initial impression fully represented the curiosity of western politics. His ability to tell amusing stories attracted more than a politically-minded audience.³³

³⁰ "Lincoln in Rhode Island," *Providence Journal*, March 29, 1860.

³¹ *Atlas*, February 16, 1848; Fiore describes about the setting of Boston. "A short distance from his [Lincoln's] hotel, over on the Common, a Dr. Morrill was launching his hot air balloon, christened the *American Eagle*, on flights over the city...The Boston Museum boasted 'a half a million objects of interest'...The Horticultural Festival was in town the next day." Fiore, *Abraham Lincoln Visits The Old Colony*, 76-78; William F. Hanna, *Abraham among the Yankees: Abraham Lincoln's 1848 visit to Massachusetts* (Taunton, Massachusetts: Old Colony Historical Society, 1983), 50.

³² *New Bedford Daily Mercury*, September 15, 1848; Zephaniah W. Pease, ed., *History of New Bedford* (New York: Lewis Historical Publishing, 1918), 286-287, 389-390.

³³ Tarbell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 167; Tarbell, *Illustrations*, in Tarbell Collection.

The informality of his humor, dress, stories, awkward manners, and lanky physique subverted the code of statesmanlike decorum by not participating in it. Audiences looked on with a sense of condescension, though fascination by his idiomatic mode of presentation. His casual deportment and proclivity, as Tarbell notes, to “indulge in telling mirth-provoking stories when discussing political questions” beguiled genteel audiences.³⁴ George Monroe, who escorted Lincoln from Dedham to Cambridge in 1848, recounted his astonishment seeing the crowd pulse with enthusiasm at Lincoln, who had appeared so diffident in private. With his shirt cuffs and sleeves rolled-up—much to Monroe’s chagrin—the crowd roared with laughter at his jokes. Monroe observed, “His style was the most familiar and off-hand possible,” nevertheless Lincoln was received “favorably.”³⁵ While Lincoln’s height and western pronunciation turned heads, it was his colorful stories and manner of speaking that held their attention.

Eastern reading audiences were keen to hear the humor and yarns of western men. Rather than finding western life simply repugnant, eastern readers saw the contrast to refined decorum, the novelty, and loutish nature of the western humor particularly intriguing. Thomas M. Inge and Ed Piacentino, scholars of frontier humor, write, “In challenging the prevalent genteel standards of antebellum culture and the conventions of literary romanticism, southern frontier humorists helped to transform the American literary landscape. They accomplished this by privileging the way of life of southern plain folk, rustics, and backwoodsmen (and women), showcasing their raw colloquial speech over Standard English.”³⁶ A New York publication,

³⁴ Louis A. Warren, “Lincoln in New England,” *Lincoln Lore* no. 309 (March 11, 1935).

³⁵ William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, *Herndon's Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life* (Chicago: Belford, Clarke and Co., 1889), 385; *The Cambridge Chronicle* reprinted in Mary Alexina Smith, “My Fortune’s Made,” *Ladies National Magazine* (September 24, 1848), 117-118. This moral tale is a warning to young women and men about growing slothful after marriage. One sign of this indiscretion for Smith is men wearing “shirt-sleeves’ around the house.

³⁶ Thomas M. Inge and Ed Piacentino, “Introduction: The Humor of the Old South; or, Transgression He Wrote,” in M. Thomas Inge and Ed Piacentino eds. *Southern Frontier Humor: An Anthology* (Columbia:

Holden's Dollar Magazine, clearly identified this perspective in 1849. The author detected that “the jokes and humor of Western men are broader than those of the East, and the small talk of society is grandiose and sublime compared with the conversational coin of other parts of the world.” Western antebellum humor simultaneously evoked a repugnance, curiosity, and enjoyment from urban readers.³⁷ Isabella Bird toured the West, including Illinois, with expectation to be beguiled in 1854. Going “north-west,” was for her “an uninterrupted stream of novelty and enjoyment.” She continued, “In the West, more especially at the rude hotels where I stopped...the spectacle gratified me exceedingly, of seeing fierce-looking, armed, and bearded men.”³⁸ Print culture circulated the same message that Bird penned, that western men, though unrefined, were bizarre, humorous, and curious to eastern audiences. Interest in Lincoln’s oddity and mode of presentation was already afoot in the region even before he visited the northeast.

Within this context, eastern audiences understood Lincoln and western stump speaking as entertaining, but also with a condescending reluctance. A year before Lincoln’s tour, Old Abe caught the eye of Boston journalist Joseph Buckingham. Buckingham embarked on a tour of the northwest, including Illinois, to report the fascinating, grotesque, and peculiar western way of life to New England newspapers during the summer of 1847. Early in his travels Buckingham sat next to Lincoln on his train ride from Chicago to Springfield. Although Buckingham had never heard of Lincoln prior to meeting him on the train, he recorded his fascination with the congressman’s stories, homespun wit, and absence of decorum. Upon arriving in Springfield Buckingham took special note of the rude taverns, trusting folk, and informality practiced on the floor of the State House. He summed up his impression by noting that “The character of the

University of Missouri Press, 2010), 18; Jennifer Hughes “Frontier Humor and Genres of Cultural Conquest” in Ed Piacentino eds. *Southern Frontier Humor: New Approaches* (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 2013).

³⁷ “The Bluffs of Semla, On the Mississippi,” *Holden's Dollar Magazine* 4, no. 5 (November 18,49), 643.

³⁸ Isabella Bird, *The Englishwoman in America* (London: John Murray, 1856), 50, 52,152.

Western people is in every respect different from ours.”³⁹ Buckingham’s reaction of fascination and refined contempt towards Lincoln in 1847, captures the general impression of him in the northeast in 1848 and 1860.

Buckingham’s assessment matched the one that congressman Lincoln received when he first took the stage for his ten-day tour of Massachusetts in Worcester. The *Springfield Daily* of Massachusetts immediately marveled at the little-known Illinois Senator’s “off-hand, talking style, so peculiar to Western orators.”⁴⁰ Towards the end of Lincoln’s tour the *Excelsior*, a Boston temperance paper, reported about stump speeches that, “a novelty has been introduced into the electioneering tactics.” The author makes no reference to Lincoln but notes that the new trend of stumping was formerly only found in the frontier.⁴¹ Schouler recounted how Lincoln was more a theatrical act than a purely political speech. “The chief charm of his address,” wrote Schouler in the *Atlas*, “lay in the homely way he made his points. For plain pungency of humor, it would have been difficult to surpass his speech.” The reason for this reaction was, in part, Lincoln’s colloquial manner of relating to audiences. Careful pronunciation and vocabulary were marks of gentlemen and the opposite indicated vulgarity, yet audiences listened attentively. Linguistically he pronounced his words in a backcountry manner, giving refined eastern audiences an initial impression that the Illinoisan was boorish, but it also affirmed that he was truly an authentic show of western politics in the urban northeast mind. Audiences looked, listened, and laughed at Lincoln with delight as they would with a clever showman playing on the public’s desire for amusement rather than esteemed statesman.

³⁹ John M. Scott, “Lincoln on the Stump and at the Bar.” ALPL. Springfield, Illinois; Harry E. Pratt ed. *Illinois as Lincoln Knew it: A Boston Reporter’s Record of a Trip in 1847* (Springfield, Illinois: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1938), 30, 33-34, 37-38.

⁴⁰ “Whig State Convention,” *Springfield Daily Republican* [Mass.], September 14, 1848.

⁴¹ Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 2 Vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). I: 63-64; “Stump Speeches,” *Excelsior, a Journal of the Sons of Temperance*, September 23, 1848.

Henry J. Gardner, who later became Governor of Massachusetts, said of Lincoln's appearances on stage, "His [Lincoln's] style and manner of speaking were novelties in the East." The interest in listening to Lincoln was in part, according to Gardner, that "No one had ever heard him on the stump, and in fact knew anything about him."⁴² As a bona fide stump speaker, Lincoln attracted more than those holding Whig or Republican political allegiances. James Clarke reported on the audience at Manchester's Smyth's Hall as, "a flattering one to the reputation of the speaker. It was composed of persons of all sorts of political notions, earnest to hear one whose fame was so great."⁴³ At Exeter, it was reported that half the audience were Democrats. They came to experience a western stump speaker and, also, for the chance to see a western buffoon not only embarrass himself, but the Republican Party as well. The *Palladium* reported on March 8, 1860 that Democrats spilled into Meriden's Town Hall next to Republicans "to witness a fizzle."⁴⁴ While the Massachusetts newspaper reactions to Lincoln's political points were generally split down partisan lines, the entertaining qualities of a stump speech transcended political party.

Democrat and Whig editors noted the same peculiarities of Lincoln as a western orator and both agreed that he succeeded in entertaining audiences in 1848. What the political editors disagreed about was the soundness of Lincoln's political argument. On the 21, the *Old Colony Republican*, a Whig paper, published a favorable report of Lincoln's political discourse. The editor who wrote the article was either Charles I. Reed or Benjamin F. Presbrey—both officers in the local Whig Club. Although they generously appraised his political reasoning, they candidly

⁴² Rugg, "Abraham Lincoln in Worcester," 34; Gillespie's recollections of Lincoln from Joseph Gillespie Papers, ALPL, Springfield, Illinois; "Taylor Meeting in Worcester," *Boston Republican*, September 14, 1848.

⁴³ *Manchester Mirror*, March 7, 1860.

⁴⁴ Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 104; Jacobs, "Abraham Lincoln on the New Haven and the Boston and Albany," 27; *Palladium* [New Haven, Connecticut], March 8, 1860.

described his appearance and speeches. The editor observed, “His manners and the way he advanced upon his hearers and cultivated their acquaintance until he became perfectly familiar with them, can any man think of without being tickled?” He then concludes by capturing Lincoln’s technique. “Arguments and anecdote, wit and wisdom, hymns and prophecies, platforms and syllogisms,” the editor explained, “came flying before the audience like a wild game before the fierce hunter of the prairie.”⁴⁵ Likewise, the *Old Colony Republican* editorial mirrored the *Bristol County Democrat and National Magazine* impression of Lincoln’s presentation. Although the Democratic editor averred that his political views were “inferior,” the editor then noted that it was the combination of Lincoln’s “gesticulation,” “management of his voice,” and “comical countenance” that “all conspire to make his hearers laugh at the mere anticipation of the joke before it appeared.”⁴⁶ Despite the disagreement over Lincoln’s political stance, both papers reported that he captivated audiences.

Laughing and grinning reactions to Lincoln are telling clues to how audiences perceived him. The response of sudden laughing is a characteristic of Duchenne laughter. Neuropsychological research identifies that Duchenne laughter requires two factors: a spontaneous subcortical response to external stimuli and insouciance of social inhibition. Biological Anthropologists Matthew M. Gervais and David S. Wilson suggest that Duchenne laughter is most frequently provoked in circumstances when a “nonserious social incongruity” is seen or heard. The incongruity northeastern audiences experienced with Lincoln, exhibited in his uncouth appearance and behavior in a region where the prevailing impression of a politician was a genteel statesman, evoked this blithe reaction. Second, this type of laughter results from the viewer and/or hearer suspending an earnest state of mind. Brain activity reveals that humor

⁴⁵ *Old Colony Republican* accessed from Fiore, *Abraham Lincoln Visits The Old Colony*, 13,14.

⁴⁶ *Bristol County Democrat*, September 29, 1848.

indicates a non-serious state of mind. Michael Apter contrasts the “paratelic mode,” where Duchenne laughter occurs, with the task-oriented “telic mode.” Non-Duchenne laughter is most commonly expressed in polite, conversational laughter. Whereas non-Duchenne is self-aware laughter, Duchenne laughter is unencumbered by social etiquette. The raring laughter that audiences responded to Lincoln with was the same type of laughter aroused from frontier stump speeches and minstrel shows in the urban northeast, but it was traditionally loathed among eastern political audience.⁴⁷

The degree of laughter evoked often grated against refined society. Duchenne laughter, by all visual signs, represented a lack of self-control and therefore repulsed members of the audience closely in tune with a refined social imaginary. Giving way to passion in this manner directly opposed the calculated behavior of refined society. Richard Bushman notes, “A gentleman would no more appear with his vest unbuttoned than he would laugh aloud with mouth wide open,” both habits of Lincoln. Lord Chesterfield, a chief architect of mid-eighteenth century and early-nineteenth century gentility, warned young men to avoid laughing. For him, laughter revealed a “weak mind” and “low education.” Those who absorbed the spectacle of Lincoln with boisterous laughter engage suspended their telic mode. The desire of amusement drew novelty, like Lincoln. Consequently, the lust for amusement undermined the tradition of genteel authority.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Matthew M. Gervais and David S. Wilson, “The evolution and functions of laughter and humor: A synthetic approach,” *Quarterly Review of Biology* 80 no. 4 (2005): 395–430; Michael J. Apter, *The Experience of Motivation: The Theory of Psychological Reversals* (London: Academic Press, 1982); Dacher Keltner and George A. Bonanno, “A study of Laughter and Dissociation: Distinct correlates of laughter and smiling during bereavement,” *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 73 no. 4: 687-702; Michael J. Apter, “A Structure-Phenomenology of Play” in J.H. Kerr and Michael J. Apter eds. *Adult Play: A reversal theory approach* (Amsterdam: Sewts & Zeitlinger, 1991), 13-29.

⁴⁸ Lord Chesterfield’s formal title was, Philip Stanhope, the 4th Earl of Chesterfield. Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 66; John Trusler, *Principles of Politeness and of Knowing the World; by the Late Lord Chesterfield* (Philadelphia: Robert Bell, 1778), 61-63.

Lincoln won urban audiences over the same way theater performance would. The Illinoisan kept his audience laughing and fascinated them with his manner of speaking. The *New York Gazette & Courier* published a reader's reflection of Lincoln's Cooper Union speech. The unnamed attendee wrote, "We were admitted at two shillings per capita, to listen to one of the most satisfactory forensic entertainments of the seasons." The author stated that Lincoln was anything but a "finished statesman." While Lincoln do not impressive as a politician, the *New York Times* remarked that he, nevertheless, attracted attention. "If there shall be any novelty," declared the *Times* editor, "it will be in the mode of presenting the facts, and the inferences and observations." Like other performers and lecturers who came to the city Lincoln was perceived as a passing show. On the morning of his speech the *Tribune* reminded readership to come see him because, "It is not probable that Mr. Lincoln will be heard again in our City this year if ever."⁴⁹ The fickle nature of entertainment in the city never gave way to rest; viewers had to catch a glimpse before the next, newer display came along. Lincoln speaking style was unusual, but not foreign to his urban audiences in 1848 and 1860.

Lincoln's speeches were received in much the same way urban audiences consumed stump speeches. Stump speeches grew as a popular form of entertainment in New York City and Boston by way of minstrel shows and reports of frontier politicking. Northeastern audiences found these speeches charming for their oddity, humor, and general portrayal of western manhood. Parodies of stump speeches were incorporated into antebellum minstrel shows as a means of caricaturing the marginality of western manhood. Incorporating multiple types of manhood illustrate why Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace called the urban minstrel show an

⁴⁹ "Letter from New York," *Gazette & Courier* [New York], February 28, 1860; *New York Times*, February 28, 1860; *Daily Tribune* [New York], February 27, 1860.

“exercise in creative cultural amalgamation.”⁵⁰ By the mid-1830s, minstrel shows began popping up in and around Boston. By the late 1840s, organizers attempted to change the shows’ vulgar reputation by standardizing them into three-acts. Although these shows were primarily musical, the second act, or “olio,” contained a stump speech of a politician or lecturer performed in blackface burlesque. To accentuate the satire, the blackface actor often spoke with a frontiersman dialect in ill-fitting clothes while gesturing wildly and contorting his body awkwardly.⁵¹ These stumping spectacles were mere grist for theater managers looking to fill their auditorium and editors trying to catch their readerships’ eye. Since novelty was fodder for capitalist entertainment, it was only a matter of time for representations of the frontier to appear on northeastern city stages. As Jerry White remarks about nineteenth century London entertainment, “novelty was what audiences demanded.”⁵² Minstrels offered this kind of striking novelty to urban northeast theatergoers by staging inferior and comical manhoods. “The minstrel show,” Eric Lott adds, “is one instance in American commercial culture of an outland form exported to the northeastern city, rather than vice versa.”⁵³ The rise of stumping marks a moment when a genteel lyceum tradition was beset by mass entertainment. As compelling forms of entertainment, stump speeches and Barnum’s craft were part and parcel.

⁵⁰ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 490; Thomas Carlyle, *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1850), 146-181.

⁵¹ For an overview of stump speaking in Kentucky see: James Ramage and Andrea Watkins, *Kentucky Rising: Democracy, Slavery, and Culture from the Early Republic to the Civil War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2011), 83-84; William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999), 9, 196-197; Richard Butsch, *The Making of American Audiences: From Stage to Television, 1750–1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Charles Townsend, *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy* (Hanover, New Hampshire: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 122-123; Mel Watkins, *On the Real Side: Laughing, Lying, and Signifying—The Underground Tradition of African-American Humor that Transformed American Culture, from Slavery to Richard Pryor* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

⁵² Jerry White, *London in the Nineteenth Century: 'A Human Awful Wonder of God'* (London: Vintage Press, 2007), 278.

⁵³ Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 49.

Stump speeches performed as entertainment in the urban northeast were, as Lott puts it, “a species of inflated Barnum-speak.”⁵⁴ The connection between Barnum and stump speaking lie in both playing off emotion and drama to keep audiences rapt. Silver tongued, stump speakers drew their audience with a ceaseless array of wit, humor, stories, and straightforward arguments. According to the *New York Commercial Advertiser* in 1848, a “A man may be pardoned for faltering in delivering a lecture...but woe, confusion and utter rejection as an instrument of power await him who breaks down in a political stump speech.” The Barnumesque speech was predicated on rousing emotion through presenting with an unwavering self-assurance. “Right or wrong,” continued the *New York Commercial Advertiser* commentary, “well-informed or ignorant, he must be bold in speech and dogmatic in his assertion, and the weaker he feels his cause to be, the more vehemently and confidently he must advocate it.”⁵⁵ Blending politics and theater roiled audiences with laughter and fascination. Travelling showman, Sam Lathrop, made a career of incorporating stump speaking into his one-man routine. Advertised as a “circus clown,” Lathrop stirred up his paying audiences with bombastic, political-themed stump oratories. The *New York Herald* ran a notice for his show on March 31, 1853: “Sam Lathrop, the clown, takes his benefit this evening at the amphitheater, and puts forth an unusual array of attraction and comicalities. Sam advertises to take the stump and give his views on the state of the country generally.” Between the late 1840s until 1860 Lathrop toured

⁵⁴ Lott, *Love and Theft*, 47, 81.

⁵⁵ “The political stump speech,” *New York Commercial Advertiser* June 23, 1848; the *New York Herald*, as an example, ran advertisements for “Bryant’s Minstrels” and “Three Hunters: Stump Speech,” which appeared next to notices for Barnum’s American Museum. And, like Barnum’s American Museum, were located on Broadway in New York City. Stump speeches served as the main attraction for these shows. These shows included stump speeches as their main amusement for an entry fee of twenty-five cents. Most urban newspapers advertised minstrel shows that included stump speeches or stump speeches specifically during the late antebellum period. See: *New York Herald*, January 20, 1858; *New York Herald*, January 22, 1858.

the country bellowing caricatures of political arguments with comedic absurdity. Politics and theater was never more intertwined in the North than with rise of stump speeches.

The success of stump speeches in urban theater carried over to the political realm in New England. Anson Burlingame, elected a Massachusetts Free Soil Congressman, was a stump speaker and crowds responded to his speeches with the same enjoyment and laughter to speeches as they did to Sam Lathrop's performance. Burlingame cut his teeth in the colloquial political culture of Ohio and practiced law in Michigan before settling into a political career in Massachusetts. Western stumping in both Ohio and Michigan had left an indelible impression on his presentation style; like Lincoln, he found that his oratory was a novelty in New England. Charles T. Congdon, an editor for the *Atlas* who shared Burlingame's Free-Soil allegiance, was fraught with distaste for Burlingame's stumping style. With heightened attention, Congdon traced Burlingame's politicking in 1854 with displeasure. As Congdon nipped, "he [Burlingame] had brought from the West the bad rhetorical peculiarities of the Western stump, he exhibited a certain lack of severe culture." Further, Burlingame's dearth of refinement and his vernacular phrases were alarming. Yet, his simple vocabulary, informality, and sarcasm drew crowds. Despite his popularity, Congdon viewed Burlingame as second-rate politician and a traveling amusement, the same way he graded Lincoln. "I was sometimes embarrassed by the frankness with which he [Burlingame] spoke of his own deficiencies," recalled Congdon. And Congdon was not alone, other evaluations of Burlingame read the same. Congdon bluntly noted that he and his colleagues "made great fun of him," causing Burlingame to earn the reputation as "the pet of the Massachusetts Free Soil men." "If anybody had written of me in the same way [as Burlingame]," Congdon averred, "I doubt if I should have found the attack so easy to bear." Yet, despite being jeered at by his political peers Burlingame delighted audiences. Even

Congdon admitted that there was no other Free-Soil politician in Massachusetts more popular than Burlingame.⁵⁶

Lincoln, Corwin, and Burlingame regaled urban audiences as authentic stump speakers. They blurred the lines between entertainment and politics because, unlike entertainers like Lathrop, they were career politicians. Northeastern audiences were drawn to Lincoln because they found him seemingly contradictory; he was at once a reasoned politician whose manner of speaking seemed destined to entertain. The parallel reception Lincoln and Burlingame received illuminates the demand for the entertaining, though unrefined, qualities of stump speakers with sound political reasoning in the late antebellum northeast. Intrigued, audiences fixed their gaze, trying to reconcile this seeming contradiction. The *Daily Courant*, observed that Lincoln was engaging in his political intellect, but also full of casual stories. While able to address political affairs, the paper's editor noted, his "allusions and similes brought out the laughter of the crowd."⁵⁷ Asa McFarland, Republican editor of the *New Hampshire Statesman*, summarized Lincoln's Concord, New Hampshire speech in 1860 as a "rich forensic treat." McFarland reported that the Illinois "celebrity" stirred the crowd with his bizarre speaking style. While Lincoln spoke on a political subject matter, it was his stump speech that captivated the audience.⁵⁸

Refined tradition prompted audiences to dismiss the coarseness of a stump speech, but the burgeoning consumer imaginary countered this impulse. Despite the lowbrow association with western life, urban northeasterners who gathered to see and listen to Lincoln allowed

⁵⁶ Charles T. Congdon, *Reminiscences of a Journalist* (Boston: J.R. Osgood, 1880), 148-149; "Anson Burlingame," *Emerson's Magazine and Putnam's Monthly*, 3:35 (July, 1853), 544-547; *New York Herald*, March 13, 1854.

⁵⁷ Dewitt, *Lincoln in Hartford*, 10; *Daily Courant* [Hartford, Connecticut], March 6, 1860.

⁵⁸ *New Hampshire Statesman*, March 1, 1860.

themselves to get swept up in the entertainment of the show. Establishing himself as amusing, though, Lincoln failed to win the respect of a gentleman politician. While reports of Lincoln's speeches did not assume that he was much more than a philistine, they confessed that he was engaging. After speaking at Taunton, Massachusetts on September 21, 1848, the *Taunton Daily Gazette* reported that the audience at Union Hall that evening was thoroughly entertained by Lincoln. The editor noted his reception was due to him being "well-versed in the political tactics of the Western country." The *American Whig* of Taunton published appraisal was that Lincoln, "afforded us the pleasure of a specimen of Western eloquence." The careful preface of "western" in newspaper reports about Lincoln's presentation serve to slyly, but clearly, imply a sharp difference from polished addresses from eastern statesmen. Reactions to Lincoln's speeches regularly that it was amusing and some mention of Lincoln's western heritage.⁵⁹

At New Bedford's Liberty Hall, the second stop of Lincoln's tour in 1848, one attendee, Samuel Rodman, journaled his reaction to Lincoln in two short sentences. Although Rodman thought Lincoln's speech logical, he found it "not a tasteful speech;" a word that evoked his genteel disdain for Lincoln's lack of trained proprieties. Like his appearance, Lincoln's western sarcasm and stories were traditionally deemed uncouth in northeastern halls where statesmen exhibited gentlemanly honor.⁶⁰ Lincoln's western habits of presentation often clashed with polished air the cohort of Massachusetts Whig politicians he shared the stage with over the course of his ten-day tour in 1848. The influence their education, manners, lineage, and affluence leveraged was a continuation of colonial gentry. And, as a result, they only

⁵⁹ Fiore, *Abraham Lincoln Visits The Old Colony*, 23; *Taunton Daily Gazette*, September 21, 1848; *American Whig*, September 21, 1848.

⁶⁰ Samuel Rodman's diary entry for September 15, 1848 is found in Zepharriah Pease, ed., *The Diary of Samuel Rodman: A New Bedford Chronicle of Thirty-Seven Years: 1821-1859* (New Bedford: Reynolds Printing Co., 1927), 287; Fiore, *Abraham Lincoln Visits The Old Colony*, 3; Thomas, ed., *Lincoln, 1847-1853*, 93.

acknowledged the caliber of middle-and upper-class men as their peers. While urban Whig leaders shared the stage with Lincoln, they did not recognize him as their equal. Richard Bushman relates that although laborers might share Whig views with the wealthy, western men “were not genteel and did not belong in the drawing rooms.” Lincoln’s backcountry stump speeches would have struck Whig leaders as unorthodox and, even, disreputable. Still, the Whig party aimed at appealing to broader base than the standard urban Whig politician could. Kenneth Cmiel recognizes this tension in Lincoln. “Abraham Lincoln,” Cmiel writes, “called ‘the rail-splitter’ for populist appeal, drawled provincial wisdom in the rural Midwest. Refined Whig gentlemen, hungry for political victory, found themselves applauding the very invective they had previously condemned.”⁶¹ Although Lincoln’s western manhood clashed with the traditional decorum of Whigs, his ability to amuse audiences from various social classes was politically advantageous to the party. Thus, although Lincoln and refined northeastern Whigs shared a political party, a stark cultural divide lay just below the surface of political consensus.

The aversion to Lincoln’s stump speech was forged out of a longstanding contempt for the practice in the northeast. While throngs packed into venues to hear stump speeches and left thoroughly entertained, high-brow print media had long dissuaded urbane readership from accepting them as appropriate forms of oration. *The Ladies' Repository*, a magazine for the refinement of women through education and comportment, called attention to the banality of stump speeches in an 1859 issue. “This [stump speech] is a westernism,” wrote *The Ladies' Repository* editor Davis Clark, “having its origin in the practice among backwoods politicians, in the day when public halls, balconies, store-boxes, and sugar hogsheads were scarce, of mounting a stump in the clearing to discuss the political topics of the times.” Stump speakers were

⁶¹ Bushman, *The Refinement of America*, 431; Kenneth Cmiel, *Democratic Eloquence: The Fight Over Popular Speech in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Morrow, 1990), 61.

condescendingly regarded as men who hardly knew “public halls” let alone had a “sugar hogshead” at their disposal.⁶² Stump speaking even attracted attention from across the Atlantic, and, it was not long before the trend fell under Thomas Carlyle’s scrupulous eye. In his 1850 publication, *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, Carlyle devoted one of these eight pamphlets specifically to the corrupting effects of stump speeches on the classical art of oratory. Although “amazed” by the theatrics of the “Kentucky” stump speakers, he protested that once the veneer of their logic was prodded it quickly crumbles. Not only did the cheap antics of these speakers appear “ridiculous” to him, but also tragic. The posturing of ostentatious stump speakers in the eloquent tradition of classical orators was, for Carlyle, an assault on true intellectualism. Nevertheless, the curiosity among antebellum urban northeast audiences to view an authentic show of western politics drew crowds, among both men and women, to hear and see Lincoln even if they walked away disparaging what they heard.

The clear contrast between Lincoln’s stumping style and the polished oratory of William Henry Seward evidenced the tension between a genteel political tradition and an emerging consumer imaginary in both 1848 and 1860. During Lincoln’s second visit to Boston on September 20, 1848 he first met and shared the political stage with Seward, who was later a rival and indispensable political associate. That evening Seward was the featured speaker at the theater, relegating Lincoln to the undesirable time slot of nine-thirty. The difference between the two men was striking: Seward, an adept gentleman politician in every respect, and Lincoln, the personification of a sucker. “No greater contrast could have existed than between Seward and

⁶² Joseph Hodges Choate observed that the audience at Cooper Union comprised “All the learned and cultured men of the city, editors, clergymen, statesmen, lawyers merchants” Choate, “Abraham Lincoln at Cooper Institute,” in Nathan William MacChesney, ed. *Abraham Lincoln: The Tribute of a Century, 1809-1909* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg & Company, 1910), 277; Davis Clark, *The Ladies' Repository* 19 (1859), 113; Lisa J. Shaver, *Beyond the Pulpit: Women's Rhetorical Roles in the Antebellum Religious Press* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2012), 106-108.

the tall Illinoisan who sat with him on the platform,” writes Jordan Fiore about the difference between the two at Tremont Temple.⁶³ Seward opened his speech with a vignette of Caesar’s *Roman Republic* followed by a quote from Cicero, which he used as a transition to discuss the dire condition of the nation. References to history—especially ancient history—were marks of a genteel intellectual. The only points in his speech that he deviated from directly addressing political issues were when referencing the New Testament of the Bible and telling an anecdote of a “Saxon Bishop in the olden times.” His speech garnered many cheers, but no laughs. Lincoln’s enthusiasm was manifested in his constant pacing and impulsive gestures while Seward always maintained a calculated and dispassionate deportment. Seward rarely used humor, frequently incorporating French words and referenced ancient history.⁶⁴ Although the *Boston Courier*’s claimed Lincoln’s speech in 1848 “drew down thunders of applause,” it was dwarfed by the response to Seward’s dignified oratory. “Mr. Lincoln moved his Boston audience,” the *Courier* wrote, “but Mr. Seward made the first speech, and was looked upon as the chief star, of course.” The *Springfield Republican*, of Springfield, Massachusetts, observed that Seward’s “well known character” made him “respected throughout the country,” an interpretation that matches historian Reinhard H. Luthin’s survey of newspaper editor’s reactions to these speeches. Not one of the six newspapers that reported on the Whig meeting that evening printed Lincoln’s full speech. According to Luthin, “Four mentioned that he made an address; of these four, three called him ‘Abram’ Lincoln. Another of these six journals devoted two full columns to Seward’s speech and dismissed Lincoln’s in less than forty words.” Although

⁶³ Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne, *A Frenchman in Lincoln's America*, 2 vols. (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1974), II: 184-5; William Seward to Frances Seward (September 24, 1848), in William Seward and Frederick W. Seward, *Seward at Washington, 1846–1861* (New York: Derby & Miller, 1891); Fiore, *Abraham Lincoln Visits The Old Colony*, 79.

⁶⁴ “Political Meeting,” *Springfield Republican*, September 22, 1848; Hartley, *The Gentleman's Book of Etiquette*, 15.

slightly snubbed Lincoln was lightly praised by *Norfolk County* newspaper as having an “entertaining manner.”⁶⁵

Unlike Lincoln, Seward found himself at home among his political kin in Boston in 1848. Duvergier de Hauranne remarked years later that Boston “is at the true center of American civilization; it is from here that intelligence radiates to shine upon this unfinished nation.” Seward felt this too. In a letter to his wife, he described the audience at Tremont Temple as “a most intelligent and respectable body of men.” Seward’s words reflected the venue’s history as a milieu for cultivated audiences. In 1830, the Tremont Theatre Investigation Committee worried about “Mass vulgarity” because of the large, diverse crowds the shows attracted. In 1843, a Baptist congregation purchased the Tremont Theater and renamed it the Tremont Temple to redeem secular culture. Still, devote members worried that the venue would attract rabble wondering into to their services. Even after the venue was converted into a church it continued to provide non-religious entertainment.⁶⁶ George C. Lorimer in his history of the Tremont writes, “The public did not think of it [Tremont Temple] as a church, or associate it as a great hall, where during the week, entertainments were given, debates were held.” While historian Lawrence Levine convincingly argues that the nineteenth century American stage often brought the coarse and the elegant side-by-side, he also points out that pockets of genteel society desired

⁶⁵ Warren Jacobs, *Lincoln on the New Haven and The Boston & Albany Railroads* (Boston: The Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, Inc., 1934), 14; Reinhard H. Luthin, *The Real Abraham Lincoln: A Complete One-Volume History of His Life and Times* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice—Hall, 1960), 631; “Abraham Lincoln at Dedham,” *Atlas*, September 25, 1848; Hancock, *Norfolk County*, September 24, 1848.

⁶⁶ James W. Cook ed., *The Colossal P. T. Bamum Reader: Nothing Else Like It in the Universe* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2005), 82, 284; Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 56-57.

segregating from the lower sorts.⁶⁷ The Tremont Temple exemplified this impulse among genteel society to claim distinction in their entertainment.

In reflecting on Lincoln's Cooper Union speech early twentieth century journalist and historian, Elisha Jay Edwards, identified the contrast between the Lincoln and Seward. He wrote that the audiences' mood "was a half expectation that the great men of New York would be disappointed and that it might be discovered that what passed for great public speaking on the prairies would not meet the high standard established in New York by William M. Evarts and William H. Seward." Just two days after Lincoln's Cooper Union address, Seward delivered a major speech on the Senate floor. Posturing himself for the Republican presidential nomination, he waxed eloquent on the topics of Kansas, John Brown, and slavery. Dignified in appearance and performance, northeast newspapers lauded his ability. The *New York Evening Post* gushed that the speech "distinguished for its insight, its ability, its manliness, its comprehensive and statesmanlike views, and a certain noble impassiveness, which shows the author is as superior to his opponents in moral nature as he is in intellect."⁶⁸ This was a sharp divergence from how Lincoln was viewed at Cooper Union. Audience members did not describe Lincoln as "statesmanlike," "noble," or praise his "moral nature." Interestingly, the general cultivated sense of genteel appearance in the urban northeast led to both disgust and intrigue with Lincoln—disgust with how Lincoln smacked of boorishness and intrigue with how peculiar he appeared.⁶⁹

⁶⁷ George C. Lorimer, *Tremont Temple Sketch Book: Containing a Brief History of Tremont Temple Church* (Boston: Tremont Temple Baptist Church, 1896), 7; Lawrence W. Levine, *Highbrow/Lowbrow: The Emergence of Cultural Hierarchy in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), 21.

⁶⁸ Elisha Jay Edwards, *The Solitude of Abraham Lincoln* (Putnam, Connecticut: Privately printed by Gilbert A. Tracy, 1916), 10; Holizer, *Cooper Union*, 168; *New York Evening Post*, March 2, 1860; George E. Baker, ed., *The Works of William H. Seward* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1884), 4: 619-643.

⁶⁹ Edgar Allan Poe, *Tales and Sketches, 1831-1842*, Thomas O. Mabbott ed. (Cambridge: Belknap, 1969), 506-509; Abraham Lincoln to Mary Owens, Springfield, May 7, 1837, in Roy Basler, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, Press, 1953), 1:78; For information on Lincoln as an outsider to the polished etiquette of Springfield see: Ida Tarbell, "Galley: He Knew Lincoln," 2, Tarbell Collection.

Nevertheless, hailing from the West did not immediately mark western men—especially politicians—as stump speakers in the urban northeast. It was not uncommon for respectable men and frontiersmen with crude habits to sprout from the same region. As a staunch supporter of the Whig cause Schouler often arranged for speakers from western states to canvas Massachusetts. By the time Lincoln arrived in Worcester on September 12, 1848, Schouler had already promoted Whig meetings and lectures throughout the summer. In a letter to the Speaker of the House, Robert Charles Winthrop of Boston, Schouler notified him that a “Charles Ripley Esq. of Louisville Kentucky,” a gentleman lawyer with impeccable taste, was speaking at the Tremont House the following month. Schouler penned to Winthrop that Ripley, originally from the Old Bay State, “is one of the very best Taylor speakers in the country,” and therefore could serve as a fine speaker at any Whig Club or a Rough and Ready Club meeting. Despite the popularity of Kentucky producing heroic frontiersmen in the northeast, the make-up of Kentuckians better resembled landless farmers on the verge of financial ruin with a scattering of educated, wealthy men. Small cities in western states, like Lexington and Springfield, grew into bastions of refinement in antebellum America. As these regions produced gentlemen respected across the country, upending any neat idea of men residing in the west as rude and uneducated.⁷⁰

Lincoln’s speech at Cooper Union was perceived differently than the other two speakers the Young Men’s Republican Association sponsored earlier that year: Francis Preston Blair of Missouri, on January 26, and Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky, on February 16. Unlike Lincoln, Blair and Clay were not perceived as stump speeches, despite emanating from a state associated with the West. Both men were established statesmen with ample experience catering to

⁷⁰ Stephen Aron, *How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1999); William Schouler to R.C. Winthrop Washington, July 26, 1848 William Schouler Papers, MHS. Boston, Massachusetts.

northeastern audiences. Although Blair's father, Francis Preston Blair Sr., hailed from Kentucky, he was founder and editor of Washington D.C.'s *Globe* newspaper. Raised in the capital with the advantage of a prestigious family, Blair received a classical education before attending Princeton, where he graduated with honors. His pedigree and references to Washington and Jefferson throughout his Cooper Union speech evidenced to the New York audience that he was indeed a venerable statesman.⁷¹ Clay was cut from a similar cloth as Blair. Born into a wealthy and proper family Clay was nurtured in the art of gentility. Upon earning a law degree from Yale University, he settled in Lexington, Kentucky, where he established himself as a southern gentleman, editor, and politician. One of the many lectures Clay gave, "On Beauty," illustrated how deeply a genteel ethos was ingrained in his worldview. An editor for the New York weekly literary publication, *The Opal*, described Clay's lecture as exceptional instruction for acquiring "taste to appreciate the beautiful." The editor esteemed Clay for the fact that he hailed from the West and exhibited the dignity of a "scholar and gentleman." New Yorkers, contended the editor, "are glad a son of Kentucky had it [a taste for beauty]" because it marks the "rapid march of civilization and refinement in the West." The editor posited that spreading morality and culture westward depended upon the population acquiring the gentility Clay espoused.⁷²

While Blair and Lincoln received a warm response from the Cooper Union audience, Clay proved the most popular among the three speakers the Young Men's Republican Association sponsored. Clay not only drew a full house, but the crowd was so moved by his

⁷¹ David G. Croly, *Seymour and Blair Croly: Their Lives and Services* (New York: Richardson and Company, 1868), 222-224.

⁷² "Editor's Table," *The Opal* 5 no. 2 (1855): 61; H. Edward Richardson, *Cassius Marcellus Clay: Firebrand of Freedom* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1976); Roberta Baughman Carle, *The Last Gladiator: Cassius M. Clay* (Berea, Kentucky: Kentucky Imprints, 1979), 123; Keven McQueen, *Cassius M. Clay: Freedom's Champion* (Paducah, Kentucky: Turner Publishing Company, 2001).

speech that the following day “enthusiastic admirers” honored him by giving him a one hundred-gun salute in Central Park. James Briggs, who organized all three speeches, was so impressed by Clay’s performance that he wrote his wife to gush about her husband’s brilliant performance. In the minds of Cooper Union attendees, Lincoln was a far cry from the dignified nature of both Blair and Clay. While many in attendance found Lincoln’s speech intelligently crafted, it was his embodiment of the West that monopolized the audience’s attention.

Two days after Lincoln left Massachusetts for Chicago the *Norfolk County* reflected on Lincoln’s visit and in considering Lincoln’s objective the editor writes, “He aimed at not much more than to be bright, effective and talking with his audience, and his success was perfect here.”⁷³ Fascination with the genuineness of Lincoln’s frontiersman speech and body management broke the social conventions of what constituted a politician and a gentleman in New England. Lincoln gave no serious impression that he was attempting to pass as a polished statesman. The public quickly recognized that he was not attempting to claim rank as a genteel man, rather he was winning spectators and undermining the traditionally genteel atmosphere by putting on a show of western manhood in the process. His tours exposed how urban northeasters desire for novelty and entertainment served as a means for the reception of a marginalized, western display of manhood. Similarly, the Republicans organizers concerned about Lincoln’s Cooper Union speech did not fret over whether Lincoln would toe the Republican Party line or cogently preach the party doctrines; they worried, instead, that the audience would see him as a picayune politician and nothing more.

In keeping with the traditional expectations of politicians, the Democratic *New York Herald* spurned the humor and curiosity of Republican stump speeches to their readership. The

⁷³ *Atlas*, September 25, 1848.

paper's editor, James Gordon Bennett Sr., bemoaned the vulgar practice of stump speaking and of low-brow entertainment generally.⁷⁴ With Clay, Bennett anticipated a stump speech, though Clay did indeed deliver a more respectable speech than a stump speech. The *Herald* printed the article, "Another Republican Stump Orator," on February 15, 1860, the day before Clay spoke at Cooper Union. The editor, James Gordon Bennett Sr., barbed eastern Republicans for inviting a "Little band of itinerant stump orators, under the guise of lecturers, addressing political speeches to audiences in all the principal cities and towns." Respectable society, in turn, "pay their money to hear a discourse upon some interesting and importance topic," but instead they are treated to a "travelling Barnums of the republican party."⁷⁵ After the speaking series, the *New York Herald* took a jab at Republicans for pandering to the baser sentiments by presenting stump speakers to paying Cooper Union audiences. The editorial, "Twenty-Five Cent Patriots," sarcastically slammed New York Republican clubs for inviting "a number of 'distinguished' Republican orators." Pointing out that these "'lectures' were extensively advertised in the daily newspapers and by larger posters placarded in various parts of the city," the author blasts the clubs for tricking their patrons, including many women, into attending the "most radical republican stump speeches." And, "To hear these 'lectures' each adult was mulcted in the sum of twenty-five cents." This novel means of attracting interest in the Republican cause was, to the editor's chagrin, met with disapproval. But, despite a general reception, "the more intelligent portion advocating open doors in the future, to listen to the lucubrations of political stump speakers," the native environment for these spectacles.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ For more information on James Gordon Bennett Sr. see: James L. Crouthamel, *Bennett's New York Herald and the Rise of the Popular Press* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989).

⁷⁵ "Another Republican Stump Orator," *New York Herald*, February 15, 1860,

⁷⁶ "Twenty-Five Cent Patriots," *New York Herald*, April 17, 1860,

As part of a partisan attack, Democrat editors barbed Lincoln's stump speech to that of a poor stage performer. Gideon Welles, a Democratic, newspaper editor, and future member of Lincoln's Cabinet, observed that the popular "caricature" of Lincoln was a result of his renown as a western stump orator in the winter of 1860. "He is not Apollo, but he is not Caliban," Welles observed.⁷⁷ Stage performance was a natural comparison to Lincoln. Shakespeare's Caliban was marked by oafish behavior and beastlike appearance, epitomized a savage. Early nineteenth-century Shakespeare scholar William Hazlett described Caliban as one with "uncouth gabbling and emphatic gesticulations"; the comparison between the two no doubt resonated with educated readership.⁷⁸ Edward H. Rollins, editor of the *Coos Republican*, advanced this Caliban impression of by writing, "[the] oddities and peculiarities which would seem to detract from the efficiency of the orator [Lincoln], all go to gain the sympathy of his hearers and to make his speeches what they are."⁷⁹ Still, Lincoln's Caliban-like qualities did not deter most; rather they instantly intrigued and slyly confronted conceptions of eastern notions of a manly body.

Democratic editors focused their efforts on discrediting Lincoln and the Republican cause for pandering to the masses out of financial motives. In an attempt to paint Lincoln a sordid politician, reports circulated soon after Lincoln left New York City that his speeches in the northeast were motivated solely by money. The poignant critique of Lincoln's motivation—and the practice of making politics a profit-making form of entertainment generally—delivered a blow to impressions of his manhood. Shortly after Lincoln's Cooper Union speech exposés claiming that he was a catchpenny country bumpkin looking for a quick buck appeared in *New York Tribune* under the title, "Sharp Work." The editor lashed Lincoln for profiting from his

⁷⁷ *Daily Evening Press* [Hartford, Connecticut], March 6, 1860.

⁷⁸ William Hazlett, *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (New York: Wiley and Putnam, 1845), 117.

⁷⁹ Edward H. Rollins, *Coos Republican* [Lancaster, New Hampshire], March 6, 1860.

gimmicky stump routine at Cooper Union. Asserting that profit-making opportunism, not political conviction, placed him among the ranks of stage performers playing to the crowd the editor took aim at Lincoln's. He then proceeded to lampoon the Illinoisans by calling him, "The principal actor attached to the black republican dramatic corps," because he received 200 dollars for his "metropolitan *debut*." His engagements in New England furthered Lincoln's intention of profiting from his political stump routine. The editor concluded by estimating that Lincoln will received fifty dollars for each of his following twelve performances in the northeast, making his East Coast tour worth a total of 800 dollars.

These attacks were also leveled at the Republican Party for engineering his tour. The *Nashua Gazette* protested that Lincoln, "Has been trotted around this state by the Republicans during the past week. It is rumored that he would have made a speech here, but he asked \$100 for his services, and the *Nashua Republicans* considered him worth only half that sum." The critique concluded by calling Lincoln a "prosy speaker." In Dover, rumors circulated that Lincoln received 100 dollars for his performance there.⁸⁰ Even after Lincoln was nominated in May these critiques were still waged against Lincoln. Right before Lincoln won the Republican nomination, the *New York Herald* editor James Gordon Bennett attempted to expose Lincoln as a "peripatetic politician" who performed only to collect his 200-dollar lecture fee. Lincoln's "coarse and clumsy jokes" exposed his speech as "unmitigated trash," scathed Bennett. Editors took their shots at Lincoln's intention, exposing that his base manly nature was a far cry from the noble intentions of refined politicians.⁸¹ His unpolished style and lack of elegant taste evidenced Lincoln's moral ineptitude.

⁸⁰ *Nashua Gazette*, March 8, 1860; Page, *Abraham Lincoln in New Hampshire*, 45, 70.

⁸¹ Lincoln received criticism for making between fifty and 100 dollars a speech while touring New England. *Atlas and Argus-Albany*, May 21, 1860; *Boston Post*, May 21, 1860.

Since Lincoln's reputation was threatened by receiving money for his Cooper Union speech, New York Republicans confronted the issue. At a Young Men's Republican Committee meeting in March, the group that helped sponsor Lincoln's New York visit, a member identified as "Mr. Spencer" decried the practice of paying politicians to speak. Paying performers is acceptable, announced Spencer, when it is "George Christy for dancing, or Mrs. John Wood for acting at the Winter Garden, or Forrest for impersonating the character of Shakespeare, but he was not willing to pay men for addressing republican meetings." Other members echoed Spencer's objection by calling Lincoln's fee "Shameful."⁸² At the core, Republicans had to confront claims that Lincoln was simply using his western persona for personal gain rather than high purpose of moral order traditional genteel manhood claimed. For skeptics—of the *debonair* sort—thoroughly western men were ne'er-do-wells, money grabbers, and lacked proper civility, of which Lincoln was one.

The cultural climate of the urban northeast proved receptive to Lincoln's country twang, bawdy yarns, and comic delivery. Although Lincoln's colloquial manner of communicating appealed to the masses in the urban northeast, refined listeners—even those of the same political party—could find him disagreeable for those same traits. For all this, curiosity served as his ticket to stand before the polished, the educated, and the careful judges of conspicuous manliness. Yet, in the process of gaining popularity with quintessentially western presentation style, Old Abe ostracized himself from traditional gentlemen. These cultivated sorts winced as they watched Lincoln relate to audiences. Nonetheless, New York City and New England crowds eagerly listened to Lincoln because they found his manner of speaking, his stories, and

⁸² Reports that Lincoln was paid for others during his northeastern tour were unfounded, but he was criticized for profiting from his Cooper Union performance for months afterward. "The Young Men's Republican Committee," *Tribune* [New York], March 15, 1860; Louis A. Warren, "Lincoln's \$200 Speech," *Lincoln Lore* no. 1378 (September 5, 1955).

his humor all unusual and entertaining; in so doing Lincoln contradicted refined notion of how a gentleman should address audiences.

The strong reactions to Lincoln illustrate a powerful current running through urban antebellum America. As the refined tradition and consumer imaginary battled against each other, the desire to consume entertainment provided a platform for Lincoln as a western stump speaker in the urban northeast and began to wear away genteel presumptions. Those who came to set their gaze on Lincoln found his western speech, garb, and ignorance of statesmanlike decorum thoroughly entertaining. Listening to Lincoln with condescension, yet inoculated with a consumer imaginary, these individuals at once cast judgement and allowed themselves to be gratified by a western stump speaker.

CHAPTER THREE

Mediating a Former Rail-splitter: Lincoln's Manhood in Northeast Print During the 1860 Presidential Campaign

William Glenn, editor of the Baltimore newspaper the *Daily Exchange*, correctly gauged Lincoln's future fame to his Baltimore readership after the Chicago's Republican Convention on May 23, 1860. He observed that outside the Northwest, "All express surprise at the result, and none know exactly what to think of it." After briefly covering the details of the Convention, Glenn put forward a candid prediction. He prophesized: "He [Lincoln] will be sustained, too, even by those Republicans to whom his nomination was made distasteful; for all the customary machinery will be brought to bear to bestow upon him a fictitious reputation. The materials are slight enough upon which to build a biography that shall be attractive to the masses." Keenly aware of how writers and editors took every opportunity to play upon popular appeal, Glenn intuitively foresaw how Lincoln's obscurity would ultimately serve to his advantage. "Out of these meagre materials some industrious and not wholly disinterested biographer will speedily fabricate a volume that shall serve as the text-book of Republican orators." Playing upon, "those familiar but endearing appellations which not only disclose to use the character of the man, but also his social standing. Some of the rougher sort rather irreverently designate him as 'Ole Abe.' Others, more considerate, and with a shrewd knowledge of the value of the prefix, speak of him as "Honest old Abe." As Glenn correctly sensed, Lincoln was marketed as a rail-splitter cut from the same cloth as the thrilling western men portrayed to northeastern audiences on stage, in

novels, and through images. In this chapter I argue that newspaper editors and campaign biographers exploited the remarkable virility popular culture associated with men west of the Appalachian Mountains to craft Lincoln as an authentic western man to urban northerners.¹

Responses to Lincoln as a source of entertainment exposed the tension that northeastern audiences felt between his western manhood and a refined manhood in the weeks following the Republican presidential nomination on May 18, 1860. The portrayal of western men in novels, theater, and images instilled in northerners a filter through which one could view Lincoln's western manhood. A rising consumer industry manufactured Lincoln's western image in such a way that he transcended being stigmatized for a rude comportment. While northeastern society generally regarded Lincoln as vulgar, the commercial appeal of western men in the northeast whet the public's appetite for any material they could read or hear relating to Lincoln. This chapter considers how editors and biographers played upon Lincoln's western manhood and then probes how it served as another source for tension between genteel refinement and a consumer imaginary.

Editors and biographers went beyond identifying Lincoln as a stump speaker, an exhibit, or yoking his rail-splitting past to the northern laborer cause during the 1860 presidential campaign; they circulated the idea that he had exceptional physical strength and courage to northeastern readers. Urban newspapers and book publishers in the northeast were widely circulated, thereby wielding a formidable influence across the country.² A consumer

¹ Glenn elaborated on the popularity of age and honesty being associated with Lincoln. Glenn writes, "Now, although age and honesty are both valuable qualities, and entitle to a certain amount of respect those who possess them, yet they are not of themselves all-sufficient." William Glenn, (untitled article on the front page), *Daily Exchange*, May 23, 1860.

² Popularity and power of the press reached all social classes. Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace inform that New York City had the most profitable newspapers with the largest circulation in the country by mid-century. They write, "By 1860 seventeen book-printing firms were manufacturing over three million dollars' worth of volumes for the national marketplace. New York City, with 2 percent of the country's population, produced over 37 percent of its total publishing revenue." Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 527, 676-677, 681.

imaginary—which stimulated interest in entertainment over all else—enabled authors the malleability to recast Lincoln’s western manhood from a stump speaker and exhibit of western yeoman to a heroic, gun-wielding frontiersman. Tales and myths of the wilderness of Kentucky, circulated by authors like James Fenimore Cooper and Timothy Flint, popularized the impression of the “West” in the minds of northeastern audiences. Although Lincoln biographies were distributed throughout the North, the northeast showed a particular interest in Lincoln as the standard bearer of western manhood.

A year before the presidential campaign the idea of circulating a biographical account of Lincoln east of the Alleghenies came to Jesse Fell. After a trip to New England in the summer of 1859, Fell—a lawyer from Bloomington, Illinois and enthusiastic supporter of Lincoln—noticed that Lincoln was largely unknown in the region and sensed that the narrative of a former rail-splitter who had risen from the dregs of frontier society to success as a politician would strike a chord with easterners. Fell—having spent his early years in eastern Pennsylvania—was well acquainted with the perceived difference between men from east and west of the Appalachian Mountains. Aware of the potential interest in Lincoln’s narrative, Fell asked the former rail-splitter to provide him with an autobiographical sketch in November, a request to which Lincoln acquiesced in December. The personal narrative reached Fell in Bloomington, and, without delay, Fell sent it to the editor of eastern Pennsylvania’s *Chester Country Times*, Joseph Lewis.³

³ Abraham Lincoln wrote the three prosaic autobiographical accounts between 1858 and 1860. The first, sent to Charles Lanman in June of 1858 for the "Dictionary of the United States Congress" curtly listed his place of birth, education, and employment history. The second, drafted for Jesse Fell on December 20, 1859, largely related his educational journey. For his third and final autobiographical account in June of 1860, Lincoln penned more than 3,200 words for John Scripps of the *Chicago Tribune*. Yet, in none of the three did he paint himself as either physically or courageously exceptional. After passing his statement along to Scripps Lincoln made a point of saying, “it is great folly to try to make something out of my early life.” Although Lincoln did not depict himself as a brawny, intrepid western man—a perception eastern society had of men west of the Alleghenies—editors and campaign biographers crafted him in this light. Roy Basler ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* 9 vols. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1953-1955).

Upon receiving the sketch in January 1860, Lewis was both elated and slightly disappointed. Lewis, who had been pining for more information about the mysterious former rail-splitter from the West he heard murmurs of, now had an unrivaled opportunity to print the first in-depth narrative about him. Yet, what Lincoln wrote was meager and lacked sensation. Lewis, anxious at the opportunity of publishing a substantive piece on Lincoln, was disappointed by the dullness of the biographical content he had to work with. Replying to Fell on January 30, 1860, Lewis' irritation was apparent: "I want more. I want to know when he first began to speak. What was the success of his first efforts...What [is] his manner in speaking. What [is] the character of his gestures. What [is] his voice." Placing Lincoln's political disposition aside, Lewis went after what people were interested, the gripping details of a western man.⁴

On February 11, 1860, Lewis crafted Lincoln into a western hero by enhancing Lincoln's 700 words of bland, matter of fact information with fictitious anecdotes. Unlike future biographies, this one emphasized Lincoln's implicit kinship to Daniel Boone over his erudition as a lawyer and politician. Careful to accentuate his Kentucky heritage and the fact that Indians killed Lincoln's grandfather, Lewis painted Lincoln as a champion of the frontier. Waxing whimsically, he wrote: Lincoln's "hard experience of a frontier life, in which the struggle with nature for existence and security is to be maintained only by constant vigilance and efforts. Bears, wolves and other wild animals still infest the woods, and young Lincoln acquired more skill in the use of the rifle than knowledge of books." Months after publication, Lewis updated Fell after Lincoln secured the Republican ticket for president on May 28, 1860. Lewis penned, "the people do not know as much of Mr. Lincoln as they might and desire to know." At a Pennsylvania Republican ratification meeting, information was incomplete. "The speakers could

⁴ Joseph Lewis to Jesse W. Fell, West Chester, 30 January 1860, Jesse W. Fell Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

say nothing about what the people wished most to know—something of the personal history and character of our nominee.” What these speakers desperately wanted to share and audiences hoped to hear were tales of Lincoln that aligned with the image of a western hero in the minds of eastern audiences.

Just as Fell embellished the biographical sketch, Lincoln’s friend at the *Chicago Tribune*, John Scripps did the same. Although it was significantly longer than the previous two autobiographical statements Lincoln wrote, it also lacked sensation. Scripps, in turn, took imaginative liberties with Lincoln’s words and by mid-July released a thirty-two-page biography. Injecting vivaciousness into Lincoln’s past he animated the environment Lincoln was bred in, Scripps waxed lyrical about how the West, “developed and nurtured a race of men peculiar for courage, herculean strength, hardihood, and great contempt of danger. Western annals abound in stories of these men. As a class they have become extinct, and the world will never see their like again.” Even though Lincoln did not share information regarding his physical strength or courage, Scripps accentuated both. He further added that “never shrinking from danger or hardships” proved Lincoln worthy. Scripps dramatically concluded his biography by averring, “courageously and manfully battling his way upward” through life proved him worthy. The biography was an enormous success, selling over a million copies.⁵

Romanticized impressions of western men did not originate in the West, rather they flowed out of the urban imagination. Walt Whitman, a careful surveyor of spectacle in his beloved New York City illustrates how a former rail-splitter captured the urban populace’s imagination and generated such enthusiasm.⁶ From the thirst for novelty grew the appeal of an

⁵ John L. Scripps, *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Chicago: Chicago Press & Tribune, 1860), 22, 33, 49; Horrocks, *Lincoln's Campaign Biographies*, 55.

⁶ Brett Barney, “Walt Whitman: Nineteenth-century Popular Culture” in *A Companion to Walt Whitman*, Donald D. Kummings ed. (Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 233–256.

authentic western man to assume authority. Two influences pushed Whitman towards prizing western manhood in political office: a rising consumer imaginary and a discontentment with the refined culture of politicians. An early desire to satiate desires offered an alternative to the vacuum left by the waning influence of European gentility. The longing for novelty and authenticity promoted the type of men who lived on other side of the Appalachian Mountains in the northeastern mind. Miles Orvell specifies the urban spectacles Whitman was steeped in that led him to look wistfully at western men. “The great displays of daguerreotypes in the Broadway galleries to the exhibition halls he [Whitman] loved to frequent,” formed Whitman’s appetite for sensation and displeasure with the tyranny of scripted etiquette.⁷ The search for authenticity, which exposed how imbued northeastern society was with imitating European taste, led Whitman to envisage a Lincoln-like folk hero.

In 1857, Whitman unknowingly predicted Lincoln’s election with eerie accuracy. He pinned with a youthful imagination for a western man to ascend to the title of Commander-In-Chief: “I would be much pleased to see some heroic, shrewd, fully-informed, healthy-bodied, middle-aged, beard-faced American blacksmith or boatman come down from the West across the Alleghanies, and walk into the presidency, dressed in a lean suit of working attire, and with tan all over his face, breast, and arms....At present, we are environed with nonsense under the name of respectability.”⁸ As a lover of the city spectacle who experienced the region west of the Alleghany Mountain range through photographs, his impulse to look West to find a genuine

⁷ For an analysis of how Whitman perceived Lincoln’s image see: Bonnie Carr O’Neill, *Literary Celebrity and Public Life in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (University of Georgia Press, 2017), 78-82; M. Wynn Thomas, “Whitman and the American Democratic Identity Before and During the Civil War,” *Journal of American Studies* (April 1981), 77; Orvell, *The Real Thing*, 19.

⁸ Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace describe Whitman’s curiosity as “omnivorous.” Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 709; Walt Whitman, *Complete Poetry and Collected Prose*, ed. Justin Kaplan (New York: Library of America, 1982), 1308, 1332, 1338.

American manliness exposes a synergy between rising consumer culture and the imagination kindled by popular culture. Leo Braudy describes the in which worldview Whitman was so thoroughly steeped: “Barnum and Brady made capital of what Lincoln exemplified: an interest turned into disinterest by a straightforward, unbuttoned, demystified presentation of one’s public self.”⁹ Barnum and Brady, both deft at crafting celebrities, played a part in steering the populace to see and spend their money viewing a cabin-bred scion of the West in Lincoln.¹⁰

Interest in western manhood received a boost when cultural intellectuals, increasingly disillusioned by French and English ideas of gentleness as a code for men to live by, looked west for an alternative. Herbert Spencer militated against the influence of gentility. Spencer, a prominent English social theorist and an author found in Lincoln’s own personal library, criticized the rules of etiquette in an 1858 essay. Spencer, frustrated with the privilege granted to those with elegant dress and careful manners, advocated for a system of merit based on natural intellect and ability. “The time is approaching,” Spencer predicted, “when our system of social observance must pass through some crisis, out of which it will come purified and comparatively simple.”¹¹ The sincerity of western men, juxtaposed the dishonesty of polished gentlemen, featured regularly in the minds of urban intellectuals in late antebellum America.

Ralph Waldo Emerson’s search for an authentic American tradition led him to appreciate many of the virtues gained from forging a homestead in virgin terrain west of the Appalachians; with a few reservations. Emerson gave qualified approval for western men in his 1860, *The Conduct of Life*. For Emerson it was the Illinois “Suckers” who “are really better than the

⁹ Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 504.

¹⁰ At the core, both Barnum and Brady were shrewd entrepreneurs. Mary Panzer argues that Brady was an ambitious businessman who believed he could make a fortune by following the armies. See Mary Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997).

¹¹ Herbert Spencer, *Essays: Scientific, Political, and Speculative* (London: Longman, Brown, Green, Longmans, and Roberts, 1858), 130, 132, 140, 150, 153.

sniveling opposition,” because they are “at least of a bold and manly cast.” His approval of western men grew out of his imagination of steely frontiersmen, an alternative to the obsession with European cultivated taste and proper lineage. Still, despite Emerson’s desire for an alternative to European refinement conflicted with his own love of luxury. Emerson explained:

...the ‘bruisers,’ who have run the gauntlet of caucus and tavern through the country of the state, have their own vices, but they have the good nature of strength and courage. Fierce and unscrupulous, they are usually frank and direct, and above falsehood. Our politics fall into bad hands, and churchmen and men of refinement, it seems agreed, are not fit persons to send to Congress.¹²

By preaching a remedy to money-grabbing politicians who preyed on their unsuspecting constituents, Emerson unintentionally eased Lincoln’s transition into the public eye of the northeast. The distrust of traditional statesmen and the fear of swindling confidence men cultivated a fertile northeastern landscape for Lincoln’s campaign.

Since the social and economic landscape was in flux at mid-century there was good reason for Whitman, Emerson, and Spencer to not only warn readers about politicians, but also imposters lurking in cities. Since, as Edwin G. Burrows and Mike Wallace state, “City people had to size up a stranger’s character from externals,” this flimsy system could easily be exploited by individuals for. The most apparent sign that European manners and taste were an unreliable system was the rise of fraudulent confidence men. Swindlers appeared as polished gentlemen in an attempt to gain the trust of strangers, undermining an entrenched method of discerning proper manly character. The *New York Herald* described a confidence man as “being a man of genteel appearance” in such exactness that their behavior and appearance was “worthy of Chesterfield,”

¹² Ralph Waldo Emerson, *The Conduct of Life: Nature and Other Essays* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1908), 181-182.

the foremost instructor of gentility.¹³ Once a confidence man established trust with a stranger they fleeced their mark into various scams like phony financial investments, borrowing a watch, or loaning money. Trust in this commercial terrain of late the 1840s and 1850s New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia gave way because, in the words of Walter Johnson, it “dissolved the ties of mutual confidence binding men together.” Doing business outside of the community was, “a leap of faith” since confidence men “embodied the fears of a world in which identity had been unmoored from geography,” Johnson further adds.¹⁴ Tricksters exploited the thin façade marking a man’s status. Herman Melville’s *Confidence Men* (1857) played upon these well-known urban fraudsters and, in a review of the book, the *Boston Evening Transcript* remarked, “countless are the dodges attributed to this ubiquitous personage.” Print disseminated both deviant and virtuous ideas of manhood to the public as entertainment.¹⁵

The dangers of confidence men were countered by calls for honesty and self-sufficiency as authentic badges of manhood. William Landels’ 1858 book, *True Manhood: Its Nature, Foundation and Development*, warns young men that the pretense of manhood was a grave social evil. Mere clothes without the fortitude of character was “superfluous.” For men aspiring to

¹³ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 694; “Arrest of the Confidence Man,” *New York Herald* July 8, 1849; “‘The Confidence Man’ on a large Scale,” *New York Herald*, July 11, 1849; Johannes Dietrich Bergmann, “The Original Confidence Man,” *American Quarterly* 21 (Fall 1969), 561, 562.

¹⁴ Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 34, 36, 128, 150.

¹⁵ John Tosh, the leading scholar of manhood in Britain, devotes a chapter to the rise of “manliness” over “gentlemanliness” during the mid-nineteenth century. Using literary works and secondary sources Tosh avers that politeness in Britain was increasingly seen as “no more than a mask to facilitate and conceal the ambition of the social climber.” Reactions to Lincoln demonstrate that northern ideas were evolving in the same direction. The widespread concern of confidence men appearing in dress, manners, and speech as genteel men spurred a new appreciation of the honest laborer. Although Gary Lindberg, William E. Lenz, Scott Sandage and Karen Halttunen have nicely written about the distrust of “confidence men” in the antebellum North they do not illuminate how this generated an appreciation for what Tosh calls an “authentic” manliness. John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinity in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), 83; Gary H. Lindberg, *The Confidence Man in American Literature* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); William E. Lenz, *Fast Talk & Flush Times: The Confidence Man as a Literary Convention* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985); *Boston Evening Transcript*, April 10, 1857; Bergmann, “Original Confidence Man,” 575-576.

pursue business he advises, “honesty is the guard against the many evils that may befall a man” and hard work forms the core of integrity.¹⁶ Northeastern instructors preached that men should learn from modest farmers and spurn antiquated genteel values. Samuel Smiles, in *Self-Help* (1859) remarked that once young men acquired the virtues gained from vigorous physical labor that they then should adopt cosmopolitan taste. More than 20,000 copies of Smiles’ book were sold in the first year of publication, and while it was first released in London it was soon published in Boston for aspiring American men.¹⁷ Ironically, in reaction, urban men were trained to perform a less tempered form of refinement. Karen Halttunan skillfully exposes how the call for men to present themselves genuinely just encouraged more nuanced performances. The pressure to communicate a humble honesty, writes Halttunan, “ultimately contributed to the theatricality of social life in the parlor.”¹⁸ Consequently urban audiences became increasingly interested in manly labor and Lincoln’s rail chopping past. The infatuation with Lincoln’s banal labor history and rusticity exposed that gentility—as an American social system predicated on the outer gloss—was increasingly seen as riddled with fissures by 1860. The democratic nature of a late antebellum urban entertainment pierced a traditionally unyielding genteel social order.

Hence Lincoln’s Republican nomination served as a meeting of politics and entertainment. Notably, some in New York City, Boston, and Philadelphia, cities that housed Barnum’s much frequented and advertised exhibits, immediately thought they were victims of a Barnum-sized humbug. Making the public believe that a former rail-splitter was the Republican nominee smacked of a showman’s work, attention catching indeed. In the section, “News in the

¹⁶ William Landels, *True Manhood: Its Nature, Foundation and Development* (London: James Nisbit and Company, 1858), 21.

¹⁷ Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help; with Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (London: John Murray, 1859); Peter W. Sinnema, 'Introduction', in Samuel Smiles, *Self-Help; with Illustrations of Character and Conduct* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. vii.

¹⁸ Halttunan, *Confidence Men and Painted Women*, 122.

City,” of the *New York Daily Tribune* on May 19, 1860, the editor observed that many thought the news of Lincoln’s nomination was a “hoax.” Similarly, the editor for the *Boston Post* first thought that the report of Lincoln’s nomination was a “cruel hoax,” only to discover that it was indeed not.¹⁹ “I remember,” recalled one unnamed Republican, “that when I first read the news [of Lincoln’s nomination] on a bulletin board, as I came down street in Philadelphia, I experienced a moment of intense physical pain; it was as though some one had dealt me a heavy blow over the head, then my strength failed me.”²⁰ Responses likened Lincoln’s winning bid to the ferocity of nature wreaking havoc on the hopes of northeastern Republicans. Sylvanus B. Phinney, editor of the *Barnstable Patriot*, opined that the nomination “fell like a thunderbolt,” another editor stated that the news had “fallen like an iceberg upon us here,” and still another lamented “[Lincoln’s nomination] comes over N.Y. and New England like a driving March storm over the rising July of our hopes.”²¹ Notwithstanding the jolt sent through the whole region by the news, demand for Lincoln—his likenesses, biographical sketches, and even rails chopped by his hand—skyrocketed after his presidential nomination in the northeast. Lincoln’s nomination produced a tension between a longstanding distaste for the coarseness of western men and a greater fascination in their virility and adventure conveyed in the urban audiences.

¹⁹ “Who is Abraham Lincoln,” *Barnstable Patriot*, June 5, 1860; *Boston Post* reprinted in *Barnstable Patriot*, June 18, 1860.

²⁰ Eggleston, *Lincoln in New England*, 33.

²¹ Sylvanus Bourne Phinney, *Biographical Sketch, Personal and Descriptive, of Sylvanus B. Phinney, of Barnstable, Mass* (Boston: Rand Avery Company, 1888); Ida M. Tarbell, *The life of Abraham Lincoln, drawn from original sources and containing many speeches, letters, and telegrams hitherto unpublished* (New York: The Doubleday & McClure Company, 1900), 364-365. A New Yorker reported that the “nominations have fallen like an iceberg upon us here, & some have already said in my hearing, that they will not support them.” We may huzza to the nomination, but our hearts reproach us with the emptiness of the sound—a bride pronouncing the nuptial vow, while her heart is far away with another.” Some New Yorkers called the telegraph reporting the news of Lincoln’s nomination a “liar.” Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), unedited version (online at www.knox.edu/documents/pdls/LincolnStudies), 1737, 1738.

The temperament of Lincoln's nomination struck George Lunt, the editor of the *Boston Courier*, as akin to a spectacle found in sports. By 1860, boxing was a growing entertainment past-times—one that put the virile physique on display, and Lunt waggishly played upon boxing theme in his editorial, "National Mill, Between Bill Seward, of New York, and Abe Lincoln of Illinois." It opens, "Great Prize Fight, which has occupied the attention of the people of the United States for several weeks past, took place at Chicago on Friday, May 18." Lunt, a Democrat, lithely chronicles the final days of the Republican Convention as a boxing match between Seward, as "champion of light weights," and Lincoln. Despite arriving in "splendid condition...he was too much refined for a rough western ring." Next the editorial narrated that Abe "jumped into the ring" to thunderous applause, riding on his victory of the Little Giant in "forty rounds." With the posturing finished, "The fight commenced" at noon. Lunt then, with a wry wit, narrated the convention as though it were a boxing match. At the end of the fourth round, "Abe appeared and Bill Evarts threw up the sponge, and the fight was decided against Billy."²² Politics was enmeshed with other forms of entertainment that put manhood on display.

Lincoln's sinewy form and spartan lifestyle gave the impression of honesty, and provided grounds for some northeast Republicans to look past his lack of civility. Ellis Henry Roberts, editor of a Republican Utica, New York newspaper, averred, "[the] characteristic that impresses me is his eminent truthfulness."²³ According to him, although Lincoln lacked what "we prize as debonair," Lincoln's western heritage redeemed his lack of refinement. Lincoln's uniqueness cultivated an imaginative association. As the *North American* of Philadelphia, a staunch Lincoln paper, noted, "the development of manhood West of the Ohio is essentially different from what

²² "National Mill, Between Bill Seward, of New York, and Abe Lincoln of Illinois," *Boston Courier*, May 19, 1860, reprinted in the, *Daily Exchange*, May 21, 1860.

²³ Louis A. Warren, "An Evening with Lincoln," *Lincoln Lore* no. 845 (June 18, 1945); *The Utica Morning Herald*, June 21, 1860.

we are accustomed to see East of it.” Lincoln, “a representative of that energetic, sturdy and progressive people, who have by their own strong arms and stout hearts, cleared the forest, plowed the prairies,” demonstrated, as the editor candidly concluded, “We have a right to be fond of the West.”²⁴ Juxtaposing Lincoln with the appearance of insincerity only furthered the caricature of him.

By May 18, 1860, just after Lincoln secured the Republican ticket, as many as six biographies were underway, and, between late May and his presidential nomination, sixteen biographies of the former rail-splitter were published in total. This number, however, does not include the biographical sketches of Lincoln published across East Coast newspapers, most of which were excerpted from these biographies. Naturally these biographers located Lincoln’s identity in Illinois and aligning him with the heroic men who overcame the wilds of Kentucky, fit with the campaign biography genre. Presented as non-partisan factual accounts, campaign biographies were crafted to elevate the candidate by impressing the reader, they often dwelled on the candidate’s military experience. By 1852 campaign biographers increasingly emphasized the subject’s young adult life and education, which was evident in the *Life of General Winfield Scott*, which sold roughly a million copies. Depictions of Lincoln as the archetypical western man provided the commercial appeal of courage bolstering a political end while also serving as mass entertainment in the northeast.²⁵ The first three campaign biographies of Lincoln nicely illustrate how he was constructed as a western man to attract attention. Thomas A. Horrocks detects that “it was the very image of the rough-hewn Western, rail-splitting candidate that ignited

²⁴ James F. Rusling, *Men and Things I Saw in Civil War Days* (New York: Eaton & Mains, 1899), 12; Osborn H. Oldroyd, *Lincoln's Campaign or the Political Revolution of 1860* (Chicago: Laird & Lee, 1896), 126-27.

²⁵ Gillian Silverman, “‘The Best Circus in Town’: Embodied Theatrics in the Lincoln- Douglas Debates,” *American Literary History* 21 (Winter 2009), 759, 769.

imaginations and generated enthusiasm for Lincoln's campaign."²⁶ His appeal and perceived ability as a presidential candidate rested squarely on the tacit qualities of rugged manliness. But, before biographies could be churned out in book form, newspaper editors beat them to print.

As public interest grew, Lincoln received more requests to detail his personal history. Just like he had done for Jesse Fell, Lincoln drafted a biographical sketch and passed it along to his friend at the *Chicago Tribune*, John Scripps. Although it was longer than the one he wrote for Fell and in the third-person, it, like the first, lacked sensation. The seemingly bland biographical narrative of Lincoln's life appeared most notably in Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* under the heading "Honest Old Abe," and in the May 26 edition of *Harper's Weekly*.²⁷ Despite having Lincoln's own voice, Scripps and Greeley opted to enhance his personal history to make him more luring. The day prior to publishing Lincoln's biographical sketch from Scripps' *Chicago Tribune*, Horace Greeley already underscored Lincoln's association with the West. On May 21, he painted a picture of Lincoln for his New York audience by describing him as a "genuine whole-souled manliness of a Kentucky-born, Western raised, self-educated, self-made man."²⁸

Sensing opportunity, Scripps scrapped what Lincoln wrote about himself and crafted him as a western hero. In June, Scripps released a thirty-two-page biography of Lincoln. Injecting vivaciousness into Lincoln's past he animated the environment Lincoln was bred in. He waxed lyrical about how the West, which "developed and nurtured a race of men peculiar for courage, herculean strength, hardihood, and great contempt of danger. Western annals abound in stories of these men. As a class they have become extinct, and the world will never see their like

²⁶ Thomas A. Horrocks, *Lincoln's Campaign Biographies* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2014), 58.

²⁷ Horrocks, *Lincoln's Campaign Biographies*, 46.

²⁸ *New York Daily Tribune*, May 21, 1860.

again.”²⁹ This was a sharp departure from Lincoln’s dull narrative. As Michael Burlingame points out Scripps’ “biography lacked a sentence that had appeared in his newspaper article,” the sketch Lincoln composed. The earliest printed biographical accounts of Lincoln followed Scripps’ lead, with little concern for accuracy. Evidence of the article’s reach came when it was republished across the country, including in the *Chicago Tribune*—a paper well acquainted with Lincoln—on February 23, 1860. The article served as material for the first three Lincoln campaign biographies. In turn, Lincoln was shaped into what urban, northeasterners assumed characteristic of western men. A description of Lincoln that appeared in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* on September 20, 1859, included the claim, “He has the appearance of what is called in the North-east a Westernman.”³⁰ It is little wonder then that Lincoln drew comparisons to Daniel Boone at his Cooper Union speech in February 1860.³¹

While Lincoln had appeared in East Coast newspapers, especially after Cooper Union and his brief speaking tour that followed through New England, coverage of him paled in comparison to the amount of media coverage he would receive after his Republican nomination.³² Lincoln’s nomination offered publishers and jobbers a prime opportunity to sell

²⁹ Scripps, *Life of Abraham*, 49.

³⁰ “Mr. Lincoln’s Personal Appearance and Manner” *Cincinnati Enquirer* September 20, 1859.

³¹ John Walker Harrington, “Lincoln Won Acclaim of City that Knew Little about him by Cooper Union Address in 1860.” Accessed from the “Early Speeches of Abraham Lincoln, 1830-1860” in the Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection.

³² Before Lincoln’s campaign biographies were in print, small sections of the northeast grew acquainted with Lincoln through his debates with Douglas in 1858, which were first offered for sale in Columbus, March 20, 1860. It is important to note that sales of the printed debates did not pick up until after Lincoln was nominated for president and not without objection from Douglas. The Little Giant protested directly to Follett, Foster & Company in a letter on June 9, 1860. He objected that the printed speeches incorrectly portrayed Lincoln’s oratory “force” and “mutilated” his argument. The depiction of Lincoln was off to a good start, thanks in part to the fact that Follett and Fosters were partial to him. Lincoln was aware that Follett and Foster plan to publish his debates. Lincoln to Jas. W. Sheahan, Esq Springfield, January 24, 1860. James W. Sheahan was editor of the *Chicago Times*. Basler, *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* Vol. III. Jay Monaghan, *The Lincoln-Douglas debates; the Follett, Foster edition of a great political document* (Harrogate, Tennessee: Lincoln Memorial University Press, 1943), 6; Jay Monaghan, “When Were the ‘Debates’ First Published?” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 42 No. 3 (September, 1949), 344-347; Stephen A. Douglas to Follett Foster & Company, June 9, 1860, Washington, DC, Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress.

Lincoln as an authentic western man to an eager readership.³³ These biographies had less to do with Lincoln and more to do with the popular myth of the heroic western man. David W. Bartlett's *Life and Public Services of Hon. Abraham Lincoln*, commissioned by the non-partisan New York publisher Rudd and Carleton, a publishing house known for humor and fiction, drew attention to his western association. As a Washington correspondent for the *New York Evening Post*, Bartlett's sense of New York City's cultural pulse shaped his presentation the former rail-splitter.³⁴ Both written for a northeastern audience and playing off the perception of the West, Bartlett opened his biography without even mentioning Lincoln, opting instead to spend the first two pages gushing about the type of man reared in the West. He opens by describing the cultural climate of the West.

If there is any one peculiarity of American nationality, any phase of American character by which it is distinguished in the eyes of discerning foreigners, any trait that will make it pre-eminent in history, it is that singular sort of energy, half physical and half intellectual, nervous, intense, untiring, which has achieved all of greatness that America has yet attained.... This energy is manifested in various ways and by various characters, but by none more emphatically than the backwoodsman.

The scene was set; the West—in all of its mystique, heroism, and grittiness—was the crucible from which Lincoln was forged. It is only after preaching about the virtues of the West that Bartlett introduces the protagonist. “In fact,” gushed Bartlett, “all the peculiarities and excellencies of Abraham Lincoln are those of a man whose life has been spent in the West.”³⁵ It was this backstory that evoked a type of man with grit and dogged determination among eastern

³³ Horrocks, *Lincoln's Campaign Biographies*, 45, 47.

³⁴ Madeleine Stern, *Publishers for Mass Entertainment in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980), 81-87; Horrocks, *Lincoln's Campaign Biographies*, 47-48.

³⁵ David W. Bartlett, *The Life, Speeches, and Public Services of Abram Lincoln* (New York: Rudd and Carleton, 1860), 12.

readers. Bartlett, with romantic imagination, wrote; “The backwoods-man represents this individual trait of American character.”³⁶

The Republican publishing house, Thayer and Eldridge, released their own Lincoln biography, *The Life and Public Services of Hon. Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, and Hon. Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine*. It also praised the mythical type of man that Lincoln represented. The author, Richard Josiah Hinton honed close to Bartlett and Scripps style by crafting Lincoln in the image of a Davy Crockett and Daniel Boone. In his biography, Hinton effused:

Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, is a genuine scion of the "Westland," and may therefore fairly be regarded as a representative man. Born on the "dark and bloody ground" of Kentucky, he was "raised" in Illinois, being brought to that then Territory at a period when the foot of the white man had barely begun to tread its magnificent prairies. With very limited opportunities of receiving an education, but much of that genial humor and quick sense of observation and appreciation, which is especially characteristic of our Western Pioneers, Abraham Lincoln stands to-day not only a representative of the early Western stock, the hunter, farmer, and pioneer, but an admirable example of what energy and ability can do for a man honestly using them in honorable pursuits. Not only in character but in person, is Abraham Lincoln a type of the West. Tall and loose-jointed, with large bones, the person of the future Hoosier President will attract attention everywhere.³⁷

Thayer and Eldridge publishing house was in the business of selling books and Hinton’s depiction of Lincoln fit that bill. But the shifting tastes in entertainment made the whole profession of publishing, in the words of William Wilde Thayer, “shaky.” Six months after Hinton released his Lincoln biography Thayer and Eldridge declared bankruptcy, for financial reasons unrelated to Hinton’s biography of Lincoln.³⁸

³⁶ Bartlett, *The Life, Speeches, and Public Services of Abram Lincoln*, 6.

³⁷ Horrocks, *Lincoln's Campaign Biographies*, 48; Richard Josiah Hinton, *The Life and Public Services of Hon. Abraham Lincoln, of Illinois, and Hon. Hannibal Hamlin of Maine* (Boston: Thayer & Eldridge, 1860), 5.

³⁸ William Wilde Thayer, "Autobiography of William Wilde Thayer," 22, unpublished manuscript, Charles E. Feinberg Collection of the Papers of Walt Whitman, 1839–1919, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Hinton's fiction of Lincoln touched on a widespread sentiment sweeping the northeast. Heralding Lincoln as "A pioneer of the Western Wilderness," Hinton and others propped Lincoln up based upon his manhood.³⁹ Yet, this was not reserved for the press, as orators also entertained audiences with the lore of Lincoln. Indiana Congressman, William Mckee Dunn, spoke of Lincoln virtues and corrected the misunderstanding of Lincoln's nickname, Old Abe, at Independence Square on May 26, 1860. Dunn waxed, "Out West, fellow-citizens, we use that word not as signifying 'aged,' but as a word of friendship and endearment. This man who we commonly call 'Old Abe,' He is in the very prime of manly vigor."⁴⁰ Lincoln's idiomatic nickname exposed a marked difference between the more genteel northeast and the laboring men of the northwest. Timothy R. Mahoney's research affirms that the label "Old" preceding the first name emerged from fraternal sociability in the late antebellum Old Northwest.⁴¹

Reports affirmed that Lincoln's western manhood resonated with northerners. Joseph Lewis relayed Pennsylvanians' interest in hearing speeches about the former rail-splitter. He updated Jesse Fell after Lincoln's popularity was swelling on May 28, 1860. "Tide of enthusiasm is rising beautifully," Lewis cheerfully wrote, "The nomination takes well with all classes."⁴² But eastern Pennsylvanians were still left wanting. "It must be confessed," Lewis penned, "the people do not know as much of Mr. Lincoln as they might and desire to know." At a Pennsylvania Republican ratification meeting, information was incomplete. "The speakers

³⁹ Hinton, *Life and Public Service*, 126.

⁴⁰ Louis A. Warren, "A Hoosier Congressman's Prophecy" *Lincoln Lore* no. 874 (January 28, 1946); William Mckee Dunn, *Speech of Hon. W. McKee Dunn, of Indiana, Delivered in Independence Square, Philadelphia, May 26, 1860, before a Mass Meeting, held to ratify the nominations of Abraham Lincoln and Hannibal Hamlin for the Presidency and Vice Presidency of the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Buell & Blanchard, 1860).

⁴¹ Timothy R. Mahoney addresses the difference between gentility in the eastern and western part of the country in: Mahoney, *Provincial Lives: Middle-class Experience in the Antebellum Middle West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 94.

⁴² Joseph Lewis to Jesse W. Fell, West Chester, 28 May 1860, Fell Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C..

could say nothing about what the people wished most to know—something of the personal history and character of our nominee.” Almost two weeks later on June 12, 1860, Lewis sent fell another report on Lincoln’s standing in eastern Pennsylvania. “A few days ago I addressed a ratification meeting in Delaware county ten days ago and spent my whole hour upon the Life and Character of our nominee and I never saw an audience more interested.” Lewis elaborated that all classes of people were spellbound by any information about his rustic frontier upbringing. Lewis ended the letter with a suggestion for Lincoln’s campaign; “It is important that the personal character, career and opinion of our nominee should be well understood.”⁴³

Interestingly the fascination of western men was cultivated in popular presses, most of which were located in New York City and Boston.⁴⁴ George Bancroft and Frederic Fennimore Cooper, leading authors in antebellum America, glorified western male characters in their novels and histories. Timothy Flint’s *Daniel Boone* ballooned into a national best seller. Not limiting himself to accurate information, Flint spiced up his narrative with his self-generated inventions of Boone’s encounters with bears, his immense courage, and near-death experiences. This scintillating novel was read with rapidity in the northeast. Since books were less accessible in rural regions folks read them repeatedly and more thoroughly whereas in urban northeast centers, especially New York City, books were voraciously consumed entertainment.⁴⁵

Tales of western men also spread ideas of the virtues gained from carving-out a life in the frontier. Lionizing the courage, self-sufficiency, and honesty of frontiersmen offered an answer to the fears that cities were bastions of vice and lack strenuous labor, which, in turn, increased

⁴³ Lewis to Fell, West Chester, 12 June 1860, Fell Papers, Library of Congress, Washington D.C..

⁴⁴ Horrocks, *Lincoln's Campaign Biographies*, 31.

⁴⁵ Daniel J. Herman, “The Other Daniel Boone: The Nascence of a Middle-Class Hunter Hero, 1784–1860,” *Journal of the Early Republic*. Autumn 1998, 18(3): pp. 429–457, 447; For how reading habits differed between urban and rural regions of the North see: Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986).

the interest in western heroes.⁴⁶ Burrows and Wallace attribute city dwellers' interest and production of the frontier life in fiction "as an antidote to alienated urban life." During 1850s sales of images, theatrical performances, and tales of the western men boomed.⁴⁷ Through these artifacts of culture, as Herman notes, Americans "began to revere Boone as the scion of a wilderness which no longer required subjection to the plow." Boone, one of, if not the most famous western figures, spurred the popularity of hunting, shooting for sport, traveling to view natural wonders in the northwest, and studying Indians among wealthier men.⁴⁸ The highly entertaining literature surrounding western manliness, in fact, had long been grooming eastern society for the likes of Old Abe.

Biographies of Lincoln riffed off the popular perception of Boone to attract readers. Shortly after being hired as Lincoln's personal secretary in early June 1860, John Nicolay was flooded with letters requesting a biological sketch of Lincoln. Nicolay quickly grew annoyed and issued a standardized reply to all biographical inquiries.⁴⁹ Joseph Barrett, the editor of the *Cincinnati Gazette* with a knack for evocative prose, released his biography of Lincoln on June 18, 1860. It proved one of the most popular biographies and he, interestingly, associated Lincoln with Daniel Boone six times.⁵⁰ Another early biography first published in, *Revue Des Deux Mondes*, a Parisian periodical, before being translated and circulated in England and America,

⁴⁶ Lessons that the frontier taught Boone to middle class young men deal with the advantage of whites over Indians. According to Herman, "middle-class men had proceeded beyond the manufacture and worship of an indigenous hunter hero" in Boone. Herman, "The Other Daniel Boone," 432, 438-439, 443, 457. For more on this subject see: Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1960* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

⁴⁷ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 471; Pamela J. Belanger, *Inventing Acadia: Artists and Tourists at Mount Desert* (Farnsworth Art Museum, 1999), 140.

⁴⁸ John Pettegrew, *Brutes in Suits: Male Sensibility in America, 1890-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007), 84-85; Herman, "The Other Daniel Boone," 450.

⁴⁹ Horrocks, *Lincoln's Campaign Biographies*, 45, 47.

⁵⁰ Joseph Hartwell Barrett, *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (Cincinnati: Moore, Wilstach, Keys & Co., 1860); Joseph R. Nightingale, "Lincoln's Friend and Biographer: Joseph Hartwell Barrett," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 96 no. 3 (Autumn, 2003), 206-229.

similarly linked Lincoln to Boone. The author, Clarigny, wrote, “The grandfather of Abraham Lincoln was one of the hardy squatters, who with Daniel Boone immigrated from Virginia to settle in Kentucky.”⁵¹ Biographers simply situated Lincoln with what was popularly known about the Old Northwest, and, as a result, aligned him with the myth of western men.

It is important to note that the trope of the western man in literature was well afoot before Lincoln caught the public eye in the northeast. The frontier, as described in antebellum print and depicted in landscape paintings, vividly evoked the mystery, trepidation, and natural virtues in the minds of northeastern audiences. City folk envisioned Lincoln in the same vein as the nation’s vast wilderness, like Niagara Falls or images of the virgin landscapes haunted by Indians romanticized in literature. Scottish metaphysician William Hamilton described the sublime in a notable mid-century lecture, which was published in the northeast by 1859. In the spirit of renowned enlightenment writer Edmund Burke, Hamilton claimed, “The sublime is essentially different from our feeling of pleasure in the Beautiful.” It is the multifaceted nature of the sublime that Lincoln evoked. “The beautiful attracts without repelling; whereas the sublime at once does both...our feeling of sublimity is a mingled one of pleasure and pain,—of pleasure in the consciousness of the strong energy, of pain in the consciousness that this energy is vain.” Lincoln roused a curiosity rooted in his origin and embodiment of the West, a stark contrast to prevailing notions of beauty and refinement.⁵²

⁵¹ Monsr. C. Clarigny, *The Election of Mr. Lincoln: A Narrative of the Contest in 1860 for the Presidency of the United States* trans. From the “Revue Des Deux Mondes” by Sir Willoughby Jones (London: James Ridgeway, 1860), 55.

⁵² William Hamilton, *Lectures on Metaphysics and Logic* (Edinburgh and London: Blackwood, 1859). 4 vols. II: 513; For how Niagara Falls and other fierce landscape encapsulated a nationalistic identity see: John F. Sears, *Sacred Places: American Tourist Attractions in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). Edmund Burke defined the sublime as a quality of art or experience that “excites the ideas of pain and danger” that produces “the strongest emotion that the mind is capable of feeling” and that causes “astonishment...horror, terror;...the inferior effects are admiration, reverence, and respect.” (305-306) and by things that are rough or rugged. Definitions in his *Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (302, 305-306. A powerful emotion—risk, primitive survival, conquest, self-sufficiency.

The perception of the West as sublime was spread by authors and painters alike. James Fenimore Cooper's novels described waterfalls, precipices, and even the natives that lurked in the wilderness in this awe-inspiring light.⁵³ Landscape paintings, especially large panoramas, soared in popularity in the antebellum urban northeast. Breathtaking re-creations of fierce landscapes offered city dwellers a feeling of wonderment. As Kevin J. Avery adds, "The destination they [landscape paintings] offered imaginary tourists were neither urban nor fashionable: their usual subject was the frontier." The popularity of these paintings, "commodified the tourist impulse," according to Avery.⁵⁴ P.T. Barnum also harnessed the astonishment of nature to lure spectators to his American Museum. In 1841, Barnum's opened a diorama of Niagara Falls and showcased real American Indians to museum patrons. As Robert Paul Schmick notes, "It was an attraction made desirable by its promise of the sublime that had already taken root in the American consciousness." Dioramas of natural landscapes and "authentic" Indians were a means of connecting to the "real sublime," offering the urban public access to the scintillating sights of their nation's wilderness in a secure location. Even advertisements for the American Museum promised to evoke the "sublime."⁵⁵

⁵³ Robert Schmick writes, "The catch word for Romantic depictions of the wilderness in the nineteenth-century was the *sublime*." He continues, "The landscape Cooper depicted was a sublime one. The hero woodsman's description of "Glenn's Falls [Glens Falls]" in *The Last of the Mohicans* was not only characteristic of the sublime, but it was representative of American scenery that was a necessary component of the work of contemporaneous, antebellum American artist and authors alike." Robert Schmick, "A Wilderness for All: The Transmuting and Transmitting of Wilderness Imagery by Print Media and Material Culture for Antebellum America" (PhD Dissertation, New York University, 2007), 47, 208.

⁵⁴ Kevin J. Avery, "Selling the Sublime and the Beautiful: New York Landscape Painting and Tourism," in *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861*, ed. Catherine Voorsanger and John K. Howat (New York and New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2000), 133.

⁵⁵ Despite Whitman's apparent pains to distinguish between "serious" museums and what would later be known as "dime museums," in the 1850s no clear boundaries divided the two. As a historian of dime museums has explained, even the most reputable museums, lacking governmental support, featured sensational items in hopes of attracting customers, so that "[b]y mid-century they had become venues for all sorts of popular entertainments and their education agenda virtually had vanished" (Dennett 1997: 22). Barnum transformed it into a business venture so successful that by 1850 it had become "the premier attraction of New York City" (Bogdan 1988: 33), 'By a Manchester Man,' "*An Essay on Humbug*" *Fraser's Magazine* 52 (July, 1855), 38; Schmick, "A Wilderness for All," 122: The *Athens Post* described Barnum as having the, "sublime art of humbug." "Barnum and Biddle," *Athens Post* [Ohio], June 13, 1851.

If Americans believed that the frontier was fraught with unbridled nature, they also believed Daniel Boone was the tamer of this wilderness. The myth surrounding Boone fueled the sublime in the public imagination. Authors took advantage of the pliability of this mystery by fashioning him in a transcendent light. As a result, Boone won widespread admiration for conquering “sublime” regions full of ruthless Indians, preying beasts, and unforgiving environments.⁵⁶ Any dichotomy between the physically sublime and Boone himself often broke down and blurred together. Flint’s narrative, after glorifying the scenery of the West with fear-inspiring prose, for example, made sure to include the vivid feeling that overcame Boone on his journeys through the backcountry.⁵⁷ William Henry Bogart’s *Daniel Boone and the Hunters of Kentucky* averred that Boone possessed “sublime courage” to pioneer wild landscape.⁵⁸ Boone advanced a fascination with the American West to an eastern readership.

And, like the West itself—full of dangers and mystery—the western man who overcame this frontier was fierce. Essayist, historian, and diplomat, Washington Irving, nicely illustrated this point in 1852: “In the West, and especially in Kentucky, we find the foundation of social existence laid by the hunters—whose love of the woods, equality of condition, habits of sport and agriculture, and distance from conventionalities, combine to nourish independence, strength of mind, candor, and a fresh and genial spirit.” Irving continued by maintaining that it was Daniel Boone, “who embodies the honesty, intelligence, and chivalric spirit of the state.”⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Emerson Bennett, *Ella Barnwell: A Historical Romance of Border Life in Kentucky, in the Time* (Cincinnati: U.P. James, 1853), 59, 112.

⁵⁷ Timothy Flint, *Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone, The First Settler of Kentucky: Interspersed with Incidents in the Early Annals of the Country* (Cincinnati: N. and G. Guilford and Co., 1833), 47; Timothy Flint’s *Biographical Memoir of Daniel Boone, the First Settler of Kentucky*, was reprinted fourteen times between 1833 and 1868.

⁵⁸ William Henry Bogart, *Daniel Boone and the Hunters of Kentucky* (New York: Miller, Orton, 1857), 95, 103.

⁵⁹ Washington Irving, *The Home Book of the Picturesque; or, American Scenery, Art and Literature*

Because frontiersmen were largely foreign to the eastern populace, it was only through print could eastern audiences meet men like Boone. Irving concluded, “Western character; its highest phase is doubtless to be found in Kentucky; and, in our view, best illustrates American in distinction from European civilizations.” It was the “cosmopolite influence of the seaboard” that most sharply contrasted with the West at this time in America. During the antebellum period, a growing contingent of Americans felt their identity was stunted by the shadow of European gentility, driving cultural intellectuals to find value in a manliness that appeared forged in the American West.

Fiction about ferocious western landscapes and the men who dared to tame it were not disconnected from politics. The *Buffalo Republic*, a democratic paper, noted, “Mr. Lincoln is in the enjoyment of a sublime obscurity...little is know of his genius outside of Illinois.”⁶⁰ The *Philadelphia Inquirer* called Lincoln, “a true type of the sturdy pioneers who settle the Western wilderness and made it blossom like a rose.”⁶¹ These descriptions, and many others, of Lincoln gave the impression that he, like other western men, triumphed in and over the frontier. According to Mark Neely, of the roughly 4,000 newspapers circulating in 1860, about eighty percent were political in nature.⁶² And of those 4,000 approximately 1,300 newspapers were published in New York City, nearly double that of the second highest city, Philadelphia.⁶³ A common practice of the time involved reprinting popular articles from other papers, which resulted in articles of Lincoln reappearing across the North in local and urban papers.

(New York: G.P. Putnam, 1852), 126; “Who can contemplate this Napoleon of *entrepreneurs* without a sort of sublime amazement?”; Neil Harris, *Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum*; Robert C. Cottrell, *Icons of American Popular Culture: from P.T. Barnum to Jennifer Lopez* (Armonk, New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2010).

⁶⁰ Williams, *A Rail Splitter for President*, 119.

⁶¹ Harper, *Lincoln and the Press*, 56.

⁶² Horrocks, *Lincoln's Campaign Biographies*, 71; Mark E. Neeley, Jr., *The Boundaries of American Political Culture in the Civil War Era* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

⁶³ Bryan F. LeBeau, *Currier & Ives: America Imagined* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 263.

Information about Lincoln circulated in the form of short campaign biographies and advertisements for his biographies were often sandwiched between ads for other western men, like Daniel Boone.⁶⁴ Rugged, wild, large, and altogether lacking a genteel polish verified that Lincoln cut his teeth in a wilderness complete with violent animals and the constant threat of Indian attacks.

It was, therefore, the ability of authors to conjure-up the sublimity of the West in the minds of northeast audiences that enhanced Lincoln's popularity while simultaneously countering European gentility. Gentility, at the core, was defined by methodical motion, smoothness, delicacy, and pettiness. A gentleman's manners, appearance, dress, conversation, and general temperament should conform to this ideal. Richard Bushman succinctly describes this relationship; "Gentility's devotion to beautiful nature put it at odds with both the ugly and the sublime." Those imbued in the refined ideal chafed against the rough-hewn Lincoln, but the commercial appeal of his western manhood circumvented these traditional codes with the cunning art of diversion.⁶⁵

The timing of Lincoln's rise in popularity was not by happenstance; the magnetizing tales of western men, namely Daniel Boone, primed the public for Lincoln to step into the limelight of the urban regions along the northern Atlantic seaboard. In an attempt to recognize the virtues that both the rural and urban settings offered men, *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial*

⁶⁴ Samuel Chester Reid, *The Scouting Expeditions of McCulloch's Texas Rangers; Or, The Summer and Fall Campaign of the Army of the United States in Mexico* (Philadelphia: G. B. Zieber and Company, 1847).

⁶⁵ Advances in technology in late antebellum America offered urban populaces new possibilities of viewing the fierce, uninhabited American landscapes and interpreting them as sublime. David E. Nye, *American Technological Sublime* (Boston: MIT Press, 1994), 26. Carole Fabricant detects that an emerging fascination with the grandeur and ferocity of nature was located deep within the cultural consciousness. Widespread gravitation to viewing and reading about the sublime derived from a feeling that humanity was helplessness before the power of nature. "The Aesthetics and Politics of Landscape in the Eighteenth Century," in *Studies in Eighteenth Century British Art and Aesthetics*, ed. Ralph Cohen (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 49–82; Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 98.

Review proclaimed that the grit acquired from working the land was an asset to metropolitan commerce. “The country is the place where the ore of manhood is found; but the city is the furnace and forge where the ore is sharpened into cutlery....Men should be born and developed in the country; but in the city they find a stimulus for every faculty, and a field for every power!”⁶⁶ Despite criticism of Lincoln’s laboring past from northeastern newspapers during his presidential campaign, northeastern audiences still flocked to see him, read about him, or seek out his likeness. The compelling nature of him as an authentic western man cut through cultural and economic lines. In sum, the debate over Lincoln’s labor history and lack of refinement that played out in eastern newspapers was, ultimately, eclipsed by his ability to intrigue the northeastern public.⁶⁷

Advocates of Lincoln attempting to appeal to a more refined audience, pointed to his sincerity. George Ashmun, Chair of the National Republican Convention, delivered a speech in late May before 2,000 people in Springfield, Connecticut. The speech was later republished in Boston’s *Semi-Weekly* and the *New York Times*. People along the Atlantic seaboard were reeling from Lincoln’s nomination and eager to learn more about the former rail-splitter.⁶⁸ Ashmun

⁶⁶ Freedman Hunt, *The Merchants' Magazine and Commercial Review* 24 (1851), 150-154.

⁶⁷ A distrust of genteel statesmen existed west in the Old Northwest, which offered Republicans an opportunity to contrast Lincoln’s manhood with the prevailing sort polished men who won political office in the Northeast. The *Marysville [Ohio] Tribune* blasted this type of politician in an editorial on July 4, 1860. “One argument our opponents use against Lincoln is that he is *ugly*. He is the very man we have been looking for. We want a man whose rough exterior, stern demeanor and honest look will be repulsive to the sneaking cormorants who crowd around the Capitol to look after the spoils. These bland, sleek looking, smiling Presidents, have not fared well in public estimation, so far as their administration was concerned. Therefore we will try one of the other kind—one of the working people’s kind.” Two-weeks after Lincoln’s Cooper Union performance the *Pomeroy Weekly* of Ohio boasted of his “honest” manhood. Claiming to have firsthand reports from three old acquaintances, the paper vouched that one of these acquaintances remembered him splitting rails by day and avidly studying by candlelight at night. Another attest that Old Abe would “walk ten miles in the mud to Springfield to borrow a law book.” The last, a lawyer in Springfield, professes that Lincoln always gave a helping hand to those in need. The image of an industrious, honest man who pulled himself up from the squalors resonated with readers. Lincoln’s westernisms allowed his proponents to seamlessly caricaturize him as the standard-bearer of western manhood, but it was likewise a rallying cry for his western supporters. “Abe Lincoln,” *Pomeroy Weekly*, March 13, 1860.

⁶⁸ Lauriston F. Bullard, “Abraham Lincoln and George Ashmun,” *New England Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (June 1946): 184-211.

professed the qualities of Lincoln's manhood as "intelligent, educated, earnest, sincere." "He is a Western man," Ashmun continued, who "lives in the midst of one of those great prairies that spread beyond the lakes. He is a man of Western origin and growth of that marvelous region. In the memory of the most of us these Western plains were inhabited only by the buffalo and the red man."⁶⁹ For Ashmun it was important to communicate to his audience that Lincoln proved his virility by overcoming nature's savagery, yet still possessed education and refinement—the qualities of a gentleman, in other words.

Following the *New York Times* publication of Ashmun's speech an editor educated their readers that Lincoln's first name was "Abraham" not "Abram," as commonly published by northeastern newspapers. Interestingly, it was likely Lincoln's western pronunciation of his name that led many to believe it was "Abram," a less Christianized name than Abraham. Biblical traditional, according to Genesis 17:5, holds that God, upon making a holy covenant with Abram, called him to change his name to Abraham, clearly demarcating him from his idol worshiping past. Thus, Abram marks the Biblical figure before encountering Yahweh, which led to his covenantal name, Abraham. Lincoln's name was regularly printed in the northeastern as Abram, a Biblical association with a heathen, before it was corrected during the summer of 1860.⁷⁰ George Templeton Strong, a New York City lawyer, noted this connection with the Old Testament patriarch on May 19, 1860 when penned in his diary that the "candidate being a

⁶⁹ "Letters and Documents Illustrative of the Presidential Contest. Observations and Indications from all Quarters. Hon George Ashmun on the Nominations," *New York Times*, June 1, 1860; Wayne C. Williams, *A Rail Splitter for President* (Denver: University of Denver Press, 1951), 95.

⁷⁰ Lincoln cleared up the uncertainty of his first name to George Ashmun. "My dear Sir," he penned, "It seems as if the question whether my first name is 'Abraham' or 'Abram' will never be settled. It is 'Abraham' and if the letter of acceptance is not yet in print, you may, if you think fit, have my signature thereto printed 'Abraham Lincoln.' Exercise your own judgment about this." Abraham Lincoln to George Ashmun, June 4, 1860, Springfield, IL, in Roy P. Basler, ed., *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (8 vols., New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1953), 4: 68.

namesake of the Father of the Faithful,” a common name for Abraham of the Bible.⁷¹ His past was reason to rebuff the vulgarity of his western manhood, regardless of how amusing it was. On May 21, 1860, the *Boston Semi-Weekly Courier* protested that there existed no reason to support Lincoln “except that he resides in the West.” This dismissive remark tapped into the spirit of consumerism infiltrating the cultural lifeblood, the northeast’s fascination with western men. Interest in the description and tales of western men grew concurrently with the population of eastern metropolises. Popular tales of western men dominated print culture, both cheap and expensive.

Other northeast proponents of Lincoln or his party tacked away from drawing attention to his western manhood. James B. Angell, the editor for the Republican *Providence Journal*, wanted to advocate for Lincoln presidency in fall of 1860, but had a refined distaste of his western behavior and manner of speaking, calling him an “awkward figure.” Angell, who had previously served as Chairman of the Modern Languages Department at Brown University, witnessed Lincoln speak in Providence in March of 1860. Later in life he recalled the poor reaction he had to Lincoln’s speech. Lincoln, he remembered, “was an entire stranger in Providence; and when he appeared on the stage with his long, lank figure, his loose frock coat, his hair cut rather close, his homely face, we were rather disappointed.” In the fall of 1860, Angell wanted to publish a substantial piece on Lincoln, the candidate his newspaper endorsed, so he asked John Hay, a former student of his at Brown working as a secretary for Lincoln, to compose it. Hay acquiesced, but Angell was disappointed with the result, claiming that it was written through “western eyes.” Angell disliked what Hays drafted because Hay, “dwelt unduly for my purpose on the qualities which had made him so popular in Illinois.” Angell took it upon

⁷¹ George Templeton Strong, diary entry on May 19, 1860, George Templeton Strong, *Diary of the Civil War, 1860–1865*, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 28.

himself to make it more palatable for his readership by “severely” editing Hay’s writing before printing it.⁷²

The startled reaction to the 1860 Republican nominee, and resistance to him from cultivated men like Angell, was due, in part, to Lincoln clashing with a refined ideal. Formed out of the cold mechanics of the market economy, refinement was the constellation guiding northeastern men to economic and social success. The market revolution set in motion an industrial cash economy that became the basis for how northeastern society gauged the worth of a man beginning in the 1830s. Vulgar and rude individuals were not only distasteful but were also believed to be sinful, as popular authors like James Fenimore Cooper reminded their readers. As Elizabeth Johns notes, Cooper’s “novels made unequivocal the conviction of many urban Easterners that the Westerner might have an admirable honesty and strength but that his social and moral standing was definitely inferior to that of society.”⁷³ Refinement blended with the market, if only for a time, to create a powerful social force.⁷⁴ The result was a rigid concept

⁷² The article was published in the *Providence Journal* under the alias “Ecarte”; James B. Angell, *The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angell* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1912), 117; Michael Burlingame, ed., *Lincoln's Journalist: John Hay's Anonymous Writings for the Press, 1860–1864* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), xi.

⁷³ Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 18-19.

⁷⁴ The market revolution in the North informed how of manly character was evaluated. Charles Sellers argues that the capitalistic market shifted the country away from traditional values of, “family, trust, cooperation, and equality.” He vividly describes this upheaval; “Where nobilities and priesthoods left folk culture little disturbed, capital feeding on human effort claimed hegemony over all classes.” David Walker Howe counters Sellers’ contention, yet still acknowledges the impact of the economy and technology on society. Instead of bankruptcy of character, he comprehends the expanding commercial economy offered greater individual choice. Howe asserts, “The balanced character was an asset when it came to make one’s way in the new commercial economy. Along with new income came new ways of spending it, the chance to exercise taste. Increasing amount of transactions with strangers instead of neighbors was, according to Howe, the advancement of technology and society. While Howe see this shift as less than a “Market Revolution” and more of “Communication Revolution,” both he and Sellers acknowledge that it altered how middle-class men were evaluated. Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jackson American, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 6, 237; Daniel Walker Howe, *Making the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 9; Daniel Walker Howe, *What God Hath Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); For an excellent analysis of how the middle class adopted ideas of refinement see: Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978). Bushman, *The Refinement of America*;

of manhood that young upstarts were bound to conform to.⁷⁵ Refinement—deeply embedded in the cultural fabric—reigned as the guiding standard for proper manhood.

Non-conformity, as a result, was glaring and socially offensive. The appearance of manual labor in New York City elicited, according to Burrows and Wallace, reminders of “bestial” character. Instruction and coercion unified men and buttressed the display civility as a universal aspiration. The growth of refinement and print culture naturally led to an increase in etiquette manuals published. Between 1820 and 1860, a consistent increase in the number of manuals published reflected the soar in readership of a budding middle class as well as the growth of cheap print.⁷⁶ A common interest grew among the new middling class men to shed their unrefined habits and acquire attributes of refinement in order to pass as gentlemen. Historian Arthur Schlesinger describes this growth; “Aside from frequent revisions and new editions, twenty-eight different manuals appeared in the 1830’s, thirty-six in the 1840’s and thirty-eight more in the 1850’s.”⁷⁷ The ability to direct behavior and appearance was not simply done by advice manuals; Lewis and Arthur Tappan’s Mercantile Agency, the first-credit rating enterprise, championed men adhering to a refined code. Founded on the assumption that the interior person was made visible through manners and dress, the Agency conducted credit

⁷⁵ Brian Luskey, Scott Sandage, Stuart Blumin, John Kasson, and Christopher J. Lukasik all affirm that aspiring laboring and middling men strove to appear as gentlemen in the European tradition for social and vocational ends. Stephen Mihm and Karen Halttunen shed light on the ill repute ambitious men received because of fraudulent business schemes. Shrewd men frequently presented themselves as model gentlemen to give their hustle the veneer of authenticity. Brian Luskey, *On the Make: Clerks and the Quest for Capital in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2010); John Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1990); Stephen Mihm, *A Nation of Counterfeiters: Capitalists, Con Men, and the Making of the United States* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007); Stuart Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); Scott Sandage, *Born Losers: A History of Failure in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005); Christopher J. Lukasik, *Discerning Characters: The Culture of Appearance in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011); Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982).

⁷⁶ Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, 47.

⁷⁷ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 734; Schlesinger, *Learning How to Behave*, 18.

evaluations on thousands of determined men likely to petition for credit. Credit evaluations of men were tersely condensed into one or two sentence summations of their integrity composed by a man of repute (bankers, lawyers, or politicians). Within a few years of its creation, the Agency accrued an extensive catalogue of men and by 1849, after a merger, became known as Dun & Bradstreet. This proved an especially valuable resource during the 1850s when New York City doubled in population to over a million; gauging men on their references and initial impression became more pertinent.⁷⁸

At the core the Agency advanced the idea that bred-in-the-bone western men were uneducated, prone to immoral passions, and lacked trustworthy character. Although the Tappan brothers believed evangelism was their true calling, they served that end by spreading Christian civility and holding men to standards of polished living. The Tappan's mission was, in the words of Bertram Wyatt-Brown, to conduct a "large-scale assault on the unchurched and the heretical, particularly those of the West."⁷⁹ This sentiment was not unusual; it was reiterated as a matter of fact by a correspondent for the *New York Times* in an 1854 article, "Thrilling Scenes of Indian War." Aside from the breathtaking tales of near death encounters with Indians, the correspondent posed the question, "What is the effect of this demoralized frontier life on character?" followed by the answer, men grow "reckless of life, confident, ragged and saucy."

⁷⁸ John F. Kasson, *Amusing the Million: Coney Island at the Turn of the Century* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1978), 4; Historians have identified that the perception of manly character in antebellum cities and dress were two threads woven from the same loom. But what is missing is a consideration of why western men that smacked of vulgarity in Northeastern milieus increasingly were approved for their upstanding character. Commercial Agencies described its self in *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* as: "a business record office, where all the details are gathered in regard to the character, capital, capacity, and social standing of business men in all section of the country. These Institutions are valuable for the following reasons;" From *Hunt's Merchants' Magazine* August, 1856, 9. Honesty and integrity are reoccurring themes in David S. Reynolds cultural analysis of Whitman; *Walt Whitman's America: A Cultural Biography* (New York: Vintage, 1996), 107.

⁷⁹ Arthur Tappan, according to historian Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "took interest in the reports of woeful conditions out West." Wyatt-Brown, *Lewis Tappan and the Evangelical War against Slavery* (Cleveland: Case Western Reserve University Press, 1969), 49.

After traveling through the Old Northwest the correspondent ended his report with the objection, “there is not a single thing that I can think of about here, agreeable to see, hear, smell, touch, taste or tell.”⁸⁰ Northeasterners whipsawed between perceiving western men as fascinating and debased.

What most western men lacked—in the minds of many urban northeasters—was the display of good taste, broadly speaking. Increasingly impersonal transactions of capitalism in antebellum North gave greater weight to appearance and comportment as a means of evaluating a man’s fiscal worth. It was so persuasive that, for middling and upper class white males, it permeated into all facets of life. Grading men by “rate” began appearing in magazines and newspapers by the 1840s and grew into a common word in the American lexicon by 1860. Initially pertaining to quantifying a man’s credit value, “first-rate” soon was applied to all vocations. Upon winning the Republican ticket, claims that Lincoln was a “third-rate” lawyer surfaced in northeastern papers.⁸¹ Since the evaluation of manhood rested upon the belief that the exterior was a telling lens into the true Christian essence of a man, the coarse western image was generally perceived as undesirable in matters relating to commerce, and therefore unmanly.

It was clear that Lincoln did not measure-up to the standards of northeast decorum, even for a self-made man. The estimation of northeastern commercial sphere was that Lincoln did not show economic ambition, either in appearance or behavior. This opinion was officially documented in 1858, when the credit agency Dun & Bradstreet logged a brief report on Lincoln, a then Springfield lawyer. By the time historians discovered it, long after his martyrdom, Lincoln’s ledger—and only Lincoln’s—was intentionally blotted out. Scott Sandage skillfully

⁸⁰ *The Wyandot Pioneer*, July 20, 1854.

⁸¹ Wynne, *Lincoln’s Western Image*, 179; Scott Sandage suggests that the number obsessed economy of the antebellum North morphed into defining the worth of men. Sandage, *Born Losers*, 129-58.

argues that Lincoln's record was scrawled over because the report insisted Old Abe did not measure up to the commercial standards for a man—whether his poor review was due to his dress, manners, or general western vulgarity remains unknown.⁸² As an act of guarding the martyred President's reputation the report was destroyed after his death.

The Dun & Bradstreet log of Lincoln illustrated a contempt of western men in the East. Thurlow Weed, a later supporter of Lincoln's first presidential bid, indirectly ribbed Lincoln for these shortcomings on his tour of the western states in the summer of 1860. Weed protested during his travels that the "polishing aid of eastern refinement" was lost on the region. A dearth of civility abounded, and it was no secret that he believed Lincoln smacked of it. Lincoln felt this condescension when Weed paid him a visit at his Springfield home in early June. Describing this visit with Senator Lyman Trumbull, Lincoln wrote, "he [Weed] showed no signs whatever of the intriguer. He asked for nothing."⁸³ Weed's lack of interest in Lincoln was due to his condescending opinion of him. A Philadelphia editor addressed the popular concern in the northeast, pondering what a Lincoln presidency would mean to refinement as a social gatekeeper. The editor rhetorically asked: "What are the acquirements of Mr. Lincoln? Is he a man of varied accomplishments and long tried public experience? Is he what the President of the United States should be without exception – a pure, upright, firm, learned, classical, accomplished, dignified, and respected man? Where in the records of our National history is there one act to warrant, or by which he may claim, a Presidential nomination?" Scornfully he predicted, "If we descend to nominate such men as Lincoln, we will have before long 5000

⁸² Sandage, *Born Losers*, 158.

⁸³ Jeremiah Bonham, *Fifty Years' Recollections: With Observations and Reflections on Historical Events* (Peoria, IL: J. W. Franks and Sons, 1883), 182; Lincoln to Lyman Trumbull, June 5, 1860 in: Basler ed., *Collected Works* IV, 71.

upstarts claiming the nomination.” It was clear, a fear that if the practice of electing genteel statesmen broke down than chaos would ensue was in the air.⁸⁴

Lincoln’s nomination put a rising consumer social imaginary and entrenched values of refinement at odds. By late May and early June, after the initial alarm passed, northeastern editors expounded on Lincoln’s lack of genteel statesmanship. A Barnstable, Massachusetts newspaper—located seventy miles north of Boston—exemplified the cutting affronts with which northeastern Democratic newspapers assaulted Lincoln. On May 29, 1860, the editor of the *Barnstable Patriot*, Sylvanus B. Phinney, printed an exposé illuminating Lincoln’s ineptitude. “Mr. Abram Lincoln, it must be admitted by all candid men, cannot be possessed of the knowledge, experience, or statesmanship requisite in one who aspires to fill the highest office.” The editor, like many others, was dumbfounded that Seward was passed over for Lincoln. Lincoln, another editor protested, was “Seward without Brains.”⁸⁵ The *New York Journal of Commerce* attributed Lincoln’s nomination to merely winning the knee-jerk delight of constituents. The paper’s editor decried, “If there is any one in the Union who is a representative man in the Republican ranks, who embodies in a greater degree than any other the distinctive dogmas and theories upon which that political organization...the passions instead of the judgments of the people will be appealed to, and the attention of the public diverted, as far as possible, from the real issues before the country.” On June 12, 1860, the *Barnstable Patriot* ran “A. Lincoln’s Qualifications,” in which Phinney blasted Lincoln for his want of “Learning, statesmanship, moral culture.”⁸⁶ The *Boston Traveler*, an independent paper, suggested that

⁸⁴ Lincoln’s want of culture gave many the impression that he was not suitable for the White House. Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, unedited version (online at www.knox.edu/documents/pdls/LincolnStudies), pp. 1726.

⁸⁵ “The Black- Republican Nominations,” *Barnstable Patriot*, May 29, 1860.

⁸⁶ *New York Journal of Commerce* from the *Daily Exchange*, May 21, 1860; *Barnstable Patriot* June 12, 1860.

Lincoln “being an awkward man” was public knowledge, a statement that was reprinted in *The Journal of River Falls, Wisconsin* on June 13, 1860.⁸⁷

By mid-June Phinney’s attacks in the *Barnstable’s* grew more barbed. He scoffed that Lincoln was probably more distinguished in the West for selling liquor than splitting rails. On June 26, 1860, the censure of Lincoln’s western manhood was poured out in full. Phinney slammed Lincoln for being a “Third rate slang-whanging lawyer” with “no proper qualifications.” Ridiculing his reputation in the article, “Honest Abe,” the editor witted that Lincoln was “Sixteen feet high” and “spotless in everything but his linen.” The editor closes the article by protesting, “The people are expected to accept a slang nickname, in lieu of fitness.” The paper cited the exhibition of “Lincoln Rails” split by the Old Abe, the proliferation of Lincoln flags, and building miniature structures to show their support of Lincoln. In the article, “‘Abe’ Lincoln Wigwams,” Phinney denounced cheap ploys to “humbug the people” as a “disgraceful burlesque.” Therefore, according to his critics, Lincoln amounted to cheap entertainment void of morality.⁸⁸

This “disgraceful burlesque” became evident in the gritty particulars of Lincoln’s life that authenticated him as an archetypical western man. Campaign biographies and newspapers animated the epithets that famously marked Lincoln’s labor history. But, these same personal details offended gentrified northeasters. Descriptions of Lincoln’s garments and how he wore them animated the biographical narratives. In turn, Lincoln appearance was a far cry from what Charles J. Ingersoll, congressman and minister to France, avowed as elegant dress. For Ingersoll

⁸⁷ “The Black- Republican Nominations,” *Barnstable Patriot*, May 29, 1860; *New York Journal of Commerce* from the *Daily Exchange*, May 21, 1860; *Barnstable Patriot* June 12, 1860; *The Journal* [River Falls, Wisconsin], June 13, 1860.

⁸⁸ “‘Abe’ Lincoln Wigwams,” *Barnstable Patriot* June 18, 1860; for images of Lincoln wigwams see: Karen M. Kostyal, *Abraham Lincoln's Extraordinary Era: The Man and His Times* (Washington D.C.: National Geographic, 2009), 87.

dress, like demeanor, was important because it “characterizes the deepest thinkers.”⁸⁹ As T.J. Jackson Lears, among others, has recognized, “by the 1840s and 1850s consumer goods were carrying more and more cultural freight.”⁹⁰ Failure to display acceptable sartorial taste was a reason for social exclusion.

Lincoln’s rolled up blue jeans were described with poetic nuance by William Deans Howells in his 1860 campaign biography of Lincoln. Howells makes sure to note that as a young adult Lincoln wore a shirt “of the sort [of material] known in the song and tradition as *hickory*,” a popularized name for coarse cotton shirt worn by western men.⁹¹ Of the numerous personal recollections of Lincoln gathered by journalists and published after his death, a common refrain among these sources was that he wore rough jean clothing.⁹² A sartorial decision that teetered on social deviance in the northeast, since his garb appeared indistinguishable from what slave wore in the South. Authors popularized the perception western men wearing jean clothing across the northeast, a striking specific to urban East Coast readers. In early 1861, a fictional tale that appeared in *Harper’s* included an Illinois backwoodsman described as “lean, lank gawky-looking individual, in patched jean pants, linsey-woolery hunting-shirt.” The description not

⁸⁹ “Address of the hon. Charles J. Ingersoll” *National Intelligencer* October 7, 1854; Ida B. Tarbell astutely notes that once Lincoln won the Republican ticket, “The snobbishness of the country came out in full. He was not a gentleman; that is, he did not know how to wear clothes, perhaps sat at times in shirt sleeves, tilted back his chair...had no pedigree.” While she correctly identifies the importance of how Lincoln wore clothes and his lineage, or lack thereof, she does not mention the type of clothes that he had worn as a laborer and how that stained him as deficient. Tarbell, “Lincoln and the campaign of 1860,” 10, Tarbell Collection.

⁹⁰ Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 63.

⁹¹ William Dean Howell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln* (1860), reprinted (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 1960), 6.

⁹² In New Salem Lincoln, according to one resident, was known to wear “A calico shirt, coarse brogans, and blue yarn socks” with shrunken “Buckskin breeches” that left his ankles exposed. Octavia Roberts, *Lincoln in Illinois* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1918), 18. In Springfield, a resident noted that Lincoln wore, “mixed jeans coat, clawhammer style, flax and tow-linen pantaloons and potmetal boots.” Gibson William Harrison, “My Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” *Farm and Fireside* (December. 1, 1904), 23, 33. Usher F. Linder observed that in 1835 Lincoln often wore “a plain suit of mixed jeans.” *Reminiscences of Early Bench and Bar of Illinois* (Chicago: News Company, 1879), 37.

only matches reports of what Lincoln wore, but it is also indistinguishable from a male slave's attire.⁹³

Slave owners outfitted their slave in coarse material because of its durability, cost, and social stigma. Beyond the functionality of the fabric coarse clothing signified that slaves were set apart from the white society. Similarly, the same rough material marketed as “Kentucky Jeans,” associated with the clothing of Kentuckian frontiersmen and laborers, appealed to the laboring sort because it was cheap and sturdy. Even though the jeans worn by Lincoln and the clothing worn by slaves—commonly known as “negro cloth”—were labeled differently, it was indistinguishable. Katie Knowles points out that the very same fabric that was sold in the South as “negro cloth” was marketed in the Northwest as “jeans.”⁹⁴ Thus, when Lincoln was derided as a “Black Republican” it was a barb that reached beyond politics; suggesting that his laboring past, appearance, crude humor, and the accusations that he drank hard liquor aligned him with black men.⁹⁵

Once Lincoln won the Republican nomination easterners jeered him for his clothing. In the days following his nomination a correspondent for the *New York Herald* observed that people in Washington D.C. mocked Lincoln's crude attire. “The first dispatch announcing the nomination of ‘Old Abe’ was first supposed by most people to be a hoax” because “the report

⁹³ “Editor’s Drawer,” *Harpers New Monthly Magazine* 22 (May, 1861).

⁹⁴ Katie Knowles, “The fabric of the frontier: How textiles help us understand the American West” (blog) *National Museum of American History and the National Museum*, November 3, 2014. Madelyn Shaw writes, “Clothing was an important and immediately visible mark of social status, and osnaburg, jean, and kersey were considered suitable for the lower ranks of society. All of the available cloths came in several qualities, ranging from the cheapest sold to slave owners to better grades purchased by laborers, farm workers, craftsmen, and mechanics—both white and black—who also required durable but inexpensive cloth” in: “Slave Cloth and Clothing Slaves: Craftsmanship, Commerce, and Industry,” *The Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 33 (2012). Helen Bradley Foster notes that “A strictly American addition to the wearing attire of many enslaved men was jeans.” *New Raiments of Self: African American Clothing in the Antebellum South* (New York: Berg, 1997), 167-168, 331.

⁹⁵ Tarbell’s research uncovered that upon winning the nomination, “Springfield Woolen Mills set out on a wagon a power loom run by steam which during the procession wove several yards of jean cloth and made it up into a pair of trousers, which were presented to Mr. Lincoln at the end of the celebration.” Ida B. Tarbell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln*, 18, Tarbell Collection.

seemed *prima facie* so very absurd.” The editor then commented; “We have already heard this ticket of Lincoln and Ham. its christened the ‘dirty shirt ticket.’” An editor for the *Hartford Times* claimed that he was the first to apply the title “dirty-shirt” to Lincoln after he visited the city in traveled stained clothes.⁹⁶ Newspapers across the North circulated this title—riffing off the association that western men dressed crudely, and drawing upon the anti-genteel appearance of western, laboring men. Historian Joshua Greenberg notes that manual laborers contended honest toil affirmed their worth, not their refined taste. “Workingmen,” Greenburg explains, “called for a society where ‘a dirty shirt acquired by toil’ was ‘held more honorable than the dandy’s ruffle.’”⁹⁷ Laborers promoted their virtues by contrasting their appearance with the superfluous, self-centered dandy. Even if Lincoln’s “dirty shirt” made him more appealing to laborers, it was categorically reject by traditional, polite society. As one editor mocked, the “Dirty Shirt Ticket” will only “get all the anti-clean shirt votes.”

Still, northeastern audiences imbued with an appreciation of French fashion and English manners could not help finding the lore of the frontier fascinating because it represented an authentically America manliness. Despite smacking of incivility and want of erudition, the wilds of the frontier agitated the visceral senses that urban life was believed to dull. Rousing tales of the courage, self-sufficiency, and conquest of frontiersmen existed uneasily with traditional ideals in the northeast. David H. Murdoch articulates this tension:

Though Easterners admired the great march into the wilderness, they did not particularly admire the society which sprang up in the West. On the contrary, Eastern snobbery made the crudity of Western life the butt of endless jokes. The West had also become well-known as the source of a new kind of American humour, wonderful anecdotes of exaggeration usually called ‘tall tales.’ Regarding tall tales as cruse nonsense and the boasting as crass, the

⁹⁶ *Hartford Times*, March 5, 1860.

⁹⁷ Joshua Greenberg, *Advocating the Man: Masculinity, Organized Labor, and the Household in New York, 1800–1840* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), 66.

East tended to write off Westerners as uncouth, loud-mouthed braggarts.⁹⁸

Critics contended that Lincoln caught the attention of the northeast simply because he championed the frontier persona. What made him particularly repulsive to northeastern editors was his embodiment of what was traditionally deemed rude and wanting of intelligence. The *Philadelphia Evening Journal* editorial on May 28, 1860, nicely captured this critique of Lincoln; “His coarse language, illiterate style, and his vulgar vituperative personalities in debate contrast very strongly with the elegant and classical oratory of the eminent senator from New York.”⁹⁹ A far cry from the dignified William Seward, Lincoln was an affront to the cultural and political authority of blueblood society. Democrats harnessed this suspicion by drumming up three-month old charges that money grabbing drove Lincoln to speak at Cooper Union and across New England that past winter. Democratic editors likened Lincoln to a scheming showman, who demanded 100 dollars for each of his speeches in New England following his Cooper Union speech. The *Norwich Aurora* went as far as claiming that Lincoln dreamed of “gold” and devised schemes to gain “wealth.” A politician profiting from humbug was thought insincere at best and outright fraud at worst.¹⁰⁰

Historian Larry Tagg details the way eastern papers thrashed Lincoln no holds barred. The criticism always included a critique of Lincoln’s labor history or that he hailed from Illinois or, as an editor for the *Boston Courier* put it, from “The laboring mountains.” The *New York Times* praised intellect pedigree and diplomatically dismissed the qualification of splitting

⁹⁸ David H. Murdoch, *The American West: The Invention of a Myth* (Las Vegas: University of Nevada Press, 2001) 28.

⁹⁹ *Philadelphia Evening Journal*, May 28, 1860.

¹⁰⁰ Scott Sandage skillfully reveals how trust, in commercial centers, was hard won; *Born Losers*, 99-128. Neil Harris notes that “connection between political ideology and tastes in amusement.” *Harris, Humbug: The Art of P. T. Barnum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 85; *Boston Post*, May 21; *Boston Post* May 22; *Columbian Weekly Register* [New Haven, Connecticut], May, 26, 1860; *Norwich Aurora*, May 26, 1860.

rails.¹⁰¹ The *New York Tribune*, on the other hand, was not as tactful in their review of Lincoln. On May 22, a *Tribune* editor blasted Lincoln as a “Vulgar Village Politician, without any experience worth mentioning in the practical duties of statesmanship.” By mid-summer a number of eastern papers made sport of Lincoln’s labor history. On July 17, the *Boston Courier* chided those who advocated for Lincoln on Biblical grounds by misquoting Psalms 74:5, as “A man famous, according as he had lifted up axes upon thick trees.”¹⁰²

Some Republican proponents of Lincoln in the northeast attempted to craft him as a proper gentleman, exposing their embarrassment with his association with plebian work. The *New York Herald* sent a reporter to Springfield soon after Lincoln won the Republican ticket to invalidate condescending reports of Lincoln. In the article, “Lincoln at Home,” the reporter described Lincoln in his Springfield house as an “angular gentleman, with a profusion of wiry hair ‘lying round loose’ about his head.” He contended that pictures and published descriptions failed to communicate Lincoln’s gentlemanly qualities. The segment concluded by claiming that after being “five minutes in his company” Lincoln ceases appearing “awkward.”¹⁰³ The *New York Post* also published an account of a New York gentleman’s visit with Lincoln in Springfield shortly after the Chicago Republican convention. Like the *New York Herald*, the *Post* attempted to defend Lincoln’s reputation as a slovenly laborer from the West. The gentleman noted how three months earlier at Cooper Union Lincoln’s manner had appeared “awkward and ungainly,” but in Springfield he had a “surprising urbanity” and politeness. Lincoln biographer Ida M. Tarbell perceptively points out the “eagerness” among “Republican press... to show that Lincoln

¹⁰¹ “Hair-splitting on Rail-splitting,” *New York Times*, June 12, 1860.

¹⁰² “Why Should Lincoln Be President,” *Philadelphia Journal*, reprinted in May 24, 1860, *New York Tribune*; “A New Argument for the Rail-Splitter,” *Boston Courier*, July 17, 1860.

¹⁰³ The article written by the *New York Herald* was titled “Lincoln at Home” and republished in: *The Standard* [Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin], July 5, 1860.

was not the coarse backwoodsman.” Newspaper correspondents from New York were sent to Old Abe's home in Springfield to scrounge up evidence to discredit reports that he was of “low Hoosier style.”¹⁰⁴ Whether editors fashioned Lincoln in a fond or repulsive light, their readership was keen to peruse any information pertaining to the former rail-splitter. The collision between a culture of refinement and a rising consumer imaginary was not abstract. The tension between the two was apparent in the portray of Lincoln to urbanites. Lincoln’s obscurity allowed image-makers and editors to impose their own idea of western manhood on him. And, as a result, portrayals of Lincoln as vulgar buffoons or mythical Boone-like frontiersmen led to a broader debate over whether western manliness was fit for a president. Although the northeast knew the heroics of western men, they were also accustomed to disparaging the lack of education and incivility western men exhibited.

Advocates of Lincoln drew criticism for playing fast-and-loose with how they presented Lincoln—whether portraying him as a gentleman or a heroic frontiersman. The first front-page article of the *Daily Exchange* on May 31, 1860, fleshed out this critique of Lincoln. William Glenn carefully lashed an early Lincoln likeness with orotund prose. Starting in with a discussion of the veneer crafty artist dressed their subject with, Glenn observed; “They clothe a naturally dull scene with all the colors of the rainbow, and a homely person with the physical perfections of an Apollo Belvedere.” Deception is the game, according to Glenn. This critique sets the stage for his commentary on Lincoln. “The Republicans recently who have taken to this art, and from an examination of some specimens of their skill...they have vastly excelled them in high coloring.” Referring specifically to Lincoln, Glenn launches into his reproach of the immense public clamor to view the Illinoisans image. “Permit us to withdraw the veil,” quips

¹⁰⁴ Ida M. Tarbell, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Doubleday, 1909), I: 365.

Glenn. “Where is P.T. Barnum? Mr. B. will please describe this newly caught North-Western Wonder.” He wrote the following section of the editorial as though it was Barnum shouting to the audience about the specimen in question. “[He] stands six feet four inches high in his stockings.” His body, “gaunt;” arms “long;” and, “Mode of wearing [clothes]—‘careless but not slovenly.’” Glenn ends his Barnum parody with a description of Old Abe’s facial bone structure and his vivacious manner of shaking hands. “Such is the picture of ‘Honest Abe Lincoln, the rail-splitter,’ glorified.” Glenn concluded his shot at exposing the superficiality of Lincoln’s qualification by lamenting, “Who shall deny hereafter the artistic value of varnish and megilp?” Just like in the printed word, images of Lincoln now contested over what it communicated about his manhood.¹⁰⁵

In the end Glenn’s prophesy came true; Lincoln was manufactured out of the imagination of northeastern authors in a manner that was sure to attract readers. Recreations of the West in print catered to urban proclivity for novelty and wonderment since, as Kevin J. Avery puts forth, depictions “could be consumed conceptionally.”¹⁰⁶ Technology and entertainment converged in the form of newspaper images, Barnum’s influence, theater, and gripping tales glorifying western men served to popularize Lincoln in the urban northeast. Commercialization, therefore, led to the consumption of authentic western manhood, as depicted in print and on stage. The image of western men was not flowing from the frontier into the cities. Rather, the esteem for western men was both constructed and disseminated by the northeast. A craving for the entertaining—made possible by the replication of images and cheap print—launched Lincoln to

¹⁰⁵ William Glenn, *Daily Exchange*, May 31, 1860.

¹⁰⁶ Kevin J. Avery, “Selling the Sublime and the Beautiful: New York Landscape Painting and Tourism,” in *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861*, ed. Catherine Voorsanger and John K. Howat (New York and New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2000), 133.

center stage. Although many bristled against a former rail-splitter from Illinois vying for the presidency, his opponents and advocates alike kept his name in print. An interest in novelty and the intrigue of western manhood was sweeping through the northeast and leaving the traditional concepts of polished manhood in its wake. The power of an emerging consumer imaginary thrived off the mystique of a western man in Lincoln.

CHAPTER FOUR

Rails, Likenesses, and Fireworks: The Spectacle of Lincoln's Manhood During the Presidential Campaign of 1860

By the summer of 1860 a frenzy broke out to muse over bona fide Lincoln artifacts. The Wide Awake Club of the 17th Ward in Brooklyn, New York showed their eagerness to participated in sensory entertainment of Lincoln-related spectacles when a rail attributed to the Illinoisan was presented to the nearly 100 members. A club member, George Bagley, recently traveled to Illinois and “had the distinguished honor of shaking hands with old Abe, and borrowed the rail,” according to Henry McCloskey, the editor of the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*. As the relic caretaker, Bagley proudly chose to display it at the 17th Ward. On July 25, 1860, Bagley carried the rail into the hall—accompanied by a bodyguard—carefully stood the rail in the middle of the room for all to see. Immediately the crowd, in silent awe, “reverently approached the relic” in “solemn precession.” After a few minutes passed, a predictable question arose from a club member: was it an authentic Lincoln chopped rail? Another chimed in that sand paper and polish would improve the state of the weather-beaten wood. A member of the Wide Awake Committee assured the eager spectators that the rail’s “authenticity is beyond doubt,” since a document of authentication came with it. A curious spectator questioned the condition of the rail, to which a Committee

member quipped back, “they made ‘em so in Illinoy.”¹ Reaction to Lincoln rails parading across the northeast was immense. Crowds eagerly gathered to marvel at and contemplate a crude, mundane object with devotion. It was, in part, the authenticity of the rail that attracted urban populaces. Beset by—or at least the warning of—conmen and cheap hoaxes at nearly every corner, the Atlantic seaboard city goers developed a keen eye for the fake. Neil Harris identifies how skepticism filtered into the economic, political, and social worldview. For example, New York City theater managers struggled to find crowd pleasing acts because the audiences’ “zest for novelty” had “quickly become jaded,” according to Harris. The craving for the new and authentic among theatergoers was accompanied by a general suspicion of men’s motives in the city, necessary for detecting prowling tricksters.²

This chapter argues that sensory experiences—viewing likenesses, procuring objects, and spectacles—drove the consumption of Lincoln’s western manhood in the urban northeastern.³ Intensification of sensory entertainment in northeastern cities increased, in the words of Colin Campbell, a “longing to experience in reality those pleasures created in the imagination, a longing which results in the ceaseless consumption of novelty.” Despite the attribution of

¹ Henry McCloskey was an ardent Democratic and a critic of Lincoln prior and during the Civil War. Raymond A. Schroth, *The Eagle and Brooklyn: A Community Newspaper, 1841–1955* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1974), 59-68; “City News and Gossip: Greenpoint on a Rail,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, July 26, 1860.

² Sandage, *Born Losers*, 70-99; Harris, *Humbug*, 84-86.

³ Sensory history explores how people without the assumption that the human senses served as an objective means of perception. I place a particular focus on the way Lincoln related items were crafted to involved the senses. William Leach demonstrates the importance of sensory entertainment and consumerism in his study of Wannamaker’s Department Store. Leach points out that three elements were at the heart of the ability to influence consumers: color, glass, and light. Leach reveals how each of these elements played a critical role as consumer capitalism gained a greater hold on society. By the 1890s ads, artistic posters, painted billboards, and show windows all began to appear in cities. In 1897, the first store orchestras performed. The soothing music weaved the spirit of unity and tranquility into consumption. Display windows allowed products to entice, complete with the installation of air conditioning by the 1920s to offer comfort and easy while consuming. William Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1993). For more on sensory history see: Mark M. Smith. "Producing Sense, Consuming Sense, Making Sense: Perils and Prospects for Sensory History," *Journal of Social History* 40, no. 4 (2007): 841-858.

spectacles to the onset of cinema and popular twentieth century media, they were well afoot in mid-nineteenth century cities. Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language* defined spectacle as "anything exhibited to the view as eminently remarkable" in 1755, and Noah Webster's *An American Dictionary of the English Language* classified it as "something that is beheld as unusual and worthy of special notice" in 1854. The core aspects of spectacle were, and still are, the ability to captivate audiences' attention and imagination. Joe Kember, John Plunkett, and Jill A. Sullivan posit that nineteenth century spectacle in London, "could provoke intense curiosity, detached amusement, condemnation or a knowing appreciation for the achievement of the effect, as well as the easy caricature of the open-mouthed gawping wonderment." Neither were spectacles inherently tied to consumer capitalism, although profitmaking motives often drove their design. Rather the increase of spectacles in antebellum cities signaled their rise as a leisure activity and an expansion of entertainment in antebellum northeast. As the 'consumption of the eye,' spectacles were part of a growing consumer imaginary taking root in the urban northeast.⁴

The commercialization and objectification of Lincoln offered a means to indulge in spectacle through the sensations of sight and touch. According to Tom Gunning, the large cities of the mid-nineteenth century, "increasingly tied visual stimulation to commodity culture." City spectacles, like Barnum's museum or firework display of the Wide-Awakes, were emerging

⁴ Samuel Johnson, *Dictionary of the English Language* (London: W. Strahan, 1755); Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (Springfield, Massachusetts: George and Charles Merriam, 1854), 1061; Deborah Parsons, *Streetwalking the Metropolis: Women, the City, and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 21; Joe Kember, John Plunkett, Jill A. Sullivan, "Introduction" in *Popular Exhibitions, Science, and Showmanship, 1840–1910* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012), 6-7. Venessa Schwartz traces "spectacular realities" in fin-de-siecle Paris, which include public entertainment ranging from journalism, wax museums, cinema, and the morgue. Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in Fin-de-Siecle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998). For spectacle in the twentieth century see: *Guy Debord, Society of the Spectacle* (Detroit: Black and Red, 1983), Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1990).

forms of urban spectatorship that fostered a consumer imaginary. The “new entertainment industries purveying technologically,” notes Gunning, “achieved visual delights which culminated in the cinema at the end of the century.”⁵ While displays of Lincoln rails, his likenesses, and Wide Awake events offered a communal viewing experience, Lincoln-related items created in mass also offered urbanites a personal sense of kinship to the famed Illinoisan. By 1860, the improved quality of printed images and declining postage rates heralded a modern consumercentric worldview.⁶ Depictions of Lincoln, as Carole Payne puts forth, “embodied a sense of personal identification with politician, an identification that was enhanced by the presumed indexicality of the photographic image.”⁷ Against the backdrop of refinement, the fascination with Lincoln’s western manhood confirmed the grip a consumer imaginary had on the urban northeast during the summer of 1860.

The excitement of a former rail-splitter running for president frequently drew comparisons to William Henry Harrison’s 1840 presidential campaign. Lincoln proponents used Harrison’s successful campaign to champion their industrious, common man for the presidency. James A. Briggs, a member of the New York Republican Committee, identified how the

⁵ Gunning, “From the Kaleidoscope to the X-ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin, and Traffic in Souls (1913),” 25-61; Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*.

⁶ The study of images in France between the early to mid-nineteenth century exposes a link between consumerism and visual culture. Analyzing theaters along Parisian boulevards in the 1820s, Nicholas Green writes, “speculation and consumption went hand in hand.” Green further contends that “Visual modes of consumption enabled the visitor to simultaneously to look at ‘the picture’ and plunge into sensation,” regarding visitors to Parisian nature panoramas in the 1840s. Tom Gunning argues that visual stimulation was aligned with commodity culture in urban centers before the Civil War. “This modern urban spectatorship,” Gunning puts forth, “was fostered by new entertainment industries purveying technologically achieved visual delights which culminated in the cinema at the end of the century.” Nicholas Green, *The Spectacle of Nature: Landscape and Bourgeois Culture in Nineteenth-Century France* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 23, 88; Tom Gunning, “From the Kaleidoscope to the X-Ray: Urban Spectatorship, Poe, Benjamin, and Traffic in Souls (1913),” *Wide Angle* 19, no. 4 (1997): 25-61; Colin Campbell, *The Romantic Ethic and the Spirit of Modern Consumerism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1987), 205; Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990); John Urry shows how city spectacles engage the senses. John Urry, “Sensing the City,” in *The Tourist City*, ed. Dennis R. Judd and Susan Fainstein (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999), 71–86.

⁷ Carole Payne, “Seeing Lincoln: Visual Encounters,” in Shirley Samuels ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Abraham Lincoln* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012): 40–58, 47.

comparison to Harrison would occur in 1860 when he told a Brooklyn audience, “The Democrats who affect to be above all aristocratic notions, sneer at Abraham Lincoln, because he was a rail splitter. They sneered at Tippecanoe in 1840, because he lived in a log cabin.”⁸ Both candidates generated enthusiasm for embodying the yeomen ideal. The *Northern New York Journal* attempted to defuse attacks of Lincoln’s rude manners by contending that he did not “live in the sunshine of court circles” and “is not a refined and polite gentleman.” Rather, claimed the paper, these merely “ornamental qualities” inadequately represented true character.⁹ Harrison, raised in wealth and with an expensive taste, did not create near the media spectacle that Lincoln’s campaign did, but he attempted to appear like the rural voter he courted, whereas Lincoln was anything if not a barefaced western man to urban northeastern audiences.

A consumer imaginary made the presidential campaigns of Harrison and Lincoln categorically different. While the hoopla surrounding Lincoln’s upbringing in a log cabin and rail-splitting pedigree resonated like Harrison’s 1840 campaign, the spectacle was mediated differently. First, Harrison’s rallies parade-like with vast spreads of food and teeming drink intended to lure entire rural communities. Tables and blankets were set on rolling pastures that pulsed with music, laughter, and campaign chat, creating a scene that resembled a community celebration instead of a political rally.¹⁰ The record turnout for the 1840 presidential election demonstrated that politics and entertainment were not mutually exclusive. Instead of touring to address large gatherings during his campaign, as Harrison did, Lincoln remained in Springfield, far from the media centers that manipulated his image to the northeast populace.¹¹ Although

⁸ James A. Briggs, “Meetings of Public Bodies,” *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 7, 1860.

⁹ *Northern New York Journal*, May 29, 1860.

¹⁰ For an analysis of the festivities at William Harrison’s political rallies see: Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, “Limits of Political Engagement in Antebellum America: A New Look at the Golden Age of Participatory Democracy.” *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 3 (1997): 855-85.

¹¹ Frank J. Williams maintains that the central difference between the campaigns of Harrison and Lincoln centered on authenticity. “Voters in 1860, on the other hand,” Williams determines, “knew that there was nothing

historians point to the 1840 election as the first example of mass produced political material culture in American history. The dissemination of Lincoln in 1860 related print media dwarfed that of Harrison's campaign. Reflecting on Lincoln's campaign in his journal, George Templeton Strong—a former Whig turned Republican—recognized the deliberate construction of Lincoln's image. "I am tired of this shameless clap-trap. The log cabin hard cider craze of 1840 seemed spontaneous. This hurrah about rails and rail-splitters seems a deliberate attempt to manufacture the same kind of furor."¹² While Harrison contrived his own yeomen image—complete with a coonskin cap—for rural constituents, Lincoln was manufactured by the efforts of editors, campaign biographers, and image-makers. Lincoln did not participate in constructing his image to northeastern audience—as Harrison did for rural constituents. Instead entrepreneurs eagerly crafted Lincoln's image to conform with the popular impression urbanites had of western men.¹³

Between the two campaigns the introduction of innovative and intensified spectacles in both city landscape and print culture touched viewers on a physiological level. As psychologist Marvin Zuckerman's research confirms, "varied, novel, and intense sensations and experiences" trigger pleasing physiological sensations. The effect of visual stimuli can cause a neurochemical response from a grouping of cells in the midbrain, known as the dopamine system. Although the physical affect undoubtedly varied widely to Lincoln images, biographic tales, and the Wide Awakes parades, the potential existed to spark this type of beguilement. Those that experience a

fictitious about Lincoln having been born and raised in a Kentucky cabin." Frank J. Williams, "Abraham Lincoln and Kentucky," *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*, vol. 106, No. 3/4, (Summer/Autumn 2008), 479-494, 481.

¹² George Templeton Strong's journal entry from June 16, 1860 in; *Diary of the Civil War, 1860–1865*, Allan Nevins ed. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 33.

¹³ David Donald hints at the correlation between a consumer culture and Lincoln's western manhood. Due in large part to Harrison, Donald notes that Lincoln "could be packaged not merely as a powerful advocate of the free-soil ideology," but also as "the spokesman of the great West." Donald, *Lincoln*, 245.

pleasing dopamine sensation are thereafter prone to seek repeating the sensation.¹⁴ George Simmel hinted at the technological pull of city spectacles without knowledge of the physiological affect in 1903. “The psychological foundation, upon which the metropolitan individual is erected,” he postulated, “is the intensification of emotional life due to the swift and continuous shifts of external and internal stimuli.” Although the stimulation Simmel identified was much more pronounced in 1903, this sensory stimulation has already taken root in the urban northeast by 1860.¹⁵

The back page of the Horace Greeley’s *New York Tribune* June 12, 1860 issue, a leading Republican newspaper at the cost of two cents per issue, illustrated how this type of entertainment and spectacle in the form of Lincoln mania swept through New York City. The one-page announcement section of the paper included eleven new publications, events, or general notices for Lincoln. Six notices ran for Lincoln Republican meetings or Lincoln Clubs; the “Rail-Splitters’ Battalion” offered a more involved participation option. The battalion, commonly known as the Wide-Awakes, advertised their Tuesday evening meetings on Broadway for drilling and marching in support of Lincoln to any interested young man. The following section, “New Publications,” included seven separate announcements for biographies of Lincoln. The last section of announcements included job opportunities for selling Lincoln-related publications. One of these posts informed readers, ‘Agents can make money, and a good deal of

¹⁴ The intensification of the pleasing dopamine effect through visual entertainment was more dramatically experienced via cinema at the end of the century. Marvin Zuckerman, *Behavioral Expressions and Biosocial bases of Sensation Seeking* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 27; Zuckerman, “Sensation Seeking in Entertainment,” in Jennings Bryant and Peter Vorderer eds., *Psychology of Entertainment* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Erlbaum, 2006), 367-387; David Warburton, “The Functions of Pleasure,” in David Warburton and Neil Sherwood eds., *Pleasure and Quality of Life* (New York: John Wiley, 1996); Annemone Ligensa, “Sensation and Early Cinema,” in André Gaudreault, Nicolas Dulac, and Santiago Hidalgo, eds., *Companion to Early Cinema, 1890–1914* (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 163-182.

¹⁵ Georg Simmel, “The Metropolis and Mental Life” (1903), in Kurt Wolf ed. and trans., *The Sociology of Georg Simmel* (New York: Free Press, 1950), 410.

it too, for the profits are large and rapid in selling “The Wigwam Edition’ of the Lives of Lincoln and Hamlin.” A similar announcement declared that men were being sought to sell the “National Republican Chart,” a large broadside, complete with pictures, detailed information, and a map of the nation with Lincoln’s image at the center. Only one Democratic Party document was advertised for sale on this entire page; it was tellingly titled “The Democratic Leaders for Disunion.” Lincoln’s western manhood swept away older reactions to the coarseness of western men the northeastern during the summer of 1860. As Wayne C. Williams notes, “in the columns of the *Tribune* he [Greeley] ‘sold’ Abraham Lincoln to the people of the Atlantic Coast.”¹⁶ Transcending the categories of genteel statesman or western philistines, an emerging consumer culture hungrily commodified Lincoln, fanning the scintillating lore of his western manhood.

By the antebellum period lithographs—sketches printed onto paper—offered popular impressions of western manhood. By the end of the 1850s New York City alone had ninety-four engraving producers and twenty-three lithographic establishments churning out images. Images depicting western life, though often disparaged for their vulgarity, offered an alternative to urban banality and inauthenticity.¹⁷ The New York City based lithograph company, Currier & Ives, found financial success selling scenes epitomizing the autonomy and adventure of western men in the urban northeast; they also took things a step further by combining politics and satire to

¹⁶ *New York Tribune*, June 12, 1860; Wayne C. Williams, *A Rail Splitter for President* (Denver: University of Denver Press, 1951), 81.

¹⁷ By the late 1830s daguerreotypes, a French invention for producing images, reached the urban areas of the northeast. Within a few years the popularity of these images soared in popularity. A Washington D.C. newspaper wrote whimsically in 1843, during a financial downturn, “in these Jeremiad times” only two classes were making money in Manhattan: “the beggars and the takers of likenesses by daguerreotype.” Indeed, he added, ever since a Frenchman had set up shop selling apparatuses, “any pedlar can take up the trade.” By the 1850s factories produced thousands of daguerreotypes each day in New York City alone. Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 690, 689; Alan Trachtenberg, “Mirror in the Marketplace: American Responses to the Daguerreotype, 1839 1851,” in John Wood, ed., *The Daguerreotype: A Sesquicentennial Celebration* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), 60-73.

craft comedic illustrations of Lincoln's western manhood. Sketches often rendered him in shirt-sleeves chopping rails and standing at least a head taller than his political opponents. Regarding images during the mid-nineteenth century Elizabeth Johns avers, "What had been vulgarity became masculinity competent in outward skills and conscious of freedom." This fascination with the men who settle the unbridled land west of the Appalachian Mountains drove lithograph sales of frontier life. "Informing Easterners' hunger," according to Johns, "was the propensity to idealize the beneficence of an unstructured West in contrast to a decadent, regimenting East." Portraits constructed an idea of what the authentic western experience was for eastern audiences prior to the Civil War.¹⁸ Ultimately, lithographs of frontiersmen played upon a longing among urban northeastern men for the virile self-sufficiency of cultivating a life in the backwoods.¹⁹ Urban producers of Lincoln images and goods stealthily superseded competing political factions by framing his manhood as an object of fascination to customers.²⁰

No longer were the theater stage or Barnum's American Museum designated sanctuaries for entertainment seekers to gather, by 1860 inexpensive images offered the public an autonomous experience.²¹ In 1853, the *New York Tribune* estimated that at least 3 million

¹⁸ Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 681; Elizabeth Johns, *American Genre Painting: The Politics of Everyday Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 99.

¹⁹ Bryan F. Le Beau, *Currier & Ives: America Imagined* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 131-140, 270-277; Johns, *American Genre Painting*, 68, 141.

²⁰ Consumerism swept Europe cities during the mid-nineteenth century as well as American cities. Vanessa Schwartz argues that in Paris, the "spectacularization of city life and its connection to the emergence of mass culture" consuming the modern city was a democratic at heart. Vanessa Schwartz, *Spectacular Realities: Early Mass Culture in fin-de-siecle Paris* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); "Our City Amusements: How the Mass of our People Amuse Themselves," *New York Times*, December 3, 1858.

²¹ Boston, New York City, and Philadelphia, as the locus of technological and visual entertainment, permeated into the northeast vicinities. David Henkin argues that a shift from intimate communication towards mass communication swept urban centers in the late antebellum era. Communicating to larger groups shifted "to a broader-based, more boisterous, and more populous public centered in the streets." Newspapers followed this trend and began to resemble the street entertainment and communication. Henkin writes, "they [newspapers] became another stage" and "collapsed the distinction between imagining a community and participating in it." David A. Henkin, *City Reading: Written Words and Public Space in Antebellum New York* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 12,13, 38.

photographs had been taken throughout the country that year. By 1860, the United States Census counted 3,154 professional photographers in the nation. Image-makers exploited Lincoln's lack of refinement and well-known public record by crafting him in the manner that intrigued the public most. David Davis, Illinois Judge and Lincoln's presidential campaign manager of sorts, keenly recognized in a letter to his friend Orvell H. Browning on May 21, 1860 that, "His [Lincoln's] appearance and the man himself would be more effective, than a thousand speeches from Eastern Orators"²² And, capitalizing on his western manhood, images produced of Lincoln portrayed him with either a maul, rails, or in the garb of a manual laborer during the summer and fall of 1860. This calculated design of Lincoln's persona imparted to the viewer, in the words of Harold Holzer, that Lincoln's "greatest virtue was his rise from frontier obscurity." And his obscurity allowed image-makers, editors, and biographers to mold him in the way that caught the public's attention most.²³ Images effectively advanced the idea that Lincoln stood in stark contrast to the traditional idea of a gentleman statesman. At least 120 photographs of Lincoln were taken over his lifetime, making him the most photographed man of the period.²⁴ According to Mark Neely, "The orientation of political ephemera in the nineteenth century to the presidential contest constitutes further proof that printmakers and other purveyors of goods for the political market were in fact market—and not politician—driven."²⁵ In this market, Lincoln's western manhood proved especially unique and exciting.

²² Burrows and Wallace, *Gotham*, 690; Judge David Davis to Orvell Hickman Browning, May 21, 1860 in: *The Diary of Orvell Hickman Browning*, ed. Theodore Calvin Pease and James G. Randall, 2 vols. (Springfield: Illinois State Library, 1925-1933), 409.

²³ Harold Holzer, "The Campaign of 1860: Cooper Union, Mathew Brady, and the Campaign of Words and Images" In *Lincoln Revisited: New Insights from the Lincoln Forum*, ed. John Y. Simon, Harold Holzer, and Dawn Vogel (New York: Fordham University, 2007), 57–80; Harold Holzer, Mark E. Neely, Jr., and Gabor S. Boritt, *The Lincoln Image: Abraham Lincoln and the Popular Print* (New York: Scribner's, 1984), 86.

²⁴ Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf, *Lincoln in Photographs: An Album of Every Known Pose* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963).

²⁵ Neely, *The Boundaries of American Political Culture*, 12.

Instead of relying on written descriptions of Lincoln's appearance the prevalence of his portraits allowed the public to evaluate the Illinoisan's appearance for themselves. The development of inexpensive, mass-produced likenesses catapulted stage performers, writers, European dignitaries, and politicians into objects to be studied and collected. Rise of photography extended beyond providing a material good; in the words of Ida B. Tarbell, it "stimulated and satisfied demand for intimate knowledge of the body and...became a major industry." Such a high demand led to the market, rather than Lincoln or any political machine, determine how the former rail-splitter was portrayed to the populace. "In Lincoln's day," writes Harold Holzer, "popular prints...were designed exclusively by the image makers." Or, as Mark Neely puts it, images of Lincoln were made by, "entrepreneurs hoping to exploit a market."²⁶ Great effort was taken to meet the markets demand by capturing numerous images of Lincoln, so the public could see and even own a likeness of the western man for themselves. Peddlers were steered by their customers to sell depictions of Lincoln that enhanced his association with labor and western life. Holzer succinctly states, "While a generally naïve and eager public made printmakers' works about Lincoln highly profitable, the ensuing competition among publishers made it a flawed art."²⁷ The interest for an illustration of grew out of Lincoln's backstory as a former rail-splitter, a genuine western man.

²⁶ Holzer, "The Campaign of 1860," 87; John F. Kasson studies the tall, muscular perception of western men pre-shadowed early muscle men, like Eugen Sandow. He notes that early muscle builders claimed, "an ancient heroic ideal of manhood that had been lost in the modern world, yet he turned his body into a commercial spectacle and a commodity whose image was widely reproduced." He also points out, "From its inception in 1839, photography stimulated and satisfied demand for intimate knowledge of the body, and beginning in the late 1850s, souvenir photographs became a major industry through North American and Europe. Would-be celebrities of all sorts—stage performers, writers, and politicians—came to depend on the work of studio photographers." John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and The Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 29-30, 60.

²⁷ As Mark Neely states, "Though intended for voters and other politically engaged Americans, they [images of Lincoln] were created not by politicians but by entrepreneurs hoping to exploit a market." Neely, *The Boundaries of American Political*, 12; Harold Holzer, "How the Printmakers Saw Lincoln: Not-So-Honest Portraits of 'Honest Abe.'" *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 14, No. 2 (Summer, 1979), pp. 143-170 (145).

At least fifteen artists and photographers from the northeast captured Lincoln's image during the summer of 1860, and most were hastily hired and sent to Springfield from the northeast.²⁸ A desire for viewing depictions of the famed rail-splitter existed alongside an increasing recognition that images did not mirror reality. Despite a widespread refusal to trust any single representation of Lincoln, most northeasters were eager to determine which illustration was the most authentic. The earliest images provide another lens into the tension between a refined and western manhood and how the market facilitated Lincoln's popularity. Perhaps the first image sold of Lincoln in the northeast was advertised in the *New York Tribune*. Walker & Company seized the opportunity to ride Lincoln's coattails and advertised their portraits of Abraham Lincoln on May 26, 1860. It boasted "A Magnificent Picture" at the size of twenty-four by thirty-two inches for the price of one dollar. The next day the freshly printed *Harper's Weekly* ran Matthew Brady's photograph of Lincoln in its exposé of the former rail-splitter.

Lincoln presented image makers with a prime opportunity and the chance to profit from capturing an image of the improbable nominee was not missed on Charles H. Brainard, a Boston photography studio owner. Brainard, who had carved out a lucrative livelihood selling portraits of famous men like: Charles Sumner, William H. Seward, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Henry W. Longfellow for a dollar, hired Thomas M. Johnston, a twenty-four-year-old Boston artist, to travel to Springfield and obtain Old Abe's likeness. Brainard banked on Johnston's drawing to yield a handsome profit, especially after his decision to produce 1,000 small portraits of Stephen

²⁸ The quickest to pounce at the opportunity was Marcus Ward of Trenton New Jersey. Ward, who had attended the Republican national convention, hired a local Springfield photographer and newspaper editor, William Marsh to obtain Lincoln's image. Marsh, arrived from England only five years earlier, elevated himself to the post of Springfield editor by 1860, and it was through this post that he developed relationships with men like Ward and Horace Greeley of the *New York Tribune*. On May 20, 1860, Marsh took five images of Lincoln to be sent east.

Douglas had flopped. Despite running advertisements in newspapers with large circulations, like the *New York Tribune* and Washington's *National Era*, he was still in financial straits.²⁹ Writing to Johnston from Boston on July 26, 1860, Brainard despaired about his Douglas images; "I think I never knew business as dull as it has been for the last two weeks. The picture buyers must be dead or out of town...Business must revive before long." Despite his financial loss, Brainard's spirits remained high due to his confidence in the earning potential of Lincoln images. His plan rested on convincing the public that Johnston's rendering of Lincoln was the most genuine likeness of the former rail-splitter on the market. "Don't forget" reminded Brainard, "to get all the testimonials you can as to the accuracy, etc. of your portrait. 'We must keep blowing' and thus make the public shell out. I feel certain that everybody will be clamorous for the picture...considering how much we stake upon it." Touting a genuine Lincoln image was the key to make "the public shell out." The letter concludes with a request to secure more evidence of authenticity; "Please get a signature of Mr. Lincoln to be transferred to the stone, and about a dozen of his autographs for distribution among autograph collectors." This was important because Lincoln's signature could then be printed below Johnson's published print of him. What Brainard saw in Lincoln was money making potential and, consequently, nurtured an emerging consumer imaginary in the process.³⁰

Portrait painters who descended on Springfield rendered Lincoln through an urban northeast lens with their patrons in mind.³¹ One artist Lincoln sat for, Charles A. Barry of

²⁹ Charles Brainard ran advertisements in New York and Washington D.C. despite his store being in Boston. One of Brainard's ads appeared in the *New York Times* on September 24, 1859. An advertisement in the *National Era* on February 9, 1860 promised to send images of popular Americans for one dollar with the instructions: "Sent by mail, free of postage, to any part of the United States, upon receipt of the price."

³⁰ Charles Brainard to Thomas Johnston, July 26, 1860 in: R. Gerald McMurtry, *Beardless Portraits of Abraham Lincoln Painted from Life* (Fort Wayne: Public Library of Fort Wayne and Allen Co., 1962), 19-20.

³¹ Old Abe sat for his first painted portrait at the request of Thomas Hicks on June 12, 1860. Hicks who, cut his teeth at the National Gallery in London, occupied a lucrative post at a New York lithograph company, W.H. Schaus and Company, painting popular Americans. The pro-Seward Hicks, who completed a portrait of Seward in

Boston, on June 30, 1860, leveraged his ten-day visit to Springfield with the *Boston Transcript* to also serve as a correspondent for the paper. Like the biographers of Lincoln, Barry whimsically wrote for *Transcript*'s readership. Attempting to satisfy Bostonians' curiosity about Lincoln, he wrote: "There is none of the smooth, bland, political office-seeker look about the face of the fearless Illinois backwoodsman, raftsmen, lawyer, or whatsoever else he has been." Barry's painting sought to reflect this description—a tender yet formidable figure, not a gruff laborer—because he hoped the exhibition of this painting in New York at the room of George Ward Nichols on Broadway and in Boston at the Mercantile Library Association would draw large crowds; and it did. In July the *Boston Transcript* correctly predicted that the replicas of the painting "will have a large sale."³² Artists made the onerous trip to Springfield because of the soaring demand for depictions of Lincoln.

Though motivated to sell their portraits, artists privately patronized Lincoln for lacking refinement. John Nicolay, Lincoln's recently hired secretary, quickly picked up on the disappointment John Henry Brown, a Philadelphian artist, had with Lincoln's lack of stately disposition. Nicolay confided in his wife, "[Brown] will go back home as agreeably disappointed in Mr. Lincoln's manners, refinement, and general characteristics, as in his personal appearance." Still, Nicolay sensed that Brown depicted Lincoln in a more attractive light, to catch the eye of northeastern audiences. Nicolay was aware that audiences in the "East" were

April, in anticipation that he would secure the Republican nomination for president, made the arduous trip from New York City to Springfield with a letter of introduction to William Herndon. Upon leveraging the letter written by a mutual acquaintance—a social formality not wholly necessary in the casual social setting of Springfield—Hicks was soon introduced to Lincoln. Louis A. Warren, "Thomas Hicks' Portrait 'The Youthful Lincoln';" Charles Alfred Barry's Lincoln Portrait 'The Greek God,'" *Lincoln Lore* no. 471 (September, 1960); Theodore E. Stebbins, Jr. and Melissa Renn, *American Paintings at Harvard, Volume 1: Paintings, Watercolors, and Pastels by Artists Born Before 1826* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014), 208; June 11, 13, 1860, *The Diary of Orvell Hickman Browning*, ed. Theodore Calvin Pease and James G. Randall, 2 vols. (Springfield: Illinois State Library, 1925-1933), 1:415.

³² *Boston Transcript*, July 14, 1860 from Warren, "Thomas Hicks' Portrait of 'The Youthful Lincoln';" Charles Alfred Barry's Lincoln Portrait 'The Greek God,'" *Lincoln Lore* no. 471, (September, 1960).

under the impression that the presidential candidate appeared boorish because he hailed from the coarse northwest. He noted that John Henry Brown's painting manipulated Lincoln's image to appear less as a classical statesman and more as a ruddy-faced mauler to increase the popularity of his work east.³³

The market for likenesses of Lincoln operated synergistically with a rising collective awareness of subjective viewing and the frenzy for visual spectacles. Subjectivity placed the individual viewer front and center; attenuating traditional assumptions of perception. During the 1860 election cycle, the role of viewer was not only one of enjoyment, but also one that involved deciphering the authenticity of images and the character of Lincoln himself. Just as Barnum's museumgoers grew increasingly skeptical of what first met their eyes, so too did image viewers. The process of viewing images grew increasingly subjective in urban antebellum America because, as Jonathan Crary argues, it became unmoored from a fixed epistemology of sight. Crary points out that the insistent exchange of "commodities, energies, capital, images or information" created a modern viewer. And, the result of this new way of seeing: cultural authority shifted towards individual perception.³⁴ Therefore, the proliferation of images, growing awareness of the false façade of confidence men and hoaxes, and stunning sensory experiences nurtured the interests of northeastern audiences for an authentic rail-splitter.

³³ John G. Nicolay to Theresa Aug. 26 1860; Warren, "John Henry Brown's Miniature Portrait of Abraham Lincoln" *Lincoln Lore* no. 470, (September, 1960); Harold Holzer, "Visualizing Lincoln: Abraham Lincoln as Student, Subject, and Patron of the Visual Arts," in Eric Foner ed., *Our Lincoln: New Perspectives on Lincoln and His World* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2008), 91.

³⁴ Jonathan Crary explains subjective by writing, "The articulation of subjective vision in the early nineteenth century is part of a shift which Foucault calls 'the threshold of our modernity.'" When the camera obscura was the dominant model of observation it was as "a form of representation which made knowledge in general possible." The city landscape rapidly changed with the advent of images. Nicholas Green comments, "speculation and consumption went hand in hand" with the advent of theaters along Parisian boulevards in the 1820s. Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 71; Green, *The Spectacle of Nature*, 23.

While Lincoln's opponents countered that his impression exuded a crudeness and incivility, Republicans attempted to recast Old Abe's appearance as a mark of his humble honesty. Horace Greeley used published images and articles in his paper to serve as evidence that, in his words, "Lincoln possesses rare qualities of mind and heart." The tension between Lincoln's apparent lack of polish and his thick western persona drew strong responses. On June 11, 1860, a Republican paper, the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, published a woodcut image of Lincoln. This waist up depiction rendered his hair in disarray and dark shadows under his eyes and nose, furthering the impression of a coarse frontiersman. Within days the image gained national attention among Republican newspapers. Upon discovering the printed woodcut sketch the *New York Times* responded on June 15, 1860, "Mr. Lincoln is by no means an eminently handsome man; but his countenance is at least human. If he looked like the picture the *Sentinel* gave, however, he could split rails by simply looking at them. There have been a good many bad portraits of Mr. Lincoln published, but this on the whole, is decidedly the unkindest cut of all."³⁵ The *New York Times* assumed Lincoln should appear with a degree of refinement that the *Sentinel* was not affording him.

After the *New York Times* criticized the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel*, the state of Wisconsin was abuzz over the topic. The *New York Times* article was reprinted in three Wisconsin newspapers, the *Daily Argus and Democrat* on June 19, 1860, the Republican *Oshkosh Courier* on June 22 and the Republican *Kewaunee Country Enterprize* on July 4. By late June the *Alton Courier* of Iowa published the same woodcut of Lincoln. The *Daily Milwaukee* abstained from publishing the image and reproved the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* for "putting up that horrid

³⁵ The *New York Times* published an article on June 11, 1860 concerning the woodcut image of Lincoln in the *Milwaukee Daily Sentinel* on June 11, 1860. The article was republished in *Kewaunee Country Enterprize* [Wisconsin], July 4, 1860 and in the *Oshkosh Courier* [Wisconsin], June 22, 1860.

looking likeness of ‘Old Abe.’”³⁶ The *New York Times* again responded on July 3 in disapproval to the publication of these images. “Poor Mr. Lincoln” a *Times* editor wrote, “is made to look as though he had been dragged through a very rough knot-hole, and subsequently beaten with a soot-bag.”³⁷ Debate over the former maunder’s appearance in newsprint revealed that the importance of refinement was at stake.

Interest concerning Lincoln’s upbringing and work history stirred up controversy over his depictions. Some editors cried foul, claiming that images of Lincoln depicting him as a laborer were inaccurate. One such objection rang from the *Worcester Spy*, thrashed Matthew Brady’s photograph that had appeared in *Harper’s Weekly* as a “libelous picture which they call a portrait of Abraham Lincoln.” As editors asked whether his image was appropriate, another critical question emerged: was Lincoln’s image doctored in such a way that it was not authentic? If the northeast was suspicious of Lincoln’s western uncouthness, images of Lincoln had the polarizing effect of either softening his cladhopping façade or affirming his vulgarity.³⁸ In mid-July, *Vanity Fair* published a harsh statement regarding Lincoln’s published pictures. “We propose,” the magazine asserted, “that authentic portraits of OLD ABE LINCOLN be posted up on the trees about. If these would not frighten any worm of ordinary nerves to death, we had best let them live.”³⁹ The Democratic *Staunton Spectator* of Virginia published an article entitled, “Personal Appearance of Abraham Lincoln,” pointedly ribbed Lincoln and his followers. “A correct likeness of Mr. Lincoln,” the *Staunton* editor surmised, “would be condemned as a caricature by any one who did not know it was true.”⁴⁰

³⁶ *Daily Milwaukee*, July 6, 1860.

³⁷ “Minor Topics,” *New York Times*, July 3, 1860.

³⁸ *Barnstable Patriot*, June 18, 1860.

³⁹ “A letter from the hermit at Nixon’s,” *Vanity Fair*, July 7, 1860, 17.

⁴⁰ “Personal Appearance of Abraham Lincoln,” *Staunton Spectator* [Staunton, Virginia], June 12, 1860.

Rather than accepting pictures as irrefutable, editors and viewers alike gazed warily—though with great intrigue—upon Lincoln images. It was common for the few northeasterners who caught a glimpse of Lincoln during his campaign to compare their impression to photographs of him. A New Yorker who saw Lincoln in the flesh reported, “The photographs of Lincoln all lie.” Instead of finding him ugly—as images depicted—the observer described Lincoln as “youthful,” though “clumsy.”⁴¹ William Robinson, an experienced journalist, penned in a private correspondence, “I have seen Barry’s pictures of Lincoln; and I am satisfied that he is as ugly as his most enthusiastic admirers claim.” Though Robinson confirmed the accuracy of Lincoln photographs circulating, he found him to appear as “a man of ability and substantiality.”⁴² A Wisconsin paper noted, “Mr. Lincoln looks so much better than his pictures represent him.”⁴³ When Old Abe reached Philadelphia, *The Christian Recorder* commented, “His personal appearance is much more prepossessing than his portraits indicated it to be.”⁴⁴ These remarks indicate how fastidiously his image was analyzed. As a former rail-splitter from the Sucker state running for president transcended politics and his image became a matter of public interest.⁴⁵

The debate over the authenticity of Lincoln published images during the presidential election was exclusive to the Republican candidate—other nominees did not gain this type of interest. Although the other candidates were lampooned, they faced much less scrutiny than Lincoln. Boston calligrapher of Lincoln, David Davidson, found his work interpreted through

⁴¹ William Burger to Eben H. Burger, February 12, 1861, “Pictures of Lincoln Lie, Says Old Letter,” *New York Times*, undated clipping. From the Ford Financial Foundation Collection, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

⁴² Mrs. W. S. Robinson, ed., *Warrington "Pen Portraits": A Collection of Personal and Political Reminiscences, from 1848 to 1876, from the Writings of William S. Robinson* (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1877), 242.

⁴³ “Journey of the President Elect,” *Weekly Gazette and Free Press* [Janesville, Wisconsin], March 1, 1861.

⁴⁴ “The Reception of the President Elect in Philadelphia on Thursday.” *The Christian Recorder* [Philadelphia, Pennsylvania], February 23, 1861.

⁴⁵ *Daily Argus And Democrat* [Madison, Wisconsin], June 19, 1860.

this critical lens. Upon viewing Davidson's portrait hanging in a city studio an editor for the *Boston Gazette* subjected Lincoln to an analysis dripping with physiological overtones.⁴⁶ Published in the paper on December 8, "every word of which he has wrought into hair, eyes, facial lines, shadows, cravat, shirt studs, watch guard, drapery, and extending out over the ornamental lines of the embossed page on which the picture is written, it presents the form of more flowers of speech than ever its author dreamed imparting to it." The effusive reviewer every pored over Lincoln's appearance as a means of assessing Lincoln's character. "Every mark," continued the editor, "though microscopically small, has its meaning, and if looked through a glass the continuity of the speech is easily traced, while the oval that immediately surrounds the face is a brief biography of Lincoln."⁴⁷ By 1860 a consumerism imaginary fostered subjectivity and skepticism in viewing, throttling any singular mode of evaluation. The widespread diffusion of images undermined any simple interpretation of Lincoln's character based upon his depictions. With the mass production of images, the public was no longer purely dependent on written evaluations of appearance; the act of viewing provided an instantaneous sensory experience that words were incapable of.⁴⁸

Images also found their way onto objects. Image bearing medals—collectable relics adorned with the crude visage of Lincoln—were wildly popular in the northeast during the late-summer and fall of 1860. While these types of medals were nothing new, appearing first in the

⁴⁶ Training the eye to uncover the "invisible aristocratic" contributed to the social differentiation of white men in post-revolutionary America. Proliferation of Lincoln images occurred during a period when perception of manhood was in flux. Traditional authorities were besieged by a burgeoning impulse to perceive with skepticism and a predilection for sensation. The dubious science of physiognomy, part of the old guard cultural authority in both society and politics, lingered as part of the kaleidoscopic light Lincoln was evaluated from. Gaining widespread influence during the Jacksonian period, the practice of physiology sought interpret physical features to discerning internal character qualities.

⁴⁷ *The Boston Gazette*, December 8, 1860.

⁴⁸ According to Louis A. Warren, the earliest image of Lincoln in the East appeared in 1856. Warren, "Calligraphic Lincoln Portraits," *Lincoln Lore* no. 626 (April 7, 1941).

1828 presidential campaign, the mass production and quality of popular improved by 1860. The Prince of Wales tour of the United States created uproar of excited in anticipation of European royalty along the eastern seaboard in July and August of 1860. Entrepreneurs capitalized on the spectacle of a rare visit from European royalty, as they would with Lincoln during the late summer and fall of 1860.⁴⁹ In the entire northeast, the Prince's visit during the late summer and early fall was the major attractions and merchants did not let the opportunity pass them by. Ads informed customers that "Prince of Wales Medals and Badge Pins" were on sale for twenty-five-cents. Another ad in the *New York Herald* for the Abbot brothers on 724 Broadway, New York City, informed the public that these medals were comprised of "Solid Rim, Milled Edge, Coin Style, Patented." Plus, they carried over "20 styles of campaign medals, pins, charms, etc."⁵⁰ Accessible to the public at a modest cost, these medals created a sense of personal connection detached from place or mutual interaction that facilitated an emerging celebrity culture.⁵¹

The cultural landscape was ripe for mass production and the sale of image bearing medals, an opportunity that Douglas F. Maltby seized. At the age of thirty-four Maltby, a Yale University dropout raised in a wealthy family New England family, assumed the role of treasurer and manager of the Waterbury Button Company in 1855.⁵² Equipped with a keen entrepreneurial sense he branched out of the button business and tapped into the lucrative commerce of selling medals in 1860. That year he submitted patent No. 29,652, for a

⁴⁹ Ian Radforth, *Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 84.

⁵⁰ *New York Tribune*, August 13, 1860.

⁵¹ Simone Natale relates that celebrity culture intersected with the onset of modern consumerism and popular culture. Noting that this was different than earlier forms of recognition, Natale posits, "celebrity shifted the focus from the public recognition of personal achievements to forms of consumption in which the famous character functioned as a trigger for the public's desire." Simone Natale. *Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture*. University Park: Penn State University Press, 2016.

⁵² Joseph Anderson et al., *The Town and City of Waterbury, Connecticut* (New Haven: Price and Lee, 1896), 462.

“photographic medal,” on August 14, 1860. The oval contained sheet metal in the center for the engraving of photographic image. “The example of my invention represented,” Maltby explained in his patent application, “contains two photographic pictures one being presented on each face of the medal.” The example included in the patent contained Lincoln on one side of the medal and Hamlin on the other. This very campaign medal was heavily advertised in prominent eastern papers, including the *New York Tribune*, and sold by the Abbott Brothers on Broadway. The Abbott Brothers summarized the product as a “Solid Rim, Milled Edge, Coin Style, Patented” in a *Harpers Weekly* on September 8, 1860. In addition to the Maltby’s patented medal, the Abbott Brothers store advertised 100,000 campaign medals for sale.⁵³ Variations of the button, like the Patent campaign bosom pins, also found a market.

⁵³ Patent campaign bosom pins were advertised in the *New York Tribune*, a two-cent newspaper, on August 4, 1860. *New York Tribune*, August 13, 1860; *The Cincinnati Daily Press*, August 30, 1860.

D. F. Maltby

Button.

N^o 29652.

Patented Aug. 14. 1860.

Fig. 1.



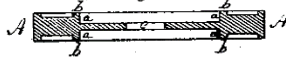
Fig. 2.



Fig. 3.



Fig. 4.



Witnesses.

C. M. Hughes
J. T. Smith

Inventor.

D. F. Maltby
John Munnell &
Attorneys

Figure 1. Maltby's Proposed Lincoln Campaign Medal Patent

The demand for campaign mementos is particularly evidenced by merchants recruiting men to peddle Lincoln keepsakes. A *New York Tribune* advertisement called for any capable man to hock political goods; “10,000 agents wanted to sell campaign books, charts, prints, metals, pins, etc. Good agents can make from five to ten dollars a day during the campaigning.” While an overstatement of the demand, the point was not lost; a high demand existed not only to see Lincoln, but to also obtain tangible, collectable objects associated with him. Another ad announced, “Agents wanted in every town in the United States. Circulars giving list of styles and prices to agents sent on application.”⁵⁴ Merchants lured hucksters with the promise of a lucrative partnership. “Agents should lose no time!” ran an announcement, “The campaign fairly opened!! Now is the time to make Money!!”⁵⁵ Advertisements in the back pages of the *New York Tribune* offer a lens into the demand for these trinkets as the marketplace harnessed new technology to meet consumers’ desire. As one advertisement in the *Tribune* proclaimed, “Campaign medals all the rage,” and producers were swift to fuel this craze.⁵⁶

Non-image bearing materials associated with Lincoln also emerged during the 1860. One such item was brought to Lincoln’s attention. A Pennsylvanian gleefully sent one of his “Lincoln nails” to the presidential candidate. With a distinct “L” on the head of the nail, they “were distributed to the people.” The craftsman then suggested that Lincoln show the artifact to Mary Todd; “I think it will please her curiosity,” he added. Other, more bizarre, Lincoln items were found across the North. Ida Tarbell writes:

Hundreds of trivial little objects aided in keeping Lincoln before the people. Thus there was a Lincoln canned tomato, an Old Abe chewing tobacco, and numbers of patriotic cards and envelopes.

⁵⁴ *New York Tribune*, July 31, 1860; *New York Tribune* August 14, 1860.

⁵⁵ It is estimated that advertising in New York City newspaper accounted for almost a third of their revenue during this period. Hy B. Turner, *When Giants Ruled: The Story of Park Row* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999).

⁵⁶ *New York Tribune*, August 11, 1860.

One of the best of the latter was a decorated across the top and left side with a rail-fence along which was inscribed ‘the fence that Able build.’⁵⁷

The vast amounts of trinkets incurred the ire of southerners. The *Alexandria Gazette* of Virginia lamented that, “the people have turned their attention to all sorts of Yankee notions.” The most popular of which were shoddy campaign medals, “which one manufacture turns out ten thousand per diem.”⁵⁸

The spectacle of images filtered into the transaction of letters. By the mid-1850s improved print technology and transportation efficiency allowed envelopes, decorated with woodcut images, to flow across the North at affordable rates. By 1845 and 1851 decreasing postage rates and speedier service offered northerners, of all stripes, the opportunity to participate in the exchange letters and commerce.⁵⁹ The feature of a persons’ penmanship on paper offered a visible and tangible mark of personality. Letters, notes David Henkin, were the expression of an “incarnate” connection between the sender and recipient. And, image-bearing envelopes imprinted with a display, added a facet of communication between sender and receiver. The production of intriguing images on the envelopes facilitated the consumption of images by reaching beyond the public sphere and into the intimate domain of letters. “Ordinary letters collected at the post office” Henkin points out, “could spark fantasies about relationships

⁵⁷ Samuel Greer to Abraham Lincoln, September 28, 1860, Pittsburg Penna. in Abraham Lincoln Papers at the Library of Congress: Series 1. General Correspondence. 1833–1916, Washington, D.C.: American Memory Project, 2000–2002; Tarbell, *Life of Abraham Lincoln: Mr. Lincoln and the Campaign of 1860*, from Tarbell “Lincolns Campaign” (unpublished) Tarbell Collection.

⁵⁸ “News of the Day” *Alexandria Gazette*, November 7, 1860; Janice G. Schimmelman, “The Tintype in America 1856-1880.” *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, New Series, 97, no. 2 (2007): 1-270.

⁵⁹ Correspondence between an Illinois merchant to a friend in Philadelphia illustrated the communication between the two regions. The letter reads, “They are not feared in the least in this county or rarely ever mentioned though we have a Bell man in the store and he is the only one I know of in these parts its all Lincoln and Douglass and the latter do not dare to throw word of reproach at Lincoln character.” Jonah Sewell to William F. Allen, July 20, 1860, Bloomington, Ill. William Frederick Allen correspondence. Pennsylvania Historical Society, Philadelphia.

that exceeded the ordinary bounds of space, time, and social possibility.” The flourishing technology of images on envelopes, Henkin continues, “offered a new sensation.” Enthusiasm to obtain and examine images led to the production of image bearing envelopes of which Lincoln proved popular in the North during the late summer and fall of 1860.⁶⁰

Newspapers reported on the trend of sending letters in Lincoln envelopes and letter writers made note of the joy of sending them. By mid-summer the illustration of a humble western mauler in Lincoln graced the cover of envelopes purchased alongside those depicting brilliant vistas, like Niagara Falls. Interestingly envelopes displayed contrasting depictions of Lincoln on the top left. The most common was a rough-hewed Lincoln in short-sleeves, complete with a rail-fence made from Lincoln rails, still other envelopes presented him as a flatboatman. Envelopes displaying a noble Lincoln in the cut of a well-postured gentleman in elegant garb contrasted this gruff Lincoln. Ed Mendel’s company, located in Chicago, the largest producer of Lincoln envelopes, found a market in the northeast. The communication revolution that occurred during this period, as Daniel Walker Howe argues, offered a means of exchange that promoted consumption based upon desire and intrigue.⁶¹

Beyond his likeness requests for Lincoln’s autograph, whether in person or by mail, surged. Lincoln’s campaign, buoyed by a consumer culture, struck a chord with the general

⁶⁰ Letters traditionally served as a means of wealthy American men to participate in an enlightened fraternity that, in some circumstances, spanned the Atlantic world. By the late 1840s an emergence of illustrated envelopes with woodcut or lithographed images appeared on the front and back of patriotic envelopes. For patriotic envelopes during this period see: Steven R. Boyd, *Patriotic Envelopes of the Civil War: The Iconography of Union and Confederate Covers* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); David Henkin, *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 41, 128-130, 154-156.

⁶¹ Richard R. John, *Spreading the News: The American Postal Service from Franklin to Morse* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995). Pryor to the Post Office Act of 1845—the cost prevented many from sending letters see (page 159, 168); “Lincoln Envelopes,” *Vincennes Gazette* July 7, 1860; “Lincoln Envelopes,” *Vincennes Gazette* July 7, 1860; Daniel Walker Howe writes, “The United States Post Office constituted the lifeblood of the communication system. *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815–1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 225.

populace of the North that transcended politics. Autographs offered a democratic means for the general populace to relate to statesmen. Formerly a proper introduction by an acquaintance was required, serving as a barrier between traditional dignitaries and the public. By the mid-1830s, however, collecting autographs became a common hobby in America, collecting simultaneously elevated the person whose autograph was sought after to a celebrity status while offering a sense of association by the owner. Collecting autographs in early nineteenth century America evolved from amassing signatures of the wealthy to, in the words of Tamara Plakins Thornton, the “truly popular.” This popularity of the hobby grew concurrently with print circulation. Some were drawn to collecting autographs out of a physiological approach, believing the stroke of a pen disclosed the interior character. Thus, a collector had the feeling of intimacy with the signer. “The experience of collecting autographs,” writes Thornton, “was even more profound than the experience of reading them, for physical contact with the actual *stuff* of individuality seemed alive with magical possibilities.”⁶² Collecting autographs and celebrity culture began to coalesce at mid-century when photographs and print technologies were improving in quality and decreasing in cost. David Haven Blake posits that carefully crafted descriptions of what renowned people, “looked like, what they wore, what they ate, and what they said,” prompted interests in collecting autographs and, thereby, fostered the “commodification of personality.” Facsimile images of famous men in cheap print—especially newspapers—regularly included a replicated autograph below the depiction. Images, autographs, and items associated of writers, poets, actors, politicians, and performers fostered a burgeoning celebrity culture. Consumers

⁶² David Hankin writes, “[T]he most valued and fetishized tokens of personal presence were autographs, especially those of famous people.” Hankin details how the Postal Service enabled and grew this practice. Hankin, *The Postal Age*, 56; David Haven Blake, *Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006) 41-43, 51; Tamara Plakin Thornton, *Handwriting in America: A Cultural History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 86, 87.

desired to gain a greater connection in an emerging celebrity culture that fashioned western manhood for an eastern market.⁶³

Clamor to obtain Lincoln's signed name put him on the frontlines of an infant celebrity culture fueled by a consumer imaginary. This is, in part, evident by the numerous requests for his autograph. In one response to a letter asking simply for his autograph, Lincoln wrote back; "Yours of May 24th is received. You say you are not a Lincoln man; 'but still would like to have Mr. L's autograph.' Well, here it is." Visitors to Springfield during the summer and fall of 1860 were star struck by the Presidential contender. William Reiley Smith was traveling through Springfield the momentous day he obtained Lincoln's autograph for his son Will. Smith's friend—an unnamed Illinoisan Democratic politician—took Smith to the state house and introduced him to Mr. Lincoln. He informed Lincoln that his boy desired his autograph, Lincoln gladly acquiesced, signed his name, and added a personalized note for to his son.⁶⁴ The allure of this western man compelled many to seek him out. A correspondent for the *Trenton Democrat* of New Jersey described how Lincoln was at the center of a fanaticism. "Mr. Lincoln, is remaining quietly at home," observed the reporter, "He occupies, during the large share of his time, the Executive apartments at the State-house, on the second floor, and some days receives hundreds of visitors, while the mails and telegraph put him in communication with a vastly larger number throughout all sections of the country."⁶⁵ The fascination with Lincoln drove northerners

⁶³ Blake, *Walt Whitman and the Culture of American Celebrity*, 49, 50.

⁶⁴ Even before his nomination, Lincoln was signing his autograph. Mary Delahay, the daughter Lincoln's friend in Leavenworth, Kansas, requested that Lincoln sign her autograph album, to which Lincoln replied, "With pleasure I write my name in your Album" on December 7, 1859; Basler, *Collected Works*, vol. 3, 504; George F. Smith to Will, November 11, 1860, George F. Smith in "Miscellanies Documents," ALPL, Springfield, Illinois.

⁶⁵ *New York Tribune*, June 23, 1860.

from all walks of life—young, old, men, and women—to not settle for a glimpse of Lincoln, but to obtain a tangible connection with him.⁶⁶

The Conkling family’s correspondence, a prominent Springfield, Illinois household, sheds light on how Lincoln images, materials, and autograph intersected with intimate relationships. James Conkling, a local politician, and his wife Mercie exchanged letters with their son, Clinton, a freshman at Yale University, during the fall of 1860. Interestingly, the Conkling letters, a dialogue between a son and parents experiencing separation of kin and place, illuminate the consumption of Lincoln items, especially among young men in 1860. Clinton’s letters to his parents, dripping with familiar longing and appreciation, often drift toward requests. Shrewdly, in a letter to his mother on September 23, 1860, Clinton petitions her for a favor:

Please tell father to get me a few of the small signed photographed pictures of Mr. Lincoln, Mr. Butler over Mr. Hawley’s has them, they are like the one I have with the blue ribbon, I gave 10 cents for mine. If Butler has not got them Hopper the news depot man may have them. I would like very much to have a few of them as I have not seen a good likeness of Mr. Lincoln since I came away; and as I have some trouble to keep the one I have on account of several of the boys who have been very anxious to obtain it.⁶⁷

Although Clinton’s affinity for Lincoln was due in part to their shared hometown, his peers at Yale were “anxious” to have materials associated with Lincoln. Merchants throughout the North, not just the northeast, peddled Lincoln images, medals, ribbons, rails, and signatures. By October 13, Clinton’s father gratified his son’s wishes and sent him two images of Lincoln. In

⁶⁶ For a description of Lincoln receiving visitors in Springfield see: Henry Villard, *Memoirs of Henry Villard, journalist and financier, 1835-1900* (Boston, New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), 145-148.

⁶⁷ Letter from Clinton to Mother. September 23, 1860. New Have, Hartford. Conklin Family Papers. ALPL, Springfield, Illinois.

addition, he sent them in an envelope with a Lincoln image produced by Ed Mendel's company, the second of its kind that he sent to his Lincoln enthused son.⁶⁸

William was on the lookout for an authentic Lincoln rail to gift his son with, but the fanfare surrounding them made it difficult for him to find one. "I have worked hard to inquire about the price of Lincoln rail but will see if I can procure any." Amidst sharing his exercise routine at the school gymnasium twice a week and asking his mother to tell the young ladies in Springfield that he had not forgotten about them, and requesting an ancient atlas to decorate his dormitory Clinton wrote to his parents most about acquiring Lincoln trinkets. On October 15, Clinton's mother sent him "a piece" of a Lincoln rail. Five days later, on October 20, his Mom sent a Lincoln badge—a ribbon with the likeness of Lincoln—to Clinton.⁶⁹ Illustrating the intersection of consumer desire and familial intimacy, by sending him Lincoln objects James and Mercie displayed affection for their son. The emotional connection to the famed Illinoisan through artifacts, uncoupled from time and place, even infiltrated the bedrock of culture—familial relationships.⁷⁰

The Conkling family search for a Lincoln rail was part of a larger fascination with artifacts of Lincoln's youth. Rails chopped by Lincoln were in high demand due to how they were marketed by Lincoln's associates. At the Illinois Republican State Convention in Decatur

⁶⁸ Letter from Mother to Clinton. September 24, 1860. Springfield, Illinois. Conkling Family Papers, ALPL, Springfield, Illinois; Father to Clinton. October 13, 1860. Springfield, Illinois. Conkling Family Papers, ALPL, Springfield, Illinois; Clinton later returned to Springfield and practice law. He assisted Robert Lincoln in securing the Lincoln Springfield home. See: Wayne C. Temple, *By Square and Compass: Saga of the Lincoln Home*, (Mahomet, Illinois: Mayhaven Publishing, 1984).

⁶⁹ Letter from Mother to Clinton. October 15, 1860. Springfield, Illinois. Conkling Family Papers ALPL, Springfield, Illinois; Letter from Mother to Clinton. October 20, 1860. Springfield, Illinois. Conkling Family Papers. ALPL, Springfield, Illinois.

⁷⁰ Sentimental relics provided a means of, according to Teresa Barnett, "renegotiating the self's relational world." Barnett further contend that distinction between the "association item" or "relic" that elicits an emotional response to the past and the more scientific "evidentiary object" provides "hard, analyzable evidence about the specifics of the past." Barnett, *Sacred Relics: Pieces of the Past in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 24, 64.

on May 9 and 10, 1860, John Hanks, Lincoln's friend and eager supporter, exhibited rails that Lincoln supposedly had chopped to a rave reaction. The rails served as material proof of Old Abe's service as an honest laborer.⁷¹ At the National Convention a few days later Lincoln supporters once again paraded rails around the Chicago auditorium, known as the Wigwam. Outside the Wigwam Lincoln supporters were seen marching through the streets of Chicago with rails on their shoulders.⁷²

Between the end of the state convention and the beginning of the National Republican Convention in the same venue, John Hanks made a handsome profit selling a wagonload of Lincoln rails for a dollar apiece. Hanks, quick to chase a profit, spent three years in California pursuing the dream of striking it rich panning gold, but returned to Illinois in 1853 with little more than the clothes on his back.⁷³ Lincoln once quipped that Hank's business selling his rails was the "rail enterprize." Oglesby contributed to the venture by securing a letter declaring, "The rails made by Mr. Lincoln are genuine and do duly authenticated" from the President of the Bank of New Jersey, Moses Ferris Webb. While Webb, who attended the Republican Convention in Chicago, was far from able to determine the origins of the rails, his reputation

⁷¹ David R. Roediger contends, "a rite of passage" of sorts to assert manly "economic independence" and honesty labor. *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (New York: Verso, 1991), 45.

⁷² Work is critical to the understanding of antebellum manhood. Historians who consider labor during this period consider the divergence between manual labor and intellectual work. This is important to note because work and manhood, especially during the late antebellum era, are conjoined. Daniel T. Rodgers clearly demonstrates this connection in the late antebellum North. Physical labor was perceived as character building because it instilled, "fortitude, self-control, and perseverance" through "systematic exhaustion." Rodgers nicely identifies the association between Christian faith and work woven into popular Protestantism. Eric Foner's seminal book, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War*, explains how the Republican Party's politics were rooted in the political and social concept of free-labor. I aim to stand on the shoulders of these influential studies to better probe manhood and the convergence in the urban northeast and rural northwest. Rodgers observes that the worldviews of work were juxtaposed depending on social status. For gentlemen in the North, "Conspicuous leisure was everywhere the identifying mark of the aristocrat, his bastion against the moralistic assaults of the middle classes; and in this regard the North was no exception [from the South or Europe]." Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America 1850-1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974), 12, 15.

⁷³ Mark E. Neely, Jr, *The Abraham Lincoln Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1982), 138.

leading eastern banker carried clout. Oglesby maintained organized receipts of where the rails were sent and the amount he made for each rail. In total he collected over 500 dollars sending rails across the country.⁷⁴

Immensely popular, Lincoln rails appeared in a variety of forms. Some were crafted into picture frames to display his very own likeness.⁷⁵ At a Republican gathering at Cooper Union on June 8, 1861, a throng of men from New York City's Ninth Ward Republican Association, a local Republican club, drew attention as they processed around the gathering while hoisting a genuine "Lincoln Rail;" all while belting songs about the tall, honest Abe from Illinois.⁷⁶ The tangible evidence of rails authenticated that Lincoln was truly a man of western industry. One rail purchaser elaborated on the widespread determination to obtain one in a letter to Oglesby on June 15, 1860. Republicans, he summarized, were "anxious to get pieces of them" because they were attributed to same man who had been "subduing the wild Frontier of this great and mighty West."⁷⁷ As a young Robert Brewster Stanton observed, "Through the whole campaign of 1860, while recognizing his [Lincoln's] ability, he had been characterized as Old Abe, the long, lank, gawky rail-splitter."⁷⁸ During the 1860 campaign Lincoln's rail splitting image was known in the northeast as his defining characteristic.

The image of Lincoln splitting wood generated further interest his western heritage, which also proved problematic for northeastern Lincoln supporters. The New York Young Men's Republican Union, the same organization that sponsored Lincoln's Cooper Union address,

⁷⁴ Wayne C. Temple, "Lincoln's Fence Rails," *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, 47 (Spring 1954), 29-31.

⁷⁵ Lincoln's son, Robert, was even called the prince of rails by his peers at Yale. James C. Conkling to Clinton Conkling, Springfield, October 20, 1860. Father to Clinton, October 13, 1860. Springfield, Illinois. Conkling Family Papers, ALPL, Springfield, Illinois.

⁷⁶ "The Presidential Campaign: Republican Mass Meeting," *New York Times*, June 8, 1860.

⁷⁷ William M. Green, Letter to Richard J. Oglesby, 15 June 1860. Richard J. Oglesby Papers, ALPL.

⁷⁸ Robert Brewster Stanton, "Abraham Lincoln: Personal Memories of the Man," *Scribner's Magazine* 68 no. 3 (1920): 35.

began publishing *Lincoln and Liberty*, a weekly campaign bulletin, on June 19, 1860. Boasting of circulating 3,961,000 pages of Lincoln campaign literature during the summer and fall of 1860, the editors were careful about how they depicted Lincoln.⁷⁹ Rather than an image of Lincoln splitting rails to grace the cover the Republican Union opted for a patriotic eagle with a Lincoln and Hamlin banner in its beak instead. Other Eastern Republicans followed suit. The second volume of the publication included an exposé of Lincoln in 1832, with vivid descriptions of his honesty and courage. Yet, despite attempting to provide its readership with biological information of Lincoln the editors omitted any reference to Lincoln's manual labor.

Only in the third volume of *Lincoln and Liberty* on July 3, 1860, did the paper tackle Lincoln's rail splitting past. The editors maintained, "that Mr. Lincoln has and can 'split rails,' will not of itself make him any more worthy of the Presidential chair; but the fact in spite of being born in 'poor and humble circumstances,' where he was obliged to work out by the day and month, he has won his way, by his intellect and probability, to the highest distinction." Emphasizing Lincoln's intellect was a careful move to align Lincoln with traditional statesmen. In contrast, New York City Republicans did not want to show his axe-chopping image or emphasize his work history, yet both westerners and easterners emphasized his honesty and courage. The *Rail-splitter* and *Lincoln and Liberty* interpreted their idea of exemplar manliness very differently. Although the public reacted to Lincoln with both repugnance and fascination, during the spring and summer of 1860, he nevertheless struck eastern readership as entertaining.

Despite the frenzy surrounding the rails, editors from the northeast objected to the notion that rail splitting validated Lincoln's qualification for the presidency. Rather than praising manual labor, many prized genteel statesman-like qualities. The *New York Times* found the

⁷⁹ *An Oration Delivered by Hon. Charles Sumner*, pamphlet, (New York: Young Men's Republican Union, 1861).

Tribune's approach of practically ignoring elite Republican voters harmful, responding, "We ventured to suggest that some of our over-zealous Republican friends seemed inclined to rest their advocacy of Mr. Lincoln somewhat too exclusively on the fact that he had been, in early life, a Rail-splitter." As a newspaper that circulated to a more dignified audience, the *New York Times* wanted to reveal Lincoln's intellectual qualities to prove that he was a capable presidential candidate, and not a mere specimen of the uncivilized backcountry. "We do not believe that Mr. Lincoln's opinions... were formed while he was splitting rails," the *Times* contended.⁸⁰ The *New York Herald's* most severe scolding came in the way of mocking the "wildest enthusiasm" over Lincoln rails by suggesting that more Lincoln talisman were ready for sale. The editor teased:

Here is the invoice, which a celebrated antiquarian in prepared to sell cheap for cash:

1. Handle of the maul with which *Lincoln* split his first rail.
2. Chew of tobacco masticated during the operation.
3. Waistband of breeches split during the operation. Patch of seat of ditto.
4. Portrait of the man who stood against a tree looking at Old Abe splitting his rail. [Old Abe told him if he kept on sogering there he'd never got into Congress and he didn't.]
5. Horns of the oxen who hauled the rails.
6. Half a pint of whisky (rifle—warranted to kill at a hundred yards) distilled in the hollow of a tree by Old Abe.
7. Original tin pot of which Old Abe took his drinks.
8. View of that grocery (by "our own artist on the spot.")
9. String of one of the original brogans worn by live Prophet in his hegira from Kentucky to Illinois.
10. Half a pound of best Young Hyson sold by Lincoln, as a grocer, to the sire of the first white child born in Sangamon county.
11. Pine knot from the original hut built by Uncle Abe from lumber got out by his own hands.
12. Hair from mane of horse who won a race of which Uncle Abe was judge.
13. Ditto from tail of losing horse in the same race.
14. Tooth knocked out of man's head who fought another man, and chose honest Old Abe for referee.
15. Portrait of Old Abe when he tried to look pretty and frightened a child of one of the first families in the county into convulsions.

⁸⁰ "Hair-splitting on Rail-splitting," *New York Times*, June 12, 1860.

The *Philadelphia Evening Journal* noted that while it is to Lincoln's credit that he elevated his station of life from the dregs of society, it did not improve his ability to serve as president. The *New York Herald*, a relentless critic of Lincoln's westernisms, published the article, "An illiterate Western Boor," that contended, "Splitting rails is by no means qualification for the office." In referring to Lincoln chopping rails the *Tribune* stated, "Let us put these entirely out of the account, and judge Mr. Lincoln solely by his intellectual and political record as a private man." The *Barnstable Patriot* affirmed this article because the *New York Herald* was, according to their estimation, "a journal which understands perfectly the characters of public men." On the next page of the same paper ran a notice about a Lincoln rail passing through the town of Fall River, Massachusetts. Two weeks later the *Barnstable Patriot* printed another notice that the local Lincoln Club obtained a Lincoln rail and that, "The rail will be on exhibition in a few days at the head-quarters of the club."⁸¹ The *Barnstable Patriot's* disparagement of Lincoln and its simultaneous publicity concerning where to view Lincoln rails illustrated that condescension of Lincoln and viewing him as a spectacle were not mutually exclusive.

Like Lincoln objects—images, autograph, rails, and medals—the political rallies held on Lincoln's behalf were visual spectacles, complete with engaging sounds. The largest Lincoln political rallies were pure spectacles—eye catching and void of political discourse—drawing hundreds of thousands in New York City, Philadelphia, Chicago, Cleveland, and Boston. Wide Awakes, a paramilitary Republican marching club, conspicuously marched in uniform, torches, and often culminated the pageantry with a fireworks display. Shaken by the bitter regional

⁸¹ "An illiterate Western Boor," *Barnstable Patriot*, June 5, 1860; "Mr. Lincoln's Abilities," *New York Daily Tribune*, May 24, 1860; "Lincoln Rails," *Barnstable Patriot*, June 19, 1860.

tensions and a political malaise during the 1850s, the northeast public gravitated to the theatrics of the Wide Awake marches.⁸² And, as spectacles, participation grew organically, without the artificial imposition of elite party organizers. Although the Wide Awakes existed before 1860, the size and coordination reached new heights by 1860, a sharp departure from former rallies.⁸³

More than pure spectacles, music enhanced the sensory entertainment that revolved around Lincoln's campaign in the urban northeast. Piano sheet music provided the ingredients to fill campaign clubs, taverns, and other communal gathering with Lincoln inspired songs and dances for the middling and lower classes. Campaign songsters published in the northeast, complete with upwards of thirty songs about Lincoln, commonly mentioned his bravery, western origin, and split rails.⁸⁴ The song and sheet music, "Honest Old Abe," complete with an image of Lincoln with disheveled hair on the cover, was printed and sold in the northeast. The lyrics included the lines:

"Out on the wide rol_ling prair_ie A tall Suck_er has tak_en the course"
"Peo_ple will al_ways re_mem_ber The Pi_o_neer Suck-er with care, And af-ter the ides of No-vember Will give him the Pre-ident's chair"
"Hon-est Old Abe of the West"

⁸² Jon Grinspan, "'Young Men for War': The Wide Awakes and Lincoln's 1860 Presidential Campaign," *Journal of American History*, 96 (Sept. 2009), 357-78.

⁸³ Lincoln's rally in Illinois was described as having "Banners and flags, Mottoes and Emblems, floated in the breeze, from a hundred different points in the town, contrasting finely with the green leave of the trees." One banner stated, "'Old Abe'—the raw-boned son of Kentucky." *The Hamilton Representative*, "Lincoln at Carthage" October 23, 1858.

⁸⁴ *Lincoln and Hamlin Songster for the Presidential Campaign of 1860; The Lincoln and Hamlin Songster, or, the Continental Melodist, Comprising a Choice Collection of Original and Selected Songs* (Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore: Fisher Brothers and William J. Bunce), 1860; For Lincoln campaign songs see: William Miles, *Songs, Odes, Glees and Ballads: A Bibliography of American Presidential Campaign Songsters* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1990).

Songbooks were most often sold with the rail-splitter image on the cover, enabling songsters to picture the man they sang about. The music sheet for “The Wigwam or Grand March” and “Honest Old Abe’s Quick Step,” both published in Boston in 1860, with drawings of him chopping wood to boot.⁸⁵

The festivity of political rallies was nothing new by 1860, but the visual spectacle of them presented a contrast with the festive, community-focused political rallies of the late antebellum Old Northwest. Two years earlier editor Thomas Gregg of the *Hamilton Representative* of Iowa described the extent of the visual spectacle in a Lincoln gathering in Carthage, Illinois; “Banners and flags, Mottoes and Emblems, floated in the breeze, from a hundred different points in the town, contrasting finely with the green leave of the trees.”⁸⁶ As one backwoods attender put it, “Our political rallies on the frontier were holidays for the entire household.” They were an opportunity to feast, regardless of political loyalty. Families brought their best dishes to share on table clothes draped on the ground in open clearings. A colloquial setting fit perfectly for Lincoln’s familial humor and speech, conversely urban populace increasingly fellowshipped over the visually spectacular by 1860.⁸⁷

The metropolitan northeast absorbed the widespread interest in the presidential race into a larger consumerism. The activity of the Wide-Awakes during the summer and fall of 1860 illustrate this evolution. While political rallies were often entertaining events, the spectacles put on by the Wide-Awakes pivoted away from kinship fête were visually stunning exhibitions. One editor wrote about a Wide Awake rally in Hartford, Connecticut, complete with fireworks tracing

⁸⁵ “Honest Old Abe’s Quick Step” (Boston: Oliver Piston and Company, 1860), Pennsylvania Library, Philadelphia; Edwin Wolf, *American Song Sheets, Slip Ballads and Poetical Broadsides, 1850-1870* (Philadelphia: The Library Company of Philadelphia, 1963).

⁸⁶ “Lincoln at Carthage” *The Hamilton Representative* October 23, 1858; Paul M. Angle ed., *The Complete Lincoln- Douglas Debates of 1858* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 88-90.

⁸⁷ Eugenia Jones Hunt, “My Personal Recollections of Abraham and Mary Todd Lincoln,” *Abraham Lincoln Quarterly* 3 (March 1945).

through the night sky, cannons booming, and a band of music creating a festive atmosphere from nine-thirty until twelve thirty in the morning. And, as an ode to the famed Illinoisian they were marching on behalf of, most men accessorized with axes and mauls; thereby co-opting a humble tool for an urban display. Those without axes and mauls marched with banners, rails, or lanterns.

A wide-eyed freshman at Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts, Joseph Boggs Beale, recorded his impression of the Wide Awakes in Philadelphia. In his diary, Beale first described the “great turn out” that came to view the group process on July 28, 1860. Beale journaled that about two thousand Philadelphia men, complete with uniforms, hats, capes, touches, and large flags, divided into paramilitary companies and marched through the city. The second procession the twenty-year-old Beale witnessed at Penn Square, on the corner of Broad and Market Street, at ten-thirty at night on September 7, dwarfed the first. More precise than the first march, Beale professed that it was “one of the largest processions that was ever seen in this city.” Every man was “‘armed’ with a torch, except the officers who carry the sticks, or canes, or maybe swords.” Mimicking the military image, marchers held their torches as though they were muskets. Divided into companies each with a band of music and officers, the replication of the militarism was carefully orchestrated. In early November Beale’s aunt and uncle journeyed to Philadelphia “to see the grand ‘Lincoln’ procession.” At this particular Wide Awake march, more than 1,000 men paraded on horses in full garb. The music that accompanied the convoy reverberated long after the marchers disappeared from the Beale family’s sight.⁸⁸

⁸⁸ Joseph Boggs Beale diary, July 28, 1860 and September 7, 1860, in: Joseph Boggs Beale Papers, 1852–82, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (hereafter HSP).

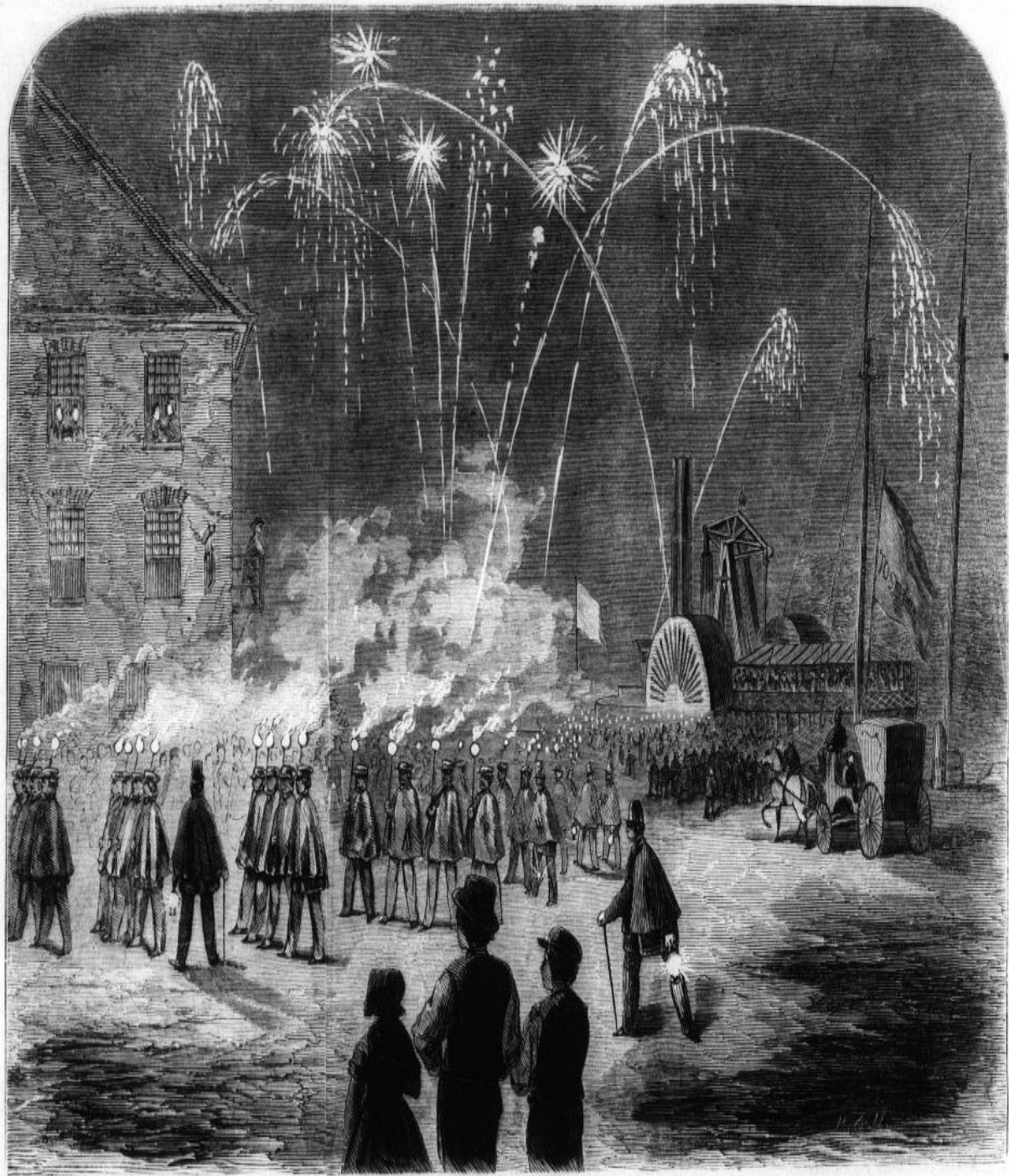


Figure 2. A Wide Awake Procession in Harford, Connecticut

Like Beale, George Templeton Strong recorded his account of the Wide Awakes. Strong described the Wide Awakes in his diary with youthful astonishment as they marched past the

Astor House and Bowery theaters on September 12, 1860. Stunned by the sight, Strong wrote that the show was, “imposing and splendid.” It was not merely the great throng of men uniformly marching, but the visual spectacle that impressed him. The night’s sky, recounted Strong, was “illuminated by the most lavish pyrotechnics. Every file had its rockets and its Roman candles, and the procession moved along under a galaxy of fire balls—white, red, and green. I have never seen so beautiful a spectacle on any political turnout.” The following day Strong noted in his diary “Everyone speaks of...the earnest aspect of the “Wide-Awakes.” The show left a lasting impression on the city.⁸⁹ Almost a month later he made a similar observation of the Princes visit to New York. Throngs packed the street to catch a glimpse of European royalty; leading Strong to confess, “What a spectacle-loving people we are!”⁹⁰ The pages that Beale and Strong devoted to the Wide Awakes in their diary affirm that these displays rapt the popular mind during the summer and fall of 1860. By celebrating Lincoln, particularly his onerous labor history, Wide Awakes appropriated western manhood for elaborate urban spectacle. The late-night festivities appealed to the publics’ desire for amusement, not political rational.

Mass intrigue with Lincoln reified the West in the minds of northerners. Audiences were delighted with tangible depictions and items of Lincoln they could both view and own. Since authentic objects of Lincoln’s gritty western manhood were eagerly sought after, merchants and entrepreneurs played upon sight and touch in ways that were formerly inaccessible to the public. Craving for personal association with Lincoln through autographs, lithographs, and rails buttressed a growing celebrity culture. Lincoln’s rise to a celebrity status occurred on the strength of technological advances in sensory entertainment, which in turn

⁸⁹ George Templeton Strong’s diary entry from September 13 and 14, 1860 in: Strong, *Diary of the Civil War, 1860–1865*, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 41.

⁹⁰ Strong’s diary entry from on September 12, 1860 and October 11, 1860 in: Strong, *Diary of the Civil War, 1860–1865*, 41, 45.

cultivated a consumer imaginary in the urban northeast. Objects, images, and spectacles associated with Lincoln fed a growing consumer imaginary. Enticing the viewer or purchaser with captivating images and narrations fueled the practice of instantaneously consuming western manhood; however fleeting.

CHAPTER FIVE

A Celebrity President: Western Manliness in the White House, 1861

In early October 1860 Queen Victoria's eldest son, Albert Edward, captured the attention of the United States during his tour of the United States. An estimated crowd of 200,000 gathered to catch a glimpse of the nineteen-year-old successor to the English throne during his visit to New York City, on October 22. The massive crowd, per the *New York Times*, "cheered vociferously," delighting audiences. As the *New York Times* noted, "The Prince of Wales is a bit of the true stock, and shows them what they have all come from. The quieter he is the better he shows what the English gentleman ought to be, and the American also."¹ The city hummed with a self-conscious excitement while merchants profited from the high demand for French fashion leading up to the Prince's visit. In preparation for their esteemed guest city government spent \$750,000 on a procession through the city and reception for the Prince.² One English traveler

¹ "Welcome to the Prince; Extraordinary Demonstration," *New York Times*, October 12, 1860; "The Prince in the United States: Sensible Opinions of an English Traveler on American Characteristics Comments of the British Press," *New York Times*, October 29, 1860; Richard L. Bushman writes, "The mythic cities in the United States in 1850 were Boston, New York, and Philadelphia. Country people thought fashionable life reached the pinnacle there." *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 370.

² A *New York Herald* editor observed how purchases increased in anticipation of the Prince's visit. The "Prince of Wales has done more towards emptying the shelves of city dealers in dry goods and jewelry than the aggregate balls of five seasons have done." "Reception in New York," *New York Herald*, October 10, 1860; "The President's Levee in Honor of the Prince" *New York Herald*, October 05, 1860; The *Cincinnati Daily Press* detailed the proper decorum of greeting a prince. The editor wrote, "A self-constituted committee of New York gentlemen, representing the wealth and high-priced piety of that city, waited upon the Prince of Montreal, and, as humbly as if they were to the court-flunkey manner brow, supplicated him to accept a ball, promising that the vulgar, and especially the New York Aldermen, should be excluded." "How to Treat the Prince," *Cincinnati Daily Press*, September 25, 1860. New York merchants even marketed hoop skirts for ladies to appear appropriate for the Prince's visit to the city. "For the Prince of Wales Ball," *New York Herald*, September 26, 1860.

witnessing the display noted, “no President could excite such a fervor.”³ This chapter contends that a consumer imaginary elevated Lincoln’s western manhood to arouse fervor of a celebrity, like the Prince of Wales.

The former rail-splitter, void of genteel condescension for the masses, appealed directly to the fascination of the northeast’s populace. In contrast to Lincoln’s western manhood, European royalty personified the essence of refinement. A clear instance when these two manhoods clashed was Prince Napoleon’s encounter with Lincoln at the White House in 1861. Lincoln represented an accessible, though primitive, western manhood while Prince Napoleon typified the serene decorum of French gentility. Facilitated by a consumer imaginary, western manhood gained traction in the urban northeast alongside the trappings of refined manhood. Not only was Lincoln’s western manhood elevated by a consumer imaginary, but I argue in this chapter that Lincoln’s celebrity status in the urban northeast attained legitimacy despite genteel disparagement of his loutish western impression.⁴

Urban northeastern audiences no longer appraised Lincoln simply in the vein of a Barnum exhibit or a passing western stump speaker, as they did prior to his presidency. By

³ The *New York Times* printed the public’s reaction to the Prince: “They philosophize, they sneer, they catch one another tripping, they smile at the immense scale of the preparations, the soirees and balls, the millions of dollars to be spent in Parisian dresses and bijouterie, the canvass for tickets, the traps laid for the Royal eye, and the dance, the word, or the look that is to be described to children of children yet unborn. Yet they cannot help relating what they are ashamed should be known. Tell it not in Gath! No President could excite such a fervor.” At the end of the analysis the author writes: “As the uniform of the Prince was recognized by the men, women and children that swarmed without the enclosure, he was loudly cheered, and handkerchiefs and hats were waved from the balconies and windows of the adjacent houses. The Prince acknowledged the compliment by raising his chapeau, and then followed the review. “The Prince in the United State: Sensible Opinions of an English Traveler on American Characteristics Comments of the British Press,” *New York Times*, October 29, 1860. For an overview of the Prince’s luxurious reception and how it excited the public see: Caroline Rennolds Milbank, “‘Ahead of the World’: New York City Fashion” in *Art and the Empire City: New York, 1825-1861*, ed. Catherine Voorsanger and John K. Howat (New York and New Haven: Metropolitan Museum of Art and Yale University Press, 2000), 243-258.

⁴ Cultural legitimacy is dependent on shared values, woven into the social engagement of a collective. As such, Charles Taylor contends that legitimacy also reflects the cultural traction of a social imaginary. In the late antebellum urban northeast legitimacy of consuming, etched in the regional disposition, evidenced a presence of a consumer imaginary. See: Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2004).

1861, Lincoln's bona fides were sealed as Commander in Chief, legitimizing his celebrity status alongside English and French leaders with a royal pedigree, to the dismay of refined society. A consumer imaginary recast urban presidential expectations to accommodate Lincoln's western appearance and manners. This chapter traces how a consumer imaginary covertly reframed the perception of presidential ceremony, western manhood, and celebrity, all the while spurring a genteel tradition. Lincoln's unrefined appearance and behavior broke with the precedent of presidents adhering to the genteel image and comportment of set by European dignitaries. A nascent consumer imaginary proved a compelling vantage point to view Lincoln's manhood from, attenuating a long held notion that a lack of refinement disqualified men in the urban northeast. His western manhood verified him as a uniquely American leader, elevating Old Abe's celebrity status in the northeast to the height of European royalty.

During the entire presidential campaign Lincoln stayed at his Springfield home while the northeastern populace avidly sought his portrait and voraciously read about him. It was not until late February that Lincoln crossed the Appalachian Mountains for the first time since his Cooper Union speech on his way to the White House. His inaugural levee, a ceremonial introduction to politicians and genteel families, took place after his arrival in the capital and by the summer he would be tasked with hosting the Prince Napoleon of France. The genteel formalities expected of Lincoln as president exposed the tension between expectations of presidential decorum inherited from Europe and the perception of him as a popular western upstart boosted. Advances in printed images and the northeastern fascination in the unusual, and slightly grotesque, western man proved the catalyst for disrupting a longstanding genteel presidential tradition. With Lincoln's arrival, northeastern populaces could now react to Lincoln in the flesh and contrast him against esteemed American statesmen, like William Seward. Conditions were primed for

the familial traits of western manhood to clash with the old guard in Lincoln's White House.⁵

Media and print technology served as the means for urban northeast populaces to become acquainted with the western mauler, building anticipation as he ascended to the presidency. In rapidly expanding urban milieus immediate gratification became more accessible by the late antebellum period, feeding the cult of celebrity by reifying depictions and writings of popular figures. Reverence and beguilement with famous persons evolved as the public sought to acquire the most recent items associated with celebrities. Interestingly, Lincoln proved as fascinating and eye-catching as the Prince of Wales to northeastern audiences in 1860. An evolving and growing antebellum consumer imaginary broadened the scope of celebrity to encompass western men like Daniel Boone, and then Lincoln. As Leo Braudy cogently points out in *The Frenzy of Renown*, Lincoln gained the highest level of celebrity status in 1860 and 1861 even though he “did not appear as a patrician, aristocrat, or an Eastern politician.”⁶ His virile identity tapped into a deep sense of longing and imagination among northerners. “Frontiersman” Braudy notes, “embodied a still strong sense of possibility and new beginnings unencumbered by European precedents.” This sense of possibility was ushered in by the emotional connection images offered.⁷ John Plunkett's research of celebrity culture sheds light on the correlation between celebrity culture and mass-produced images. Theater, music, painting, fashion, and the sporting world were lifted from niche entertainment and brought into the popular domain through the power of newspapers and photographs. Although Plunkett's

⁵ Lincoln's inaugural levee and the visit from Prince Napoleon have only been given brief recognition from Lincoln biographers and some exclude it all together. Further, cultural analysis of these episodes is wanting in the historiography. Richard J. Carwardine, *Lincoln* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2003); David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995); Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 2 Vols. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008).

⁶ Leo Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown: Fame and Its History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 495; Fred Inglis, *A Short History of Celebrity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

⁷ Braudy, *The Frenzy of Renown*, 494, 504; Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 65.

research pertains to fiction writers who grew into celebrities, Lincoln's celebrity status in 1860 and 1861 eclipsed even the most popular literary figures of his day.⁸ By 1860, the enticing power of celebrities drew northeasterners deeper into consumer-centered thinking and weakened the cultural ties to a genteel European tradition. P. David Marshall, for example, argues that the synergy between consumer capitalism, democracy, and individualism cultivated a thriving consumer culture. Enthusiasm for celebrities was, he observes, "At the very centre of the culture as it resonates with conceptions of individuality that are the ideological ground of Western culture."⁹ Though Marshall identifies individuality in Western culture generally and Europe specifically, the frontiersman represented the fullest incarnation of this idea in antebellum America—at least in the urban imagination. A sense of individuality, which operated in tandem with the consumer byproduct of a celebrity, undercut a longstanding genteel culture that was most fully represented in the presidency. Thus, a consumer imaginary and celebrity culture were powerfully yoked together in such a way that they did not exist independently from each other.¹⁰

A clear example of Lincoln's celebrity status was his circuitous train journey from Springfield to the White House in February 1861. Instead of traveling a direct, practical route the train zigzagged through the North so people could gather at train depots and city centers to see the new President. The plan was to travel by train almost two thousand miles through Indianapolis, Cincinnati, Columbus, Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Buffalo, Albany, Trenton,

⁸ John Plunkett, "Celebrity Culture" in Juliet John ed. *The Oxford Handbook of Victorian Literary Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 539-588. Claire Brock, like Plunkett, links media and tech to the rise of celebrity culture. Claire Brock, *The Feminization of Fame, 1750–1830* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave, 2006), 10.

⁹ P. David Marshall, *Celebrity and Power: Fame in Contemporary Culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), x.

¹⁰ Celebrity in the United States emerged in tandem with the rise of industrial and corporate capitalism; the culture of consumption whose foundations had been laid by the late nineteenth century required celebrities as a marketing mechanism. Their personalities were "corporate" not only in terms of the variety of social agencies that contributed to them, but also in terms of the economic imperatives that generated them. Loren Glass, "The Showman Theory of History," *Iowa Journal of Cultural Studies* 4 (Spring 2004), 71-78.

Philadelphia, and Harrisburg. Northern newspapers promoted Lincoln's travel by frequently, even daily, publishing reports of the President's trip. Crowds assembled by the tens of thousands at almost every stop on the twelve-day excursion for the first opportunity to see the President-elect. Lincoln's façade and manners had been mediated to northern public, especially in the northeast, and the public was eager to see him in the flesh.¹¹

Setting the stage for Lincoln's arrival were the wildly popular carte de visite of Lincoln in 1861. It was no coincidence that Lincoln's rise to celebrity status occurred as the production of cartes took the nation by storm just before Lincoln's election.¹² The mass produced 2½ by 3-inch photographs were cheap, accessible, and—most importantly—spellbinding. Originally a calling or business card, the cartes evolved with print technology and consumer demand. These pocket-sized items democratized likenesses beyond the photograph studios and wealthy photograph collectors, selling on average for twenty-five cents. Unlike lithographs, an inexpensive way to mass replicate drawings or paintings, the photographic cartes were viewed as more realistic depictions of individuals.¹³ They also helped fuel the trend of autograph and photograph collecting alongside the public display of images. Mid-century families routinely

¹¹ Clement Moore Butler lamented that popular newspapers are purchased before he can get ahold of them. "I can get no NY papers. I have not had a 'World' or 'Times' for 9 days." C. M. Butler to "Darling Wife," Washington D.C. April 29, 1861 and May 10, 1861, Butler, C. M. (Clement Moore) 1810-1890, ALPL; "Monthly record of Current Events," *Harper's Magazine* 22 (December, 1861), 689.

¹² Steven R. Boyd, *Patriotic Envelopes of the Civil War: The Iconography of Union and Confederate Cover* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010); John Plunkett, "Carte-de-Visite" in John Hannavy ed., *Encyclopedia of Nineteenth-Century Photography* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2008), 276-277. For an analysis of the synergy between cartes and celebrity culture see: Plunkett, *Celebrity and Royalty*, 279-281.

¹³ Elizabeth McCauley describes the rise of cartes. She writes, "The photographic carte de visit began as a novel extension of the traditional calling card...with the addition of a small photograph, the card's expressive potential was hugely increased. The face bearing of a caller or well-wisher could reveal much more about his character than a signature or a catalogue of titles and decorations. In addition, the cartes of friends and famous visitors could be preserved and displayed." Elizabeth McCauley, *A. A. E. Disdéri and the Carte de Visite Portrait Photograph* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 42.

purchased prints for their home décor—by the likes of Currier and Ives and other image-producing companies—while cartes catered to individual collections.¹⁴

With the arrival of inexpensive images, the northeastern public was no longer at the mercy of newspaper descriptions of Lincoln’s personal appearance. Audiences could now make their own inferences about his physical features, dress, and grade his physiognomy for themselves. An article from a New York periodical, *The Humphries Journal*, noted the “ubiquitous” nature of cartes, and explained how the public, “can always find its way” to obtain them “with certainty and speed. The author continued, “Nobody now needs to inquire what such-or-such a person may be like, or to be left in such surmises as written descriptions may convey of features and figures that cannot be actually seen.” As Dan Younger astutely remarks, “if photography is understood to be an essential building block of modern media, the carte de visite is one of the earliest, most precedent-setting phenomena.”¹⁵ Unlike other materials sold, the availability and cost of cartes allowed consumers to satisfy their curiosity and pore over an image.

The market was ripe for cartes of Lincoln and image-makers—most notably Matthew Brady—quickly seized the opportunity to peddle cartes. The mass production of cartes flourished and, thus, fueled the celebrity industry.¹⁶ Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote in 1862, that cartes were as ubiquitous as green-backs. Cartes created a personal bond that played upon

¹⁴ Oliver Wendell Holmes, "Doings of the Sunbeam," *The Atlantic Monthly* 12 no. 69 (July 1863), 9; Henkin, *City Reading*, 130.

¹⁵ “Cartes-de-Visite,” in *Humphrey's Journal* 13 (March 1, 1862): 326-330; *The Art Journal* 7 (London: James S. Virtue, 1861), 306-307; Dan Younger, "Cartes de Visite: Precedents and Social Influences," *California Museum of Photography Bulletin* 6 no. 4 (1987): 20.

¹⁶ Mary Panzer notes that “standardized, multiple carte de visite made it easy to produce large numbers of portraits for an expanded number of clients, and contributed to the growth of the celebrity industry that brought Brady so much profit.” Panzer, *Mathew Brady and the Image of History* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 15.

imagination and longing.¹⁷ Writer Andrew Winter identified this occurrence in *Once A Week*, an English literary magazine, in 1862. “The commercial value of the human face has never been tested to such an extent as it is in the present moment in these handy photographs. No man, or woman either, knows but that some accident may elevate them to the position of the hero,” he wrote.¹⁸ The commodity was a person and the carte promised an intimate—albeit one-way—rapport. “The carte-de-visite,” Geoffrey Batchen writes, “is a particularly distinctive commodity form because what is being exchanged are pictures of people. The person being photographed is turned into a thing, a picture. And then this thing is sold, exchanged, and consumed.” Images thus were not ordinary objects; they were consumer good that tapped into both desire to know more intimately and triggered the imagination.¹⁹ Thus, predictably, cartes of Lincoln and the Prince of Wales proved most popular in the northeast in the late 1860 and 1861.²⁰

Notwithstanding the frenzy over seeing the former rail-splitter in the flesh, disparaging opinions of western manhood were commonplace in the northeast. What many in the northeast expected to see was a poorly clad, tall, freewheeling western former rail-splitter. The *New York Times* published a letter from Lincoln’s alleged Springfield neighbor the day after the election. The letter began by confessing that Lincoln was “lacking in refinement and cultivation.” Impressions of Lincoln’s coarseness were attributed to the fact that he was “born and bred in the West,” a social setting abounding in the “rascality and sharp dealing of Western life,” according

¹⁷ Geoffrey Batchen, “Dreams of Ordinary Life: Cartes-de-visite and the Bourgeois *Imagination*,” in Martha Langford, ed., *Image and Imagination* (Québec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005), 71; Payne notes that cartes of Lincoln created “performed a sense of personal bond” with the viewer. Payne, *The Cambridge Companion to Abraham Lincoln*, 50-51.

¹⁸ Andrew Winter, “Cartes de Visite,” *Once a Week*, January 25, 1862.

¹⁹ Batchen, “Dreams of Ordinary Life: Cartes-de-visite and the Bourgeois *Imagination*,” in Martha Langford, ed., *Image and Imagination* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University, 2009), 67, 72.

²⁰ Plunkett, “Celebrity Culture,” 539-588.

to the anonymous neighbor.²¹ Even though many wanted to see a genuine rail-splitter, there was also expectations for Lincoln to maintain a standard of elegance befitting the White House. Caught between evaluating Lincoln by these two personas, the northeastern public were both drawn to and ridiculed Lincoln for his thoroughly western deportment.

Those surrounding Lincoln were keenly aware that the newly elected president did not fit the bill of traditional presidential elegance. On February 18, 1861, after a stop in Cleveland, Lincoln's presidential train set course for the cultivated social landscape of the urban northeast. The distance between the regions demarcated a sharp social divide. While the presidential train was passing through the heart of New York, Lincoln received an improvement to his wardrobe. A few weeks before Lincoln's personal secretary, John Nicolay, sent Lincoln's body measurements to a Chicago tailor for a proper suit. Not having a precisely tailored suit, Lincoln wore an outdated, heavily worn one.²² Noticing this Mary Todd intervened before Lincoln entered the pretentious judgment of the East. Her elite boarding schools training equipped her with a keen understanding of the social harm of her husband's careworn dress could do. The *New York Times* described her intervention; "During the entire trip Mr. Lincoln has worn a shocking bad hat, and a very thin old over-coat. Shortly after leaving Utica, New York, Mrs. Lincoln gave an order to William, the colored servant, and presently he passed through the car with a handsome broadcloth over-coat upon his arm and a new hat-box in his hand. Since then Mr. Lincoln has looked fifty percent better." The *Times* reporter snidely concluded, "It is very

²¹ The letter, addressed from Springfield, is postmarked, October 24, 1860. The author is attributed to "A Neighbor." "A Portrait of Mr. Lincoln," *New York Times*, November 6, 1860.

²² A letter from John Nicolay to Elmer E. Ellsworth, Springfield, January 30, 1861, from Michael Burlingame, ed., *With Lincoln in the White House: Letters, Memoranda, and Other Writings of John G. Nicolay 1860-1865* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 26.

doubtful that the wearer of them knows or cares anything about it.”²³ It was not until the presidential train drew closer to the New York City that his dress concerned Mary Todd and others in his entourage. Notwithstanding the President’s new clothes, a coerced acquiesces to refinement, many northerners gathered with the hopes of witnessing Lincoln’s western appearance.²⁴

Later in the day of February 18, the train arrived in the state capital of New York, Albany. As public gathered, eager to catch a glimpse of Lincoln, they were unaware that he stood before them. “[T]he President elect,” *The New York Herald* wrote, “was hardly recognized by the crowd, and anxiety to see him and to be certain that they saw the right man overcame any disposition to cheer. After a few moments, the crowd realized that the man in front of them was the president and began to applaud.” Despite Lincoln's new suit, spectators simply did not recognize him. *The Herald* continued, “Mr. Lincoln, tired, sun burnt, adorned with huge whiskers, looks so unlike the pale, smooth shaven, red cheeked individual, who represented upon the popular prints and dubbed the splitter.”²⁵ *The Daily Zanesville Courier* also commented that Lincoln looked “worn” in Albany.²⁶ This rugged look combined with his “peculiar image” as a result of being “loose and careless in dress” undoubtedly caused spectators to think Lincoln was someone other than the president.²⁷

²³ “The Incoming Administration; Progress of the President Elect towards Washington. The Trip From Buffalo to Albany. Mr. Lincoln’s Speech at Rochester,” *The New York Times* February 19, 1861.

²⁴ Thomas Johnson Pickett, a Springfield editor, noted that “Mrs. L’s outfit cost about three thousand dollars.” He also documented when Mary Todd would meet Lincoln on his journey. “Mr. Lincoln leaves here next Monday for Washington. His wife will go three days after him.” Thomas Johnson Pickett Papers, 1860-1864, ALPL; Mary Todd’s genteel sensibilities in early February, 1861 are described in: Jean H. Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Norton, 1987), 132-133.

²⁵ “The Presidential Progress,” *New York Herald*, February 19, 1861.

²⁶ *Daily Zanesville Courier* [Zanesville, Ohio], February 19, 1861; “The Presidential Progress. The Arrival and Reception at the State Capital,” *The New York Herald*, February 19, 1861.

²⁷ Albert Jeremiah Beveridge. *Abraham Lincoln: 1809-1858*. Vol: 4 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), I: 503.

Henry Villard, a prolific journalist, spent a few weeks with Lincoln in Springfield before accompanying the President on his train journey to the Capital. Despite anticipating a western man in Lincoln, eastern audiences were still surprised by his boorish impression. According to Villard, the President's facial hair did not look “naturalized” and his clothes were “ilily arranged,” which disappointed “those who saw him for the first time.” Villard explained, “written on the faces of his rustic audiences” was their surprise of seeing “the most unprepossessing features, the gawkiest figure, and the most awkward manners.” Villard further added, “Lincoln always had an embarrassed air, too, like a country clodhopper appearing in fashionable society, and was nearly always stiff and unhappy in his off-hand remarks.”²⁸ Future President James Garfield had a similar impression when he saw Lincoln for the first time in Columbus, Ohio. Garfield, who spent his formative adult years in the northeast, was well attuned urban refinement and coarseness of western men. Garfield jotted in his diary, “He [Lincoln] greatly shows his want of culture, and the marks of Western life.”²⁹ Lincoln scholar Rufus R. Wilson points out that there existed expectations for a President to appear as a genteel statesman in 1860. “The earliest presidents of the United States,” writes Wilson, “had many points of resemblance to those of the English country gentleman, but the plain rugged Lincoln was fitted to be the butt of jesters who hung on the skirts of the nobility.”³⁰ The critical gaze of the northeast harshly criticized Lincoln’s clothing, body motions, and social grace. “My observation leads me to think there is too much snobbishness in the East towards the West, which is retuned with greatly exaggerated prejudice” Valdemar Rudolph von Raasløff, Denmark’s Minister in Residence in Washington D.C. wrote to Elizabeth Grimsley shortly after Lincoln arrived at the nation’s capital. A similar

²⁸ Henry Villard, *Memoirs of Henry Villard*, 152.

²⁹ James Garfield diary on February 16, 1861. From Jonas M. Bundy, *Life of Gen. James A. Garfield* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Company, 1880), 51.

³⁰ Rufus Rockwell Wilson, *Lincoln in Caricature* (New York: Horizon Press, 1953), vi.

opinion was shared by a Washington D.C. church minister, who noted that during the presidential campaign Lincoln was “spoken of as that rough, uncouth Westerner from the prairies of Illinois who had dared to come among the exclusive, high-born, generally Southern people of the capital.”³¹ John Nicolay, Lincoln’s presidential secretary, recalled that during the campaign “blind inferences from his [Lincoln’s] humble origins” were made partly “in jest” and “in malice.” He further adds that, “there grew up in the minds of many the strong impression that Mr. Lincoln was ugly, gawky, and ill-mannered.”³² The opposition to Lincoln’s western habits proved stiff, still interest in him compelled audiences to gather to view him as a spectacle.

On February 19, 1861, the newly elected Lincoln arrived in New York City almost four months after the Prince of Wales visited the city. Void of ceremonial presentation, Lincoln’s appearance sharply contrasted with the reception the Prince of Wales received. Upon arrival the president-elect was ushered to New York City Hall; here he was introduced to the mayor of New York, Fernando Wood. When the men stood next to each other, observers noted the contrast between their dress, etiquette, and graceful air. A member of Lincoln’s traveling party recalled the stark difference between the men. He described Lincoln as “rugged” and “unpolished in manner and ungraceful in speech,” contrasting the Mayor’s “easy graceful manners.”³³

Rutherford B. Hayes, noted Lincoln’s simplicity earlier during his rail journey; “[T]here was a lack of comfort in the arrangements, but the simplicity, the homely character of all was in

³¹ John Nicolay states, “Partly as a blind inference from his humble origin, but more from the misrepresentations made, sometimes in jest, sometimes in malice, during political campaigns, there grew up in the minds of many the strong impression that Mr. Lincoln was ugly, gawky, and ill-mannered.” John G. Nicolay, “Lincoln’s Personal Appearance.” *Century Magazine*, XLII (October, 1891): 932; Victoria Radford, *Meeting Abraham Lincoln: Firsthand Recollections of Abraham Lincoln by People, Great and Small, Who Met the President* (Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1998), 28; Letters: Washington, [D.C.], From Grimsley, Elizabeth Todd, to John and Mary [Stuart], April 29-August 3, 1861.

³² Nicolay, “Lincoln’s Personal Appearance,” 932.

³³ Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 2: 28; *The Weekly Hawk-Eye* [Burlington, Iowa], February 23, 1861; *Weekly Gazette and Free Press* [Janesville, Wisconsin], February 22, 1861.

keeping with the nobility of this typical American. A six-in-hand with a gorgeous trapping, accompanied by outriders and a courtly train, could have added nothing to him; would have detracted from him, would have been wholly out of place.”³⁴ Nevertheless, Lincoln’s uncourtly presence drew a large crowd.

After Lincoln’s tour of city hall, he was ushered to a balcony overlooking the crowd gathered below.³⁵ After giving an impromptu speech a throng, eager to shake his hand, bombarded the President. “Ex-Mayor Harper [of New York City]” noted a reporter for the *Weekly Gazette and Free Press* of Janesville, Wisconsin, “came through the ordeal, and shaking Mr. Lincoln by the hand, admitted that their pictorial had done him injustice. Immediately after the ex-mayor came one of the seediest, unwashed citizens of New York, and thus they continued to pour in.”³⁶ It was reported that Lincoln shook over a thousand hands that evening.³⁷ His homespun demeanor won spectators over. After observing Lincoln’s blundering presentation of himself in New York City Villard recorded in his memoir, “It was plain to see that the Lincolns are common sense, homelike folks unused to the glitter and flutter of society.”³⁸ Lacking cultivated taste while holding the highest office did not sit particularly well with the established gentry. During Lincoln’s brief visit Elizabeth J. Grimsley, Mary Todd’s cousin, overheard wealthy New Yorkers discuss if “his [Lincoln’s] western gaucherie would disgrace the Nation.”³⁹ Juxtaposing the glitz of royalty, Lincoln’s simple western style proved a spectacle

³⁴ William Henry Smith, *Charles Richard Williams, The Life of Rutherford B. Hayes, 19th President of the United States* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1914), 111, 118.

³⁵ *Weekly Gazette and Free Press* [Janesville, Wisconsin], March 1, 1861.

³⁶ *Weekly Gazette and Free Press*, February 22, 1861.

³⁷ Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, 2: 29.

³⁸ Henry Villard, “Lincoln on the Eve of ‘61,” *New York Herald*, February 20, 1862.

³⁹ Elizabeth Todd Grimsley, “Six Months in the White House,” *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* XIX (October 1926–January 1927); Elizabeth Todd Grimsley journal entry on Springfield March 2, 1861. Elizabeth Todd Grimsley Papers, ALPL; *New York Illustrated News*, February 28, 1861; Walt Whitman, *Walt Whitman’s Civil War*, ed. Walter Lowenfels (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1961), 269-70.

nevertheless. George Templeton Strong compared the reception of Lincoln and the Prince of Wales in his journal:

I walked uptown at 3:30. Broadway crowded, though not quite so densely as on the Prince of Wales avatar last October. The *trottoir* well filled by pedestrians (vehicles turned off into side streets) and sidewalks by patient and stationary sight-seers. Above Canal Street they were nearly impassable. At St. Thomas's Church I met the illustrious cortege moving down to the Astor House with its escort of mounted policemen and a torrent of rag-tag and bobtail rushing and hooraying behind. The great rail-splitter's face was visible to me for an instant, and seemed a keen, clear, honest face, not so ugly as his portraits.⁴⁰

Though some northerners sneered at the crude presentation of Lincoln and reverently adored the Prince's grace, the city came out to view both because both fascinated the city.⁴¹ The adoration for the Prince and intrigue with Lincoln, co-opted by print media, was the source of their celebrity status.⁴²

Three days later a scene of Lincoln's western manhood delighted Philadelphia spectators on George Washington's birthday, February 22, 1861. Lincoln was given the high honor of raising the American flag at Independence Hall—a venerable national shrine—on the patriotic holiday. Lincoln perceived as a gritty, crude westerner contrasted with Independence Hall, which served as an architectural symbol of American elegance. “Gentility” writes Richard

⁴⁰ Despite Strong's harsh barb, “He [Lincoln] is a barbarian, Scythian, yahoo, a gorilla, in respect of outward polish,” he nevertheless watched Lincoln with rapt attention. Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie and the War Years* (Fort Washington, Pennsylvania: Harvest Books 2002), 401; P.M. Zall, “Abe Lincoln Laughing,” in *The Historian's Lincoln*, Gabor S. Boritt eds. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 8; George Templeton Strong diary entry on, February 20, 1860. From, Strong, *Diary of the Civil War, 1860–1865*, ed. Allan Nevins (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), 101.

⁴¹ Mary N. Crosby, a Boston socialite, illustrates the fascination and emotional response garnered by the Prince's visit. She journaled with great satisfaction, that the Prince of Wales nodded his head at her during his parade through Boston. Crosby also recorded with reverence, “I went out to Cambridge last Friday and wrote my name with the same pen and setting in the same chair that the Prince used on his visit.” Mary Crosby to unknown, October 20, 1860, Crosby Family Papers (1828-1877), MHS.

⁴² This sentiment was echoed by Albert Shaw, an early twentieth century Lincoln biographer; “The spectacle imitated somewhat the recent pageants in honor of the Prince of Wales.” Albert Shaw, *Abraham Lincoln: His Path to the Presidency* (New York: The Review of Reviews Corporations, 1929), 248.

Bushman in referring to Independence Hall, “basked in the aura of the political power radiating from civic buildings, as it had done at Versailles and Europe’s Renaissance courts.”⁴³ This national symbol of genteel culture, now served as the site for the city to ogle at Lincoln. The new President appeared at the balcony of the Hall like a rare artifact on display. Once Lincoln took the platform the frenzied populace, enthusiastic to catch a glimpse of the president-elect, grew so noisy that they muffled Lincoln’s short speech.⁴⁴

The massive gathering in Philadelphia also brought the woes of city life. The size of the crowd offered opportunity to Philadelphian merchants and cover for petty criminals. Crammed shoulder-to-shoulder, the rush to see Lincoln at the Hall provide pick-pockets with the perfect distraction. *The North American and United States Gazette* lamented that many fell victim to pickpockets despite city police making a concerted effort to patrol the crowd. Merchants also sought to profit from stir Lincoln created in the city. One Philadelphia newspaper printed a puff, an advertisement disguised as a short article of interest or a highly anticipated announcement, about Lincoln’s visit for a clothing merchant.⁴⁵ The puff ran:

Mr. Lincoln, en route for Washington? News from him? the President elect started yesterday, from his home in Illinois, for Washington. We have seen a private telegraphic dispatch from him to a gentleman in Philadelphia, written at the moment of his departure from home. It ran in this wise: “I will reach Philadelphia about the 20th instant. Have prepared for me, by the time of my arrival, one of the elegant suits for which the Brown Stone Clothing Hall of Rockhill & Wilson, Nos. 603 and 605 Chestnut street, above Sixth, is so famous. A. Lincoln.”

⁴³ Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 354.

⁴⁴ *North American and United States Gazette*, February 22, 1861.

⁴⁵ Gerald J. Baldasty, *The Commercialization of News in the Nineteenth Century* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 70-71; Brown Stone was known for Puffing. Their strategy, “consisting of a brief notice of an event exciting public attention, winding up with an admonition to the reader to buy all his garments at the Brown Stone Clothing Hall.” *Proceedings of the Numismatic and Antiquarian Society of Philadelphia* vol. 27 (Philadelphia: Published by the Society, 1916), 155.

The sly advertisement for Brown Stone Clothing Hall forged Lincoln's pen and crafted a false tale about his interest in their garments. Lincoln's visit hooked readers and Brown Stone clothier intended to ride the president's coattails.⁴⁶ This puff and presence of pick-pockets affirm the type of enthusiastic reception Lincoln received at the Hall.

The day culminated with Lincoln hoisting the American flag to the roar of the crowd. Surrounded by meticulously outfitted gentlemen in tall silk hats, Lincoln was given the privilege at the hall on a prized holiday. As one bystander recalled, "With sleeves rolled up as if he were about to chop a cord of wood," Lincoln approached the flag. Joseph Beale, standing at the State House looking on, did not journal about Lincoln's speech, but did record his memory of the President raising the American flag. "Mr. Lincoln," penned Beale privately, "took off his over coat and hat and rolled up the cuffs of his sleeves and raised the American flag."⁴⁷ A *Washington Intelligence* reporter described the scene: "Mr. Lincoln then threw off his over coat in an off hand, easy manner, the backwoodian style." A song about Lincoln raising the flag of thirty-four stars on the roof of Independence Hall, *Our Flag*, appeared for sale among Philadelphia merchants soon after.⁴⁸ Lincoln's spur-of-the-moment act of throwing off his coat and rolling up his sleeves to hoist the flag drew roaring applause from the crowd. Still, many were disgusted by the lack of elegance. Philadelphia's *Morning Pennsylvanian* commented on the President raising the flag at Independence Hall; "Europe stands aghast at the appalling spectacle we present."⁴⁹ The act affirmed the impression the northeast had of western maulers as offhanded brutes. Following the brief ceremony, there was a rush to shake the President's hand as the festive

⁴⁶ Brown Stone Clothing Hall boasted of offering "the choicest assortment of Ready Made Clothing at reasonable prices." *West Jersey Pioneer*, January 6, 1866.

⁴⁷ Joseph Boggs Beale diary, February 22, 1861, in the Joseph Boggs Beale Papers, 1852–82, HSP.

⁴⁸ John L. Zieber, "Our Flag written" (North Tenth Street Philadelphia: J.H. Johnson), 1861. The song sheet also advertised "Cards, Circulars, Bill-Heads, Hand-Bills, Labels, Ball Raffle, Excursion and Party Tickets."

⁴⁹ *Morning Pennsylvanian*, February 18, 1861.

atmosphere continued. Fireworks lit up the sky above the Continental Hotel, Lincoln's lodging that evening.⁵⁰ Independence Hall, a symbol of American political and cultural elegance, served as the platform for the virile, former rail-splitter to entertain the city.

All eyes were fixed on the Illinoisan once he arrived in Washington D.C. on February 23, 1861. Notwithstanding the ridicule of Lincoln's western persona, refined social circles in the nation's capital—like the rest of the urban northeast—intently sought reports and depictions of him during his presidential campaign. Elizabeth Keckley, an African-American seamstress, astutely noticed the response towards Lincoln. Upon arriving in Washington D.C., Mary Todd hired Keckley, who had worked for wealthy women living in the Capital during Lincoln's 1860 campaign. Keckley recalled how the affluent and politically prominent viewed the newly elected President prior to his arrival at the White House. "No President and his family, heretofore occupying this mansion, ever excited so much curiosity as the present incumbents" she observed. "Mr. Lincoln" she continued, "had grown up in the wilds of the West, and evil reports had said much of him and his wife. The polite world was shocked, and the tendency to exaggerate intensified curiosity."⁵¹ The mixed impulses of fascination and distaste from respectable residents did not diminish the anticipation of his inaugural levee; it heightened a sense of intrigue in how Lincoln would perform as Commander in Chief.

Despite reservations about Lincoln, the city hummed with eagerness for his inaugural White House levee on March 8, 1861. The young nation was grafted into this French and, later, English tradition of the levee. An elegant reception birthed in Louis XIV seventeenth century court and practiced by King George III, the archetypical monarchical tyrant in the American

⁵⁰ "Mr. Lincoln Hoisting the American Flag over Independence Hall," *The Potter Journal*, February 28, 1861.

⁵¹ Elizabeth Keckley, *Behind the Scenes Or, Thirty years a slave, and four years in the White House* (New York: G. W. Carleton & Co, 1868), 92.

mind, the levee naturally grew into an American presidential tradition.⁵² During John Adams' administration critics lamented that presidential levees were frivolous and perpetuating an undemocratic display of hierarchy. Thomas Jefferson took a severe measure and abolished levees during his presidential tenure to separate himself from his anglophile Federalist opponents. Interestingly, Jefferson's insatiable palate for elegance—though veiled under a casual demeanor—led John Adams to prod, "Jefferson's whole eight years [as president] were a

⁵² The term originates from the French word *lever*, meaning to rise, because the ceremony started in the king's bedchamber. It was here that a few distinguished courtiers were invited to the most private room of the palace. Their duty required assisting and providing companionship during the meticulous process of dressing the king. David N. Durant, *Where Queen Elizabeth Slept and What the Butler Saw: A Treasury of Historic Terms from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996), 188.

The ceremonial levee originated in Louis XIV seventeenth century French court and became a mainstay ceremonial courtly preparation and celebration of royal elegance. Norbert Elias argues that the levee enabled French royalty to exercise a visible display of political and social power. The preparation culminated in the *grande entrée*; the moment when deference and procedures were scrupulously observed. Nobility entered the formal ceremony first in order of rank. Nobility of blood relation to the king enter first, then nobles, entertainers, and officers of the state in the order of the rank the king gave them. It was considered a high honor to attend or assists at a levee. The symbol of acceptance and reception by the king, according to Norbert Elias, was the stamp of approval recognized by all of Europe. Louis XIV's court was the model of taste and genteel behavior for Europe.

King Charles II, after he spent time at lavish palace of Versailles in France, introduced the levee to the English royal courts in 1672. The ritual of the levee and French deportment infused with English tradition. The exclusive nature of the levee allowed only those of social distinction to attend. By the nineteenth-century the royal levee became a fixed tradition practiced by King George III. It evolved into a courtly ceremony held once a week in the late morning for properly attired gentlemen and women of social clout. It required a lengthy, but highly sought-after process to obtain an invitation, a tradition that the American colonies naturally inherited. Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), 79, 80, 84-86; Chandra Mukerji, *Territorial Ambitions and the Gardens of Versailles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 229-230; David Kucht, *The Three-Piece Suit and Modern Masculinity: England, 1550-1850* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 78-79; Simon Thurley, "The Lost Palace of Whitehall," *History Today* 48, no.1 (January, 1998): 51. Durant, *Where Queen Elizabeth Slept and What the Butler Saw*, 188; A Member of the Aristocracy, *Manners and Rules of Good Society* (London: Frederick Warne, 1892), 172; Lillian Eichler, *Book of Etiquette*, Vol. 2 (New York: Nelson Doubleday, 1922), 253; Specific details regarding levee dress are provided in, Herbert A.P. Trendell, *Dress Worn at His Majesty's Court; Issued with the Authority of the Lord Chamberlain* (London: Harrison and Sons, 1908).

Levees were a fixture of courtly life in early modern England. During King George III's rule levees were held weekly at noon. Anyone could attend but courtly attire was mandatory, and only those considered to be of qualified social rank could visit the king in the Presence Chamber. Those found worthy formed a circle around the perimeter of the room. The king, after his servants dressed him, entered with the company of two courtiers and proceeded to the center of the chamber. Once the king arrived court etiquette required silence and prohibited guests from sitting. Guests then stood in place until the king approached them individually. Both parties then bowed and exchanged a few polite words. After the king made his rounds he and the guests would exit in silence Christopher Hibbert, *King George III: A Personal History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1998), 83-85; Willard Sterne Randall, *Thomas Jefferson: A Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), 413; Elias, *Court Society*, 84-85.

levee.”⁵³ After Jefferson’s administration James Madison reinstated the levee. Unlike Washington and Adams’s formality, Madison’s first levee eliminated the formality of standing in a circle and waiting to be acknowledged by the president.⁵⁴ Although the *Daily Intelligence of Washington D.C.* advertised levees and, by principle, they were open to all, the powerful rules of social decorum served as a gatekeeper. An 1829 book, *The Etiquette of Washington City*, informed laypeople of White House levee regulations. The author, E. Cooley, noted that while anyone could attend a presidential levee, “very few people would attempt to go to such a place, without making genteel appearance, and believing themselves, more or less, entitled to mix in such society, it is very rare that any but the most distinguished and genteel people are to be found there.”⁵⁵ Throughout the presidencies of James Madison, James Monroe, and John Quincy Adams courtly etiquette and appearance were mandatory at levees. On one occasion Elizabeth Monroe asked her own relatives to leave a levee because they did not dress appropriately.⁵⁶ The levee, then, not only tacitly yoked the highest American office to the cultural expectations of English and French royalty, but also to the heritage of genteel manhood.

Even antebellum presidents who excited populist fervor upheld the tradition of the levee. Like Lincoln, Andrew Jackson and William Henry Harrison had the reputation of being presidents of the common man, but they rejected unrefined constituents at their levees. Jackson’s 1828 election and inaugural levee were feared to threaten the social prestige of the presidency. But Jackson quickly abandoned any hint of coarse practices associated with his humble upbringing and adopted the elegant polish of previous presidents. The night of his

⁵³ Esther Singleton, *The Story of The White House*, 2 Vols. (New York: The McClure Company, 1907), I: 46-50; Ona Griffin Jeffries, *In and Out of the White House, from Washington to the Eisenhowers: An Intimate Glimpse into the Social and Domestic Aspects of the Presidential Life* (New York: Wilfred Funk, 1960), 92.

⁵⁴ Singleton, *The Story of The White House*, II: 311-312.

⁵⁵ E. M. Cooley, *A Description of the Etiquette at Washington City* (Philadelphia: L. B. Clarke, 1829), 5, 6.

⁵⁶ “Fashionable Life at the Capital,” *New York Times*, January 31, 1867.

inauguration the White House was bombarded by a plebeian mass, a night traditionally reserved for the social elites of Washington. The horde was so great large that a few ladies fainted and several men left with bloody noses due to the confusion and a rambunctious crowd.⁵⁷ In a symbolic gesture of disassociating with the common folk, Jackson refused to mingle with the throng who attended his inaugural levee and retreated to a nearby inn for the night.⁵⁸ For his entire presidency, in fact, Jackson prohibited the lower classes from attending his White House levees.

Between the presidency of Jackson and Buchanan, White House levees continued with pomp and a courtly atmosphere. Even William Henry Harrison, who appealed to the middling and lower classes for votes during the presidential election of 1840, exuded an aristocratic air. While Harrison was raised in elegance, he gave the pretense of having a humble upbringing to win votes, and attempted to conceal the truth of his background for the façade of a common laborer.⁵⁹ Once elected Harrison rang in his victory with an elaborate inaugural levee, and only distinguished guests in courtly appearance and fine manners attended.⁶⁰ In 1842, Charles Dickens attended a White House levee while touring America. Impressed with the courtly feel, Dickens remarked that the levee and those in attendance resembled “an English club house.”⁶¹

⁵⁷ Margaret Bayard Smith to Mrs. Kilpatrick, Washington, March 11, 1829, in Singleton, *The Story of The White House*, I: 290-300.

⁵⁸ Seale, *The President's House*, I: 176-179; Arthur M. Schlesinger, *Learning How to Behave: A Historical Study of American Etiquette Books* (New York: MacMillan Co., 1946), 16-17; John F. Marszalek, *The Petticoat Affair: Manners, Mutiny, and Sex in Andrew Jackson's White House* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 1997).

⁵⁹ *Calhoun County Patriot* [Marshall, Michigan], April 24, 1840.

⁶⁰ Singleton, *The Story of The White House*, I: 254; *The Adams Sentinel* saw through Harrison's false veneer and criticized him for attempting to appear as part of the lower-class while being an established gentleman; *The Adams Sentinel* [Gettysburg, Pennsylvania], August 31, 1840.

⁶¹ Bess Furman, *White House Profile* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1951), 127; Singleton, *The Story of The White House*, I: 281.

The grandeur and attendance of levees increased in James K. Polk's White House. His inaugural levee was noted for its "beauty" and "fashion."⁶²

During James Buchanan's presidency, the *New York Times* declared "fancy costume was obligatory" for his levees. "Every observance which taste and good feeling could desire was obeyed with the instincts and impulses of good breeding," a *New York Times* reporter observed.⁶³ Three years later the *New York Times* described with a similar excitement the anticipation of Lincoln's inaugural levees. "Fort Sumter was forgotten," an editor announced, "Major Anderson was a myth, WIGFALL was dropped, assassins were not dreamed of—dress, dress, dress, seemed literally to occupy the minds and entire existence of three people out of every five [in the city of Washington D.C]."⁶⁴ The public absorption with the levee was directly linked to the exclusivity of the event. The president in office determined how frequently levees were held. Depending on the president, levees were held as often as once a week or as infrequently as once a month. Distinguished guests comprised of politicians, foreign dignitaries, and established genteel men and women from both the North and the South were the customary attendees, the inaugural levee intensified what were already special events. Newspaper correspondents from across the North reported on this evening more than any other levee, since it served as the president's introduction to the social life of Washington. It was also an opportunity for the genteel society to evaluate the president's decorum.⁶⁵

⁶² Singleton, *The Story of The White House*, I: 317; Jeffries, *In and Out of the White House, from Washington to the Eisenhowers*, 124-126, 129, 147; Singleton, *The Story of The White House*, I: 30, 287; "Washington City on New Year's Day: Presidential Levee," *Arthur's Home Magazine*, no. 1 (Philadelphia: T.S. Arthur, 1853): 386; "Fashion at Washington: The Last Drawing Room of the Season at the Executive Mansion," *New York Times*, April 22, 1858.

⁶³ "Fashionable Intelligence," *New York Times*, April 12, 1858.

⁶⁴ "The Republican Court," *New York Times*, March 11, 1861.

⁶⁵ E.F. Ellet, *The Court Circles of the Republic, or the Beauties and Celebrities of the Nation* (Hartford, Connecticut: Hartford Publishing Company, 1869), 219, 531-536.

On March 8, 1861, Lincoln appeared for his first levee at the entrance of the East Room of the White House offering his hands to every guest, of whom no dress code was required, quietly grating against a longstanding Presidential tradition.⁶⁶ The public converged on the White House for over four hours, two hours longer than planned. Reportedly larger than Andrew Jackson's inaugural levee thirty-two years prior, the western crowd that descended upon Washington to celebrate caught the attention of journalists and local gentry. On the night of the event a correspondent for the *Cincinnati Daily Press* observed an unprecedented number of people in "republican dress" making their way to the White House levee. The sidewalks were full and the carriage traffic light. Carriage drivers waiting on the road offered their service to the throngs passing by on foot to little avail. Arriving at a White House levee by carriage was previously the standard mode of transportation, in part because only few had the means to travel in such luxury. "There has been such a change here," remarks Random, "as no one who has not seen Washington in the days of Buchanan, can imagine."⁶⁷ In disgust one attendee, Ohio Congressman Albert Gallatin Riddle, recalled after the levee that the evening, "must have obliterated the memory of all former days and nights of tramping hordes and herds." Such deprivation of civility betrayed a Presidential precedent. "A visitor at the White House about the time of the exit of Mr. Buchanan," Riddle mused, "would have been struck by the bare, worn and soiled aspect of that part of the house devoted to the official Executive, an aspect not unlike that presented by 'the breaking up of a hard winter' about a deserted farmstead."⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Singleton, *The Story of The White House*, I: 287; "Fashion at Washington: The Last Drawing Room of the Season at the Executive Mansion," *New York Times*, April 22, 1858; "An Enthusiastic and Slightly-Exuberant Account of the New Administration." *New York Daily Times*, March 20, 1857.

⁶⁷ Roderick Random, "Our Washington Correspondence: Retrenchment Already," *Cincinnati Daily Press*, March 27, 1861; "Mr. Lincoln's First Levee," *Harpers Weekly*, March 23, 1861; Cooley, *Etiquette at Washington City*, 13-15.

⁶⁸ Albert Gallatin Riddle, *Recollections of War Times: Reminiscences of Men and Events in Washington, 1860-1865* (New York: Putnam's, 1895), 17.

One journalist who arrived late found the White House impossible to enter and left.⁶⁹ Horatio Nelson Taft, a lawyer who worked in the Patent Office, penned in his journal about the evening, “The crowd was so great in the House that hundreds left without seeing the Prest.” Inside the White House the scene was chaotic. Guests were shoulder-to-shoulder, placing genteel men and women next to the rabble—content in their cheap garb and lack of proper manners. “Elegant Ladies dresses and Elegant Officers’ uniforms,” wrote Taft in his diary, “fared bad in the crowd.” The scene was so crowded that windows turned into exits.⁷⁰ Such a larger number of outer-garments and hats were thrown on or near the White House coatracks that it overwhelmed the mansion closet. Many left the levee without their coat while others grabbed one at random on their exit. The next day a messy pile of coats and hats remained unclaimed in the White House closet.⁷¹ The sartorial chaos prompted a gentleman published an advertisement in a Washington newspaper under the heading, “Lost” on March 11, and 15, 1861. The gentleman described the coat and hat he lost at the White House in the ad and promises “a handsome reward” for the return of these garments.⁷² The disorder and informality were an affront to genteel decorum at Lincoln’s inaugural levee.

Such a large crowd of ordinary men and women arrived that evening, in part, for the opportunity to shake the President’s hand. According to one account Lincoln shook over 3,000 hands. By the end of the night his white gloves—gloves that the State Department provided him

⁶⁹ *The Independent Oskaloosa* [Kansas], March 20, 1861; *Jackson Democrat* [Chardon Ohio], March 15, 1861.

⁷⁰ Ronald Cedric White, *Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2009), 407; Horatio Nelson Taft, *Washington During the Civil War: The Diary of Horatio Nelson Taft, 1861-1865*, John Sellers ed., March 8, 1861, Vol. 1.

⁷¹ *The Tiffin Weekly Tribune* [Ohio], March 22, 1861; *The Perrysburg Journal* [Ohio], March 21, 1861.

⁷² “Lost,” *The National Republican* [Washington D.C.], March 11, 1861; “Lost,” *The National Republican* [Washington D.C.], March 15, 1861.

with—had turned a muddled off-white color.⁷³ The *New York Herald* reported that a guest overheard the newly elected president tell a young man in attendance, “This handshaking is harder work than railsplitting.”⁷⁴ While shaking a man’s hand one of Lincoln’s gloves audibly split in two. After the gaffe Lincoln reportedly quipped, “well, my old friend this is general bustification. You and I were never intended to wear such things.”⁷⁵ The throng amassed not just to be in close visual proximity to the President, but they arrived with the expectation of grasping his hand. While a presidential nominee Lincoln gained a reputation for his colloquial interaction, especially shaking hands. Part of the lore surrounding Lincoln was his willingness, even eagerness, to shake hands with anyone. During the summer and fall of 1860, visitors arrived in Springfield just to exchange a few words with the famed rail-splitter and shake his hand. Henry Rogers describes this enthusiasm in a letter to his nephew on October 21, 1860. Commenting on living in a nearby town and occasionally seeing Lincoln, Rogers wrote, “Thousands shake hands with him [Lincoln] and numerous letters are addressed to him from all parts of the county, South as well as the North.” He ended the letter by affirming, “Abraham is the man for the Times.”⁷⁶

Handshaking smacked of Lincoln’s western manhood, affable yet eccentric, rebutting the image of a serene politician. The act of shaking Lincoln’s hand became increasingly coveted as pictures spread, offering the masses an opportunity to touch the famous that they only formerly knew through images or descriptions. The act furthered the lore about Lincoln by reifying portrayals of him in print. Images, descriptions, autographs, and pieces of Lincoln chopped rails

⁷³ Walter B. Stevens, *A Reporter’s Lincoln* (Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press), 52; Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, II: 258.

⁷⁴ *New York Herald* in Emanuel Hertz, ed., *Lincoln Talks: A Biography in Anecdote* (New York: Viking, 1939), 193.

⁷⁵ Carleton B. Case in Emanuel Hertz, ed., *Lincoln Talks*, 637.

⁷⁶ George Madoc Brinkerhoff, 1839-1928. Manuscript, no date., Springfield, Illinois. ALPL; “Reminiscences” in Smith, Green Clay papers, 1826-1895, Springfield, Illinois, ALPL; Henry Rogers details the moment he shook Lincoln’s hand; Letter, Rogers, Henry C October 21, 1860, Athens Menard County, Illinois. Accessed from Springfield, Illinois. ALPL.

left the public longing for a corporeal connection. In his presence, the public did not stand diffidently at a distance—as most did with foreign dignitaries. According to Michael Newbury in antebellum America, “The celebrity was defined not by the audience's desire for his cultural productions or by the possibility of an economically profitable exchange between the celebrity and audience but rather by the audience's irrational drive to see, touch, hold, possess and consume the celebrity body itself.”⁷⁷ Letters and reminiscent of men who meet Lincoln often mention shaking his hand. The act was embedded with meaning of connection and association to the famed rail-splitter that fostered a growing celebrity culture.

Shaking a famous hand was prized, in part, because of it implied some form of acceptance and was an intimate form of personal contact. European visitors to America were aghast at the commonplace nature of the practice and disparaged it as vulgar.⁷⁸ French and English etiquette authors warned readers to be wary of the practice because of the closeness of the act. Authors preached that hands offered insight into the person; moist, dry, or boney grip indicated one's passion. Women were warned that the colloquial ritual bordered on indecent. By 1860, *Godey's Lady's Book* instructed women to shake a man's only if he—being their social equal—extended his first and then they should only lightly grasp his. Etiquette authors cringed at hand shaking as a popular practice, noting that it should be mellifluously executed between social equals if it must be conducted. In cities handshaking proved an especially visible gesture, due to the frequent interaction between strangers, and the many judging eyes to boot.⁷⁹

⁷⁷ Michael Newbury, *Figuring Authorship in Antebellum America* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 161.

⁷⁸ Alison Syme, *A Touch of Blossom: John Singer Sargent and the Queer Flora of Fin-de-Siècle Art* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010), 89-90.

⁷⁹ “Blunders in Behaviour Corrected: Code of Deportment for Both Sexes,” *Godey's Lady's Book* (May, 1860); Kasson, *Rudeness and Civility*, 142; Hemphill, *Bowing to the Necessities*, 151, 208.

The earliest presidents did not shake hands with guests. President George Washington greeted men in a decorous fashion that proscribed touching. His levees, held on Tuesday between three and four in the afternoon, did not depart far from the English requirements. A strict code of dress was enforced; gentlemen were obligated to wear formal dress with a silver belt buckle and powdered hair; guests in attendance gathered in the parlor before the president entered and, like the royal English courts, formed a circle around the perimeter of the room. Washington then proceeded to the middle of the room, approaching each gentleman individually by bowing and sharing a few words before he moved onto the next gentleman—hands did not touch. These early levees were in sum: stiff, brief, and restrictive.⁸⁰

The casual greeting of grasping hands first occurred during James Monroe's presidency and became protocol for future presidents. But once the exchange was conducted between men of different social standing, the practice drew concern. The chance of touching a boorishly mannered man's dirty hand vexed the gentry.⁸¹ This irritation with the practice was evident when the Prince of Wales visited the White House for a reception in his honor, just five months before Lincoln's inaugural levee. An open invitation, circulated by Washington newspapers, went out to the entire city for the Prince's reception. A throng of men and women from various social standings came. A local newspaper described those entering the East Wing of the White House as, "in a disorderly and mobbish manner, ladies, gentlemen, officers, workmen, children, nurses, rowdies, and drivers." Lacking the reserved exchanges deemed polite, the editor determined, "The Royal party have certainly seen Democracy unshackled for once." A correspondent for the

⁸⁰ Jeffries, *In and Out of the White House, from Washington to the Eisenhowers*, 8; Cooley, *Etiquette at Washington City*, 8; Frank Prochaska, *The Eagle and the Crown: Americans and the British Monarchy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008). 22.

⁸¹ Lewis L. Gould, *American First Ladies: Their Lives and Their Legacy* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2001), 42.

New York Herald paid particular attention to how the Prince responded to the practice. While Buchanan—standing next to the Prince in the East Wing—indiscriminately shook hands with the public entering, the Prince slightly bowed, with some exceptions. “Many of the ladies and some of the gentlemen extended their hands to him after exchanging a cordial shake with the president,” observed the *Herald’s* correspondent, “his Royal Highness evidently felt to be a great bore, although politeness compelled him to submit [and shake their hand].”⁸²

Lincoln’s inaugural levee broke from the etiquette of levees to that point. Northeastern newspaper correspondents familiar with the event published reports of guests arriving in cheap garb who were wholly ignorant of the refined elegance expected of them. One guest commented the required etiquette made Lincoln look “irksome” and “uncomfortable” in his formal attire.⁸³ Guests ascending the steps of the White House, pressed by the eager throng behind them, were unable to linger with the newly elected president. Smiling, Lincoln cordially engaged visitors with a brief conversation, joke, or story. Traditionally, conversation was the only source of amusement at presidential levees, which suited Lincoln’s personality well.⁸⁴ His physical frame accentuated his awkward attempts to bow and highlighted the shortcoming of his suit jacket, which was too long and too tight.

A correspondent from the Baltimore’s *Morning Leader* recorded overhearing men and women asking each other questions about White House levee dress protocol. The correspondent patronized that it made no difference to Lincoln “whether white gloves or green, gray trousers or

⁸² The Prince refused to shake a police officer’s hand during his visit to New York: “Of the Prince’s Tact,” *Frank Leslie’s Weekly*, November 3, 1860; “Our Washington Correspondences,” *New York Herald*, October 7, 1860; Ian Radforth, *Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 320.

⁸³ Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln, II*: 257-258.

⁸⁴ Cooley, *Etiquette at Washington City*, 11; later levees would have a band, including Lincoln’s, but not dancing.

black, a dress coat or a frock, was worn.”⁸⁵ The *New York Herald* lamented that Northerners from obscure backgrounds were “invaders.” Social *faux pas* were numerous that evening. Women entered the White House without taking off their bonnets and men unable to hang their coats and hats awkwardly carried their outer garments around the entire evening. “The fashionable circles of the city,” observed the *New York Herald*, “were but slimly represented.”⁸⁶ The absence of southern gentry, a staple at White House levees, left “lamentable vacuum” according to another *New York Herald* correspondent. Traditionally southern society came in elaborate carriages and appeared in formal attire to presidential levees.⁸⁷ Despite the lack of southern gentility the inaugural levee still attracted genteel society and folks from the Old Northwest who were unaccustomed to elegant decorum. The large and diverse reception led to reports that the evening was marked by a general uncouthness.⁸⁸

Access to one of the most prominent social events in Washington was an exciting opportunity for common folk, but it also caused a bitter reaction from those with social clout. One guest sneeringly noted how the plebian mass ruined the floor of the mansion with mud. Another gentleman in attendance remarked, “There is no smell of royalty about this establishment.”⁸⁹ But the displeasure was largely leveled at Lincoln who—according to those that attended previous presidential levees—carried himself in appearance and speech like the unsophisticated throng bombarding the White House. Even before the inaugural levee, Harriet Lane, President Buchanan’s niece, feared both Lincolns would prove “awfully western, loud and

⁸⁵ “Gossip About the First Levee,” *Morning Leader*, March 16, 1861.

⁸⁶ “Our Washington Correspondent,” *New York Herald*, March 10, 1861.

⁸⁷ Singleton, *The Story of The White House*, I, 53-57.

⁸⁸ Russell Howard, *New York Times*, March 10, 1861; “Our Washington Correspondent,” *New York Herald*, March 10, 1861.

⁸⁹ Albert Gallatin Riddle, *Recollections of War Times: Reminiscences of Men and Events in Washington, 1860–1865* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1895), 17; Ward Hill Lamon. *Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, 1847-1865* (1911; reprint by: Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 82, 97.

unrefined.”⁹⁰ A Harvard alum in attendance chided, “no man living needed so much education as the new President but all the education he could get would not be enough.”⁹¹ Robert Colby, a prominent New York banker and son of a former New Hampshire governor, scolded Lincoln for his deportment in a letter. He lectured the president on the need to be courtly in his manners and to avoid “wit and story telling.” There was a common irritation about how the presidency and the White House, both symbols of American genteel society, were being undermined by Lincoln.⁹²

The change in formality was not just superficial, but communicated a deeper cultural shift occurring.⁹³ Lincoln’s inaugural levee most severely broke from former presidential levees because it did not attempt to mimic European courts, which, as one editor noted, had been done at all previous presidential levees.⁹⁴ Although Lincoln had just arrived in Washington, observers noticed that he brought with him a democratic air, a stark contrast with Buchanan’s levees. The *Cincinnati Daily Press* recorded Buchanan appearing like “James the King” at his levees, but, unlike the genteel display at Buchanan’s White House, at Lincoln’s inaugural levee a reporter noted, “dresses are cheaper, and the wearers are the dearer.”⁹⁵

After Lincoln’s first few weeks in the White House, elegant society in Washington D.C.

⁹⁰ Kenneth J. Winkle, *Abraham and Mary Lincoln* (Carbondale, Ill: Southern Illinois Press, 2011), 93.

⁹¹ Michael Thomas Smith, *A Traitor and a Scoundrel: Benjamin Hedrick and the Cost of Dissent* (Danovers, Mass: Rosemont, 2003), 114.

⁹² Robert Colby to Lincoln, Wall Street, New York, May 18, 1861, in, Roy Basler, ed., *Abraham Lincoln: The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 4 Vols. (New Brunswick: Rutgers University, 1953), II: 14; *The Annals of Hygiene*, no.1 (January, 1888): 37..

⁹³ Lincoln frequently greeted his guests in casual dress and with colloquial manners during his presidency. Those accustomed to urban genteel society were often aghast when they met Lincoln. One guest, Colonel Silas Burt, met Lincoln at the White House in 1863 on military business. “That pathetic figure,” recalled Burt, “has ever remained indelible in my memory.” The shock was a result of Lincoln greeting him with “bowed” form, “hair disheveled,” “no necktie or collar,” and wearing “heelless slippers.” Silas W. Burt in Victoria Radford, ed., *Meeting Mr. Lincoln: Firsthand Recollections of Abraham Lincoln by People, Great and Small, Who Met the President* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998), 24.

⁹⁴ Lonelle Aikman, *The Living White House* (Washington, D.C.: White House Historical Association, 1966), 72.

⁹⁵ Roderick Random, “Our Washington Correspondence: The Republican Levees,” *Cincinnati Daily Press*, March 27, 1861. Random writes, “The Republican Party has been in power here but two weeks, and already there begins to be a diminution of that un-democratic display of ‘barbaric gold’ which characterized the levees of the Buchanan dynasty.”

proved less curious about Lincoln; their intrigue in his western manhood had run its course. White House levees were no longer guarded by social decorum that previously served to separate the coarsely mannered from attempting to mingle with the refined. A social system descended from French and English courts and served to generally regulate the attendees of White House receptions was giving way, much to the chagrin of the old gentry.⁹⁶ Alexander K. McClure traced this disintegration. According to McClure, within the city there existed, “the centre of culture, refinement and social exclusiveness. It had welcomed the earlier Presidents who came with the bluest blood of Virginia to grace official circles.” A dramatic shift unfolded, “when the ungainly form of the rail splitter came to the White House, alien to the aristocratic circles...the social rulers of the capital paid little tribute to the political powers.”⁹⁷

The contrast between the social presence of Lincoln and the genteel ideal became painfully evident when Prince Napoleon, cousin of Napoleon III, visited the White House. The visit was part of the Prince’s two-month tour of the United States and excellent diplomatic opportunity for both nations. Lincoln’s nonchalance towards his esteemed guest irritated William Seward—the Secretary of State. Seward, a man known for his refined appearance and proper manners, was well aware that Lincoln's presentation was a poor reflection on the presidency. Gentlemanliness in all circumstances was a principle Seward lived by, motivating him to be keenly attuned to the social customs expected of elites. After Lincoln's presidency Seward commented that Lincoln “had no pomp, display, or dignity, so-called. He appeared

⁹⁶ Elizabeth Grimsley identified the social disruption Lincoln caused as President. “The procession of disintegration went on rapidly, and in a few weeks there was a though change socially. By degrees we cease to meet at our informal receptions the Maryland and Virginia families who had always held sway, and dominated Washington society. Easy, suave, charming in manner, descended from a long line of aristocratic families, accustomed to wealth and all the amenities of social life, and etiquette.” “Six Months in the White House”—published by the Ill hist society, 9, 82.

⁹⁷ Alexander K. McClure, *Recollections of Half a Century* (Salem, Mass.: Salem Press Company, 1902), 205.

simple in his carriage and bearing.” Seward considered the sloppy condition of his clothes and his indifference to etiquette a consequence of his upbringing as a “rude, uncultivated boy, without polish.” Although Seward had harbored feelings of animosity after Lincoln eliminated from the 1860 presidential he felt a reluctant obligation to intervene on matters of presidential decorum.⁹⁸

Seward took immediate management of the President’s appearance. The night before Lincoln’s March 4, 1861, Seward instructed members of the State Department to provide Lincoln with a black suit, vest, jacket, and formal white gloves for him to wear at his inauguration.⁹⁹ A White House servant recalled after his presidency, “the President’s wardrobe always requires the watchful attention to his personal appearance, and he cares very little how other men dress.”¹⁰⁰ Though he dutifully wore the costume for his inauguration and the levee he seemed unable to keep his jacket from becoming wrinkled. The white gloves also appeared odd because they were too small for his large hands. Less than a year later Seward sent Lincoln a letter reminding him to dress in “full costume,” adding that such attire was “customary” for the annual New Year’s Day festivities.¹⁰¹ Lincoln’s colloquial comportment appeared especially derelict in the presence of European royalty.

⁹⁸ Frederic Bancroft, *The Life of William H. Seward*, 2 Vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1900), I: 199; John Hay’s diary entry December 13, 1861, reprinted in John Hay, *Inside Lincoln’s White House: The Complete Civil War Diary of John Hay*, ed. by Michael Burlingame and John R. Turner Ettliger (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 165; Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy Under Lincoln and Johnson*, 2 Vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), I: 123; Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln*, 323, 326.

⁹⁹ David Herbert Donald writes, “The Department of State sent over detailed memorandum of the clothing” for Lincoln. Donald, *Lincoln at Home: Two Glimpses of Abraham Lincoln’s Family Life* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 28-29.

¹⁰⁰ William Osborn Stoddard, *Inside the White House in War Times* (New York: C. L. Webster & Company, 1890), 148.

¹⁰¹ Glyndon Van Deusen, *William Henry Seward* (New York: Oxford University, 1967), 337.

The tension over Lincoln's lack of decorum surfaced between Mary Todd and Seward early on; both were well schooled in the art of gentility and relished its display.¹⁰² In early March, 1861, Seward suggested that he should "lead off" at the President's inaugural levee, a position of prestige, Mary Todd protested that the highest ceremonial role was reserved for the President, not Seward. A few months later, when news that the Prince accepted the White House invitation broke, Seward suggested hosting the Prince's dinner instead of the President. Elizabeth Todd Grimsley noted in her diary that the First Lady, "did not fail to make a prompt objection to this suggestion." Sternly objecting to Seward's request, Mary Todd tapped John Nicolay with the responsibility of organizing the formal dinner reception, "on the day of Prince's presentation to the President."¹⁰³ Seward's opposition to Lincoln presiding the White House reception for the Prince was due not only to Lincoln's lack of refinement, but also because it was where his own aptitude shined.¹⁰⁴ As the nineteenth century actress and author Rose Eyttinge

¹⁰² In the late antebellum period it was unusual for wives to monitor the manners, dress, social interactions of their husband like Mary Todd did. For more information about how Mary Todd instructed Lincoln during their marriage see, Jean H. Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987), 131-133; Harry Pratt, "The Lincoln's go Shopping" *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society*, Vol 48. (Spring, 1955), pg. 66) While the President displayed a sense of compliance and ambivalence towards genteel sophistication, Mary Todd was sensitive to these expectations. Having learned the art of gentility at a boarding school and in the sophisticated urban pockets of the Old Northwest, she was anxious of judgments from the capital city's genteel society. As the first lady Mary Todd assumed the role of hostess, and the inaugural levee was the most revered social occasion at the White House. The levee was especially important for Mary Todd because of the implication it had on her social standing in the genteel city. Newspapers gave greater attention to describing the clothing and reception of notable women at levees than men. Across the North newspapers made note of Mary Todd's general appearance and manners at the first inaugural levee. New York and Washington newspapers also took subtle jabs at her by connecting her to the working-class society. They also derided her for being a part of the bland social life in Springfield, Illinois. But she recognized the significance of the inaugural levee. Before the levee she is recorded saying to a White House servant, "I must dress in costly material." Despite the western stereotype of her, the genteel guests in attendance deemed her satisfactory for the title of first lady. Jeffries, *In and Out of the White House, from Washington to the Eisenhowers*, 164; Furman, *White House Profile*, 173; "Our Washington Correspondent," *New York Herald*, March 10, 1861.

¹⁰³ Elizabeth Todd Grimsley, Elizabeth Todd Grimsley Papers, ALPL.

¹⁰⁴ Seward stated, "He [Seward] showed to best advantage at his own dinner-table, where his sweetness and light charmed all comers." Typescript of an article on his personal memories and thoughts on Abraham Lincoln, which is included in *Intimate memories* edited by R.R. Wilson. Typescript of an essay on Lincoln and Seward that appeared in *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine* Aug. 1889 and Feb. 1893, 9.

commented, “It is impossible to think of two more contrasting personalities than those of Lincoln and Seward.”¹⁰⁵

Prince Napoleon’s visit to the White House accentuated Lincoln’s western manhood against his genteel sensibility. Despite the meticulous care in preparation and the approval of Washington architecture, the Prince was underwhelmed by the choice for President.¹⁰⁶ The guests stole themselves for a vulgar President, as evidenced by the decision of Napoleon’s wife, Princes Clotilde, to forgo the invitation to the White House and stay in New York City. John Nicolay, the organizer of the evening, believed the Princes’ decision was made “to avoid the profanation of vulgar eyes.”¹⁰⁷ Lieutenant Colonel Camille Ferri Pisani, who traveled with the Prince, validated this impression. In his journal Pisani reflected that Lincoln, “might rightly be called a giant, if this word—expression of power and strength in the Biblical and mythological sense.” He then articulated his understanding of who Lincoln was; “Mr. Lincoln was born in Illinois; therefore, he belongs—both by birth and by his very democratic ideals and his austere ways—to the ethnic group called the *Westmen*. Son of a pioneer and pioneer himself.” This impression was also shared by European elites.¹⁰⁸

After meeting Lincoln, Napoleon wrote in his journal that the President had “the appearance of a bootmaker.” Appalled, the Prince belittled, “What a difference between this sad

¹⁰⁵ Rose Eytinge, *The Memories of Rose Eytinge* (New York: F. A. Stokes Co., 1905), 77.

¹⁰⁶ Conscientiously drew a seating arrangement for the excessive guest that would join the presidential party to dine with the Prince and his entourage: Secretary of State Secretary of Treasury, Secretary of War, Secretary of the Navy, Secretary of the Interior, Postmaster General, Attorney General, Lt. General Scott, Major General McClellan, Senator Foat, Senator Sumner, Lord Lyons, Mr. Mercier, Mr. Seward, John Nicolay, and John Hay. John G. Nicolay Papers. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. John Nicolay Papers, National Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁷ John Nicolay to Theresia Nicolay, August 2, 1861. John G. Nicolay Papers. Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

¹⁰⁸ Joyaux, Georges J., ed. and trans., *Prince Napoleon in America: Letters from his Aide-de-Camp by Lieutenant Colonel Camille Ferri Pisani* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1959).

representative of the great republic and her founding fathers!”¹⁰⁹ The *New York Times* translated and republished an article from the Parisian periodical, *Revue des Deux Mondes*, about the visit seven months later. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* editor observed, “Mr. Lincoln's nomination was hailed with enthusiasm by the working classes, who saw in his rustic origin, in his probity as well as in his moderation, a guarantee for labor and the laboring classes.” The editor concluded with a patronizing *bon mot*, “If I give you all Mr. Lincoln's claims to public respect, you will allow me a smile at his whimsical appearance, and at that pair of kid gloves which seem astonished at finding themselves in the hands of a rail-splitter.”¹¹⁰ The impressions of Lincoln by his French guest matched those of other Europeans.

Elevating a former rail-splitter to the highest office puzzled both French and English gentry. One Englishman who met Lincoln in Springfield, Illinois was recorded as being “shocked” that such a man with simple western characteristics was even nominated for the presidency.¹¹¹ Another English traveler vividly remembered his first impressions of meeting Lincoln. He wrote that Lincoln greeted him and other guests from England with “hair ruffled,” eyes that were “very sleepy,” and “[f]eet enveloped in carpet slippers.” The English gentleman was surprised by his ill-bred appearance, explaining in his recollection that he and his company were “votaries of court etiquette.”¹¹² Those schooled in the art of gentility regularly made grading Lincoln an enjoyable exercise of belittlement.

¹⁰⁹ Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, II: 257.

¹¹⁰ “Prince Napoleon at Washington,” *The New York Times*, March 16, 1862.

¹¹¹ Francis B. Carpenter, *Six Months at the White House with Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1866), 121.

¹¹² Part of the shock among European visitors might be due in part to how Lincoln was depicted in Europe. According to Gabor S. Boritt, Mark E. Neely, Jr. and Harold Holzer, “It was once noted that Lincoln lacked the dignified physical appearance Europeans expected in a head of state. Little wonder, then, that European printmakers took the same view and dignified the unpretentious Lincoln to create a more palatable image.” Gabor S. Boritt, Mark E. Neely, Jr. and Harold Holzer, “The European Image of Abraham Lincoln,” *Winterthur Portfolio*, Vol. 21, No. 2/3 (Summer - Autumn, 1986), 165; George Borrett, “An Englishman in Washington in 1864,” reprinted in: *The Magazine of History* 149 (1929): 12-13.

John Bigelow—who Lincoln tapped for the Envoy to France shortly after his election—described Lincoln in a letter to William Hargreaves, a prominent English composer, on July 30, 1860. Bigelow prefaced his description of the presidential candidate by noting that Lincoln would not be considered “*a la mode* at your splendid European courts, nor indeed is his general style and appearance beyond the reach of criticism in our Atlantic drawing rooms.” Although Bigelow had a generally favorable opinion of Lincoln, he summarized him to his English friend as “essentially a Western man, he has passed most of his life beyond the Alleghenies.” Lincoln, continued Bigelow in his description to Hargreaves, carried himself, “With great simplicity of manners and perhaps ignorance of the trans Atlantic world.” Bigelow further added to Hargreaves that “Europe” was a “stranger” to western men like Lincoln.¹¹³

Western manhood proved especially striking to French eyes. The diary of a twenty-two-year-old Frenchman, Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne, carefully details the fascination with these virile men. Possessing an aristocratic upbringing, Duvergier de Hauranne found inspiration in Alexis de Tocqueville’s tour of the United States and made his journey in 1864 and 1865. Giving particular attention to the type of man produced in the northwestern region of America, he noted with intrigue their rough manners, callus hands, and offhand way of interacting. With acute detail he described these backcountry men: “There is not, as in Europe, the example of a cultivated class to inspire in him a false humility and refuse him entry into the higher social sphere to which he wants to be admitted. Not only does he not wait to be invited, he enters with complete self assurance, his hat on his head, hoisting his boots up onto the armchair and spitting on the carpet.” With acquaintances these western laborers slap one another on the back as gesture of affinity and amongst distinguished gentleman they offer “no personal distinction” or

¹¹³ Letter from John Bigelow to William Hargreaves, July 30, 1860 in: Margaret Clapp, *Forgotten First Citizen: John Bigelow* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1947), 136-37.

respectable acknowledgment. This behavior particularly concerned European observers because it dissolved the bedrock of social order. Some Americans, in turn, directed this bitter judgment at Lincoln for his part in undermining the structure of behavior, demarcating social categories, and setting an example the general populace could aspire to. *The New York Herald* observed, “There are other duties connected with the presidential office, than those which may be attended to, in the old-fashioned and queerly furnished private retreat of the Executive. There are social necessities which must be met, and on the fulfillment of which depends in no small degree the harmony of our relations with the rest of mankind.”¹¹⁴ The elevation of Lincoln to the presidency marked a cultural shift, one that a consumer imaginary paved a way for.¹¹⁵

An emerging consumer imaginary subtly guided the northeast out of the shadow of a European identity hanging over the young nation. Lincoln’s election was a departure from a European precedent towards a more distinct American identity that prized gratification. A year before Lincoln’s presidency *Harper's Weekly* published an article, “Our American Dignity.” The

¹¹⁴ Ernest Duvergier de Hauranne, *A Frenchman in Lincoln's America* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1974), 1: 253; “The Presidential Progress: The Arrival and Reception at the State Capital,” *The New York Herald*, February 18, 1861.

¹¹⁵ Lincoln was a popular figure in Europe once the American Civil War began. An English journalist, Edward Dicey, published an article in *Macmillan's Magazine* entitled, “Washington During the War,” but despite the name of the article the primarily topic was Lincoln's external appearance. The Dicey, who wrote the article during his six-month visit to America, scrutinized his “creased, soiled, and puckered up” black suit and even his “ill-fitting boots,” a common description of Lincoln's appearance in England. After debasing Old Abe's appearance, the article transitioned away from his external features and asserted, “You would never say he [Lincoln] was a gentleman; you would still less say he was not one.” The article proceeded to explain this seeming contradictory statement; “[T]here are men to whom the epithet of 'gentleman-like' or 'ungentleman-like' appears utterly incongruous; and of such Mr. Lincoln is one.” The understanding that he possessed gentlemanly characteristics came from a close examination of Lincoln, one that surpassed the outer-man. “There is about him an utter absence of pretension, and an evident desire to be courteous to everybody, which is the essence, if not the outward form, of good breeding,” the article asserted. The English journalist, William Howard Russell, penned for his countrymen that Lincoln had a “shambling” and “loose” walking manner and, by Russell's standard, wore an appalling suit when he entered the ballroom. His black suit did not fit his lanky frame correctly, a problem Lincoln was habitually had. It was wrinkled and outdated, and his necktie was raggedly tied. Russell was so aghast by his appearance that he compared Lincoln’s dress to an “undertaker’s uniform at a funeral.” Old Abe, showing no concern for his appearance, also left his hair uncombed, another common habit of his. Russell concluded his assessment by writing that in Europe Lincoln would not be considered a “gentleman.” William Howard Russell, *My Diary North and South*, 2 Vols. (London: Bradbury and Evens. 1863), I: 37; Edward Dicey, “Washington During the War,” *Macmillan's Magazine* 6 (May, 1862): 23-26.

author, Alfred H. Guernsey, averred that the social system regulating class structure in America deviated from the “Old World” constraints of lineage. Instead of being identified by family heritage, according to Guernsey, America adopted a national pedigree. A hard-working American “proves himself to be of the lineage of Washington, and Franklin, and Adams, and their compeers.” By breaking the “family blood that regulates the descent of honors” enabled the industrious and talented to thrive unencumbered. But Guernsey still maintained that “all dignity must have a material basis,” a principle derived from the “Old World” forms of gentility.¹¹⁶ While Guernsey decried the undemocratic belief of determining social standing by bloodline, he was not willing to advocate for a social system void of the exterior signs of character. The popular imaginary of western manhood implant Guernsey with an affection for western manhood forged out of fiction that circulated in print. Embroiled in negotiating a unique identity created occasion for urban northeast to direct their longing to western manhood.

As a vulgar reflection of Thomas Jefferson’s yeoman ideal in the eyes of the northeast, Lincoln’s western manliness in the presidential office brought a tension between an exclusively genteel past and the emergency of a consumer imaginary to surface. The remarkable capacity of an emerging consumer imaginary resided in its ability to bridge the gap between seemingly mutually exclusive ideas of manliness—frontiersmen and statesmen groomed in European gentility—to find common footing in a burgeoning celebrity status. A fascination with both royalty and the frontiersman alike illustrated that a consumer imaginary fed off the immediately gratifying, leveling the exclusivity of traditional genteel manhood in its wake. Lincoln: tall, masculine, weathered by years of toil, in the latter half of his life, quick to jest, eager to shake hands, appearing in his shirt-sleeves, and the Prince of Wales: elegantly restrained in social

¹¹⁶ Alfred H. Guernsey, “Our American Dignity,” *Harper’s Weekly* 49, (December, 1860).

settings, young with a porcelain skin, carefully adorned, his actions and words always implicitly inferring his royalty shared the status of celebrity, intriguing northeastern audiences. Merchants, entrepreneurs, and the media industry aided their celebrity status by appropriating both types of manhood for profit. In the growing consumer centers of the urban northeast celebrity status transcended the apparent differences between refined and western manhood. Ultimately, the fascination with Lincoln's western manhood undermined conventional manly attributes and accomplishments previous deemed essential for politicians in the urban northeast. Lincoln's manhood was, despite genteel resistance, consumed by an urban northeast populace.

EPILOGUE

Lincoln's Log Cabin, Commemoration, and Changing Impression of Western Manhood, 1865

Lincoln's sudden death sent shock waves through the North and solidified his legacy among the nation's greatest presidents. The news of his assassination fell hard on the organizers of the Western Sanitary Fair, among many others. Instead of suspending their plans to delight the city of Chicago with spectacles between May and July of 1865, the fair organizers decided to proceed with the festivities as scheduled while adjusting the Lincoln exhibits to reflect a memorializing tone. Of the many Lincoln artifacts on display the log cabin Lincoln assisted building in 1831 drew the greatest attention. A spectacle of rudimentary logs attributed to Lincoln illustrated how the consumerization of his western manhood had become mass entertainment by the summer of 1865. Memorializing Lincoln spurred consumerism while the ubiquity of stories and images of his humble beginnings softened the coarse tone of his western manliness. The humble dwelling credited to Lincoln fascinated adoring audiences with its invocation of the western man who seemed divinely called to lead the nation. Still, the cabin's power resided in its ability to stimulate reverent curiosity and wonderment, elicited from stepping into the base conditions and fathoming how one of the greatest Americans came to maturity between the dusty, splintering logs.

Consumption of Lincoln's manhood after his death evolved and proved markedly different than the excitement he raised as a western presidential candidate in 1860. More than novelty, by 1865 Lincoln-related items, reading material, and commemoration sites took on a hallowed tone. Barry Schwartz, pulling from Émile Durkheim's theory of the sacred resulting from ritual, argues that Lincoln and the material associated with him, "became an object of intense mourning at a time when most people held him in mixed or low regard." Blurring the lines between patriotism, religion, and entertainment, according to Schwartz, dramatized rituals and propagated a hagiographic narrative of Lincoln's life.¹ Simone Natale's research on the flourishing of the supernatural entertainment industry tracks how a consumer social imaginary, broadly speaking, subsumed the spiritual and religious spectacle. Despite not directly addressing Lincoln, the thrust of Natale's argument shows how a sense of longing and imagination in spiritually themed fictional literature and exhibits were in high demand in the 1860s North.² Ultimately, Lincoln's death enraptured the North, stimulating relic and tribute consumption of the former rail-splitter. As Andrew Shuman, editor for the Western Sanitary Fair's newspaper, *Voices of the Fair*, sagely predicted, "every article or memento with which the lamented President was in any way connected, will hereafter be treasured up as a precious relic."³ Unlike the purveyors of novelty that co-opted Lincoln's western manliness for amusement in 1861, by 1865 consumption of Lincoln connected to his western manhood tapped into patriotism and devote commemoration.

¹ Barry Schwartz, "Mourning and the Making of a Sacred Symbol: Durkheim and the Lincoln Assassination," *Social Forces* 70 (December 1991): 343–364; Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2000), 29, 49, 344.

² Simone Natale. *Supernatural Entertainments: Victorian Spiritualism and the Rise of Modern Media Culture* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2016).

³ *Voice of the Fair* 1 no. 13 (Chicago, 1865), 4.

Central to the consumer imaginary that initially popularized Lincoln's western manhood in the urban northeast, was its novelty. By the summer of 1860, after prolonged existence in the public's crosshairs, interest in Lincoln's western manhood waned. The onset of the Civil War absorbed the North and directed the general attention away from Lincoln's manhood. In the mind of the South, Lincoln epitomized the worst of northern manhood. His free-labor politics obscured the South from seeing any other redeem qualities of his manhood. In southern print, he was portrayed as a corrupt, cowardly Yankee leading up to and during his presidency.⁴ In the Civil War North, print made little mention of Lincoln's western manhood. Rather, discussion of Lincoln centered on him as representing the Union with comparably few references to his western manners or appearance. After his death in 1865 commemoration not only hallowed him as the savior of the Union, but also honored his western manhood. His western manhood shed its boorish association and served as evidence of his humble life that culminated in sacrificially dying for the nation. No longer did Lincoln's manhood stand opposed to refined society, since it was not viewed as vulgar in the northeast, but as heroic. A consumer imaginary served to mediate how the North—not just the northeast—commemorated Lincoln as a national saint by 1865. While the northeast was imbedded in a consumer imaginary, I argue that the commemoration of Lincoln facilitated spreading a consumer imaginary outside the northeast.

The first display of Lincoln's Macon County cabin was held at Chicago's Northwestern Sanitary Fair of 1865, the second fair of its kind. The first occurred two years earlier in the same city. The fair's initial purpose, raising money for the Union cause, was accomplished by using the spectacle of war as a means to reach into the general public's pockets—and fair organizers did not skimp on the captivating spectacle. As Beverly Gordon relates, "people would not be

⁴ George C. Rable, *Damn Yankees!: Demonization and Defiance in the Confederate South* (Baton Rouge: LSU Press, 2015), 50-68.

attracted [to a fair] merely by the presence of appealing goods and a worthy cause. Evermore novel attractions had to be provided, almost in inverse proportion to the familiarity of the event itself. The selling environment changed, and fair organizers viewed their patrons less as contributors than as consumers."⁵ Never had such a bizarre of spectacles, trinkets, and exhibits been seen in the city of Chicago. Preparation for the momentous event included the distribution of 10,000 circulars to the surrounding regions and organizers even prompted pastors to mention the grand event from the pulpit.⁶ *Voices of the Fair*, published during the summer of 1865 to detail the exhibits and the fairs reception, boasted of a three-mile march through Chicago to the fair's location on opening day.⁷ The main organizer, Mary Livermore, reflected on the crowd that gathered to absorb the spectacle as a "never-ceasing crowds of curiosity-seekers." She continued with the assumption that the fair, "was the most interesting collection of articles and relics ever seen by Western people."⁸

The chance to profit from a cabin attributed to Lincoln was not lost of his friends and colleagues from Illinois. John Hanks and James Shoaff, Dennis Hank's son-in-law, purchased a cabin Lincoln helped construct in 1830 and advertised its exhibition as the site where Old Abe learned law. John Hanks procured three documents to convince the public of the cabin's authenticity; one from James Whitely, who Hanks and Shoaff purchased the cabin from, another from Isaac C. Pugh, a war hero and early settler of Decatur, Illinois, and the third document was

⁵ Melinda Lawson argues the goal of the fair organizers were to raise funds and spark patriotism; Melinda Lawson, *Patriot Fires: Forging a New American Nationalism in the Civil War North* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 17-18; Beverly Gordon, "A Furor of Benevolence," *Chicago History* 15 no. 4 (1986): 59.

⁶ Mary Ashton Rice Livermore, *My Story of the War: A Woman's Narrative of Four Years Personal Experience* (Hartford: A. D. Worthington, 1890), 411.

⁷ Andrew Shuman joined the editorial staff of the *Chicago Evening Journal* in 1856. Twenty-one issues of the *Voices of the Fair* were published in total. "N.W. Sanitary Fair: Meeting of the Executive Committee" *Chicago Tribune* April 6, 1865; "Editor's Introductory," *Voices of the Fair*, April 27, 1865.

⁸ Livermore, *My Story of the War*, 441; John M. Wing, *The Chicago Diaries of John M. Wing, 1865-1866*, eds., Robert Williams (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2002), 139.

a letter from James Oglesby. It is doubtless that Oglesby—the then newly minted Governor of Illinois—wrote to Hanks on May 20, 1865, with the knowledge it would be shared with the general public. Keenly aware of Hanks’ intention in asking for a letter, Oglesby added, “I hope you may receive a just compensation for your efforts to bring before the country.” Equipped with documentation, Hanks promoted the authenticity of the cabin. “I cheerfully state that I am certain it is the one built by Mr. LINCOLN; besides, your voluntary statements on the subject abundantly satisfy me there can be no mistake about it,” he attested.⁹ Hanks’ zealous opportunism was matched by eager patrons.

Hanks’ “original Lincoln Cabin” was put on display at the corner of Randolph and Wabash Avenue in the heart of Chicago. Advertisements spiritedly maintained that the cabin, a sixteen by eighteen-foot structure, was “authentic,” as though its genuineness was implicitly in question. Hundreds of visited the cabin display daily, making it one of the fair’s most frequented attractions. Andrew Shuman claimed in *Voices of the Fair* that the “relic” surpassed all other displays at the fair. For the numerous visitors that entered the sacred cabin walls Shuman raved, “What tender recollections will it bring up! How sublime the thought.” He assured that anyone who made the pilgrimage would stir with “luster” and “romance” upon entering the sacred place that lodged Lincoln during his formative years. Reports of Lincoln’s cabin reached beyond urban print to provincial presses. On the front page of the *La Moille News Deal* of Hyde Park, Vermont the paper’s editor penned, “One of the features of the curiosity department of the Chicago fair is Abraham Lincoln’s log cabin, which he helped build with his own hands, and

⁹ “Abraham Lincoln's Log Cabin: The Structure in Boston,” *Boston Herald* July 16, 1865; *Jane Martin Johns, Personal Recollections of Early Decatur, Abraham Lincoln, Richard J. Oglesby, and the Civil War (Decatur, Illinois: Daughters of the American Revolution, 1912), 128-129.*

which has been brought from its original location.” The *Bradford Reporter*, of northeastern Pennsylvania, also ran a similar reported about Lincoln’s cabin.¹⁰

Uncle John Hanks, a name Hanks gave himself, was quick to chat up any paying visitor. One editor noted, Hanks “is quite talkative.” Another evaluated his behavior with patrons as, “very gentlemanly and answer all questions pertaining to the cabin and the history of our late president.” Hanks spoke in a whimsical fashion about Lincoln’s cabin both at the Sanitary Fair, and later when the cabin was displayed in Boston, crooning about his and Lincoln’s western manliness while standing in front of the structure. “In boyhood days,” boasted Hanks, “we toiled together; many are the days we have hugged the heavy oar on the Ohio, the Illinois and the Mississippi rivers together; many are the long cold days we have journeyed over the wild prairies and through the forest, with gun and axe.” Like the cabin itself, Hank’s words painted a hagiographic image of the beloved Illinoisan. This was a prized opportunity for Hanks, being acknowledged as a close companion of the most revered northerner and earning revenue from visitors transformed his life. At the cost of twenty-five-cents per head, Hanks only gave half of the profit had made to the mission of the Sanitary Fair. Hanks even seized the opportunity to profit from patrons beyond the cabin’s entry fee. Carte de vistes of the cabin were sold to visitors at the fair in Chicago. When Hanks took the cabin to Boston, cartes and walking canes made from Lincoln rails were peddled outside the cabin in Boston Commons. The sale of canes was so successful that Hanks wrote to friends in Decatur to send more rails so he could sell them as canes. As historian Otto R. Kyle snipes about Hank’s side business, “There is grave doubt

¹⁰ *Bradford Reporter* June 29, 1865; *La Moille News Deal* June 28, 1865.

that many of the rails from which the canes were made ever were split by Abe Lincoln.”¹¹ Hanks proved determined to squeeze every penny out of the opportunity.

Besides the cabin, many other Lincoln artifacts were on display. Consumer demand for authenticity led to the appropriation of rudimentary objects for mass entertainment. Paying audiences crowded around the objects to gaze and conjured up images of western life. The collection included a seventy-year old razor passed down from his father Thomas and publicized as the first shaver Lincoln used, a deed with Lincoln’s signature, the catafalque used to support Lincoln’s tomb, a Lincoln rail, a life-size portrait of Lincoln, his autograph, and a table partially made from Lincoln rails. As a contributor for the *Voices of the Fair* sweepingly claimed, “Every one admires it as the most beautiful, ingenious and peculiar feature of the fair and perhaps in the world.” This description illustrated the hagiographic context Lincoln objects were curated in. Still these objects were not the central attraction; they served as catalysts for wondering and fascinating about the famed Illinoisan, each promising an authentic insight into the humble beginnings of an American saint.¹²

Lincoln objects aligned with the intention of fair exhibitors to tap into a sense of possibility and imagination. The fair’s wax statues in Bryan Hall and the aptly named, “Curiosity Department,” were attempts to use the visually extraordinary to arouse the fascination of patrons. The best example of this was the fair’s very own fortune teller, which, as a fair organizer crowed, offered visions of potential “wealth, honor, troops of friends.” Women seeking a husband were enchanted with a vision of their perfect partner and men seeking a wife were

¹¹ “The Lincoln Cabin,” *Voices of the Fair*, June 3, 1865; “The Original Lincoln Cabin,” *Voices of the Fair*, June 8, 1865; “The Lincoln Cabin,” *Voices of the Fair* June 3, 1865; Otto R. Kyle, *Abraham Lincoln in Decatur* (New York: Vantage Press, 1957), 37.

¹² *Voices of the Fair*, May 30, 1865; *Voices of the Fair*, June 6, 1865; *Voices of the Fair*, June 10, 1865; “The Lincoln Tables,” *Voices of the Fair*, June 14, 1865.

serenade with a description, as Shuman described in *Voices of the Fair*, “whose witching grace shall fill your life with sunshine and poetry, you can find her here—in imagination.”¹³ Lincoln, though the main attraction, was but one of many entertainments.

Highlighting Lincoln’s noble manliness at the fair was the depiction of Jefferson Davis, the ruined former Confederate President. The hastily put together wax status of Davis dressed in female clothing was another top fair attraction. Only a few weeks earlier news broke that Davis was caught in southern Georgia trying to evade Union troops in the guise of female clothing.¹⁴ The entry cost was twenty-five cents to view the waggish, wrinkled, and gray depiction of “Granny Jeff.” The initial advertisement for Davis’ exhibit stated, “clad in a toga, of feminine rather than Roman cut; despite the calamity which shattered her effeminate hopes, she still wears a menacing look, and by her studied posture seems prudish still; her dagger is cavalierly thrust in her belt, while on her head her hat is arrogantly perched. No one need fear to approach the old lady; she is harmless, being closely guarded in an iron cage generously donated.”¹⁵ Halfway through the fair’s run an editor described the interest to see Davis’ feminine rendering. The “rush and crush was immense,” as “every one burned with impatience” to behold the disgraced leader in female garb. With colloquial prose a patron described Davis in *Voice from the Fair*; “Her captur in female apparel confooses me in regard to his sex, & you see I speak of him as a her as frekent as otherwise, & I guess he feels so hisself.” The curiosity to see this abhorrent, humorous depiction of manhood was both entertaining and patriotic.

¹³ “Fortune Teller,” *Voices of the Fair*, June 3, 1865.

¹⁴ Secretary of the Navy Gideon Welles also recorded the captured of Jefferson Davis in his diary on May 13, 1865: “Intelligence was received this morning of the capture of Jefferson Davis in southern Georgia. I met [Secretary of War Edwin] Stanton this Sunday P.M. at Seward’s, who says Davis was taken disguised in women’s clothes. A tame and ignoble letting-down of the traitor.” Gideon Welles, *Diary of Gideon Welles: Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson*, with an introduction by John T. Morse, Jr., 3 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1911), II: 306.

¹⁵ *Voices of the Fair*, June 5, 1865.

Once news broke that Davis was captured in such a cowardly manner, demand for stories and images of the incident was instantly created. Gilbert S. Baldwin, a Chicago book jobber, made a livelihood purchasing media in bulk for a reduced rate by employing boys to hawk them. Baldwin shrewdly used the popularity of Barnum's "What is it Display" to reach the public. On May 20, 1865 he and his partner purchased a large ad for photographs and stereoscopic views of Jefferson Davis on the front page of the *Chicago Tribune*. The ad read: "The What Is It in Female Habiliments! Woman or Child? Queer, Isn't It! Or A Correct Picture of the Capture of Jeff."¹⁶ Producers of music sheets also benefited from Davis' misfortune. Songs like, "Poor old Jeff the Shero" and "Jeff's Double Quick" were published in Philadelphia and sold across the North.¹⁷

Portrayal of Davis' femininity at the Fair highlighted Lincoln's virile manhood. As the *Chicago Tribune* published after Davis' capture, "The contrast between his [Jefferson Davis] end that of Abraham Lincoln is now rounded and complete." Lincoln's ability as a laborer and western hero was woven into the fairs subtext. By 1865 the North was all too familiar with Lincoln's rail-splitting past, the lore of Lincoln now was increasingly wrapped up in the Union's righteous cause against the backdrop of the Confederacy iniquities. Davis, a southern gentleman with genteel taste, now stood in contrast to a revered westerner in Lincoln. Lincoln symbolized the bravery and divine favor bestowed upon the North, while Davis incarnated the cowardice and

¹⁶ Janet Farrell Brodie, *Contraception and Abortion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 285.

¹⁷ The Music Department at the Sanitary Fair featured sing-a-longs of popular tunes like "John Brown's Body" with crowds supplying the new chorus, "Hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree." *Voice of the Fair*, June 4, 1865. M.E., "Jeffs Double Quick: Published for the Benefit of the Western Sanitary Fairs of Chicago, Ill. and Milwaukee, Wis." (Philadelphia: Lee & Walker, 1865); "Poor old Jeff the shero" (Lee & Walker, Philadelphia, 1865); A newspaper advertisement for Bamford & Baldwin, located between 121 and 127 Monroe Street in Chicago, that offered both pictures and stereoscopic views of a disgraced Jefferson Davis in female garb. Pictures of Jefferson Davis from the fair ran in the *Chicago Tribune* under the heading, "What Is It? Davis!" The ad included the caption, "Jeff. Davis in Petticoats, a photograph of Jeff. Davis showing how he was captured in Petticoats All should see it. Sample sent by mail." *Chicago Tribune*, May 20, 1865; Scrapbook, vol. I, 185).

transgressions of the South.¹⁸ The popular perception of western men as lacking respectable qualities, especially in the northeast, was changing by 1865.

Once the end of the fair was in sight Shoaff and Hanks took their exhibit on the road, to the humming consumer centers of the urban northeast. On July 10, 1865 the men secured a permit from the Board of Aldermen of the City of Boston to display the log cabin in Boston Commons. From July 15, 1865 until September 9, 1865 the cabin was centered at the heart of Boston.¹⁹ Unlike Lincoln's initial rise to celebrity in 1861, his posthumous status in the summer of 1865 did not curiosity driving consumption. Thousands visited the cabin in Boston commons daily. An editor for the *Boston Pilot* captured the adoration of the people filtering through the rickety structure. "There is nothing peculiar about the logs," the editor noted, "but they are gazed upon with veneration because of the memories that are associated with them and the deep feeling that are evoked as we stand within their shadows. Men and women are made better by the pilgrimage to these relics of a great man; the young make new and high resolves as they feel the spirit departed greatness hovering over them." The editor further recognized that the "consecrated" setting compels the mourners to purchase Lincoln souvenirs. "The citizens buy articles made from the wood of the cabin, and spend much time lingering within this 'now sacred relic,'" observed the editor.²⁰

Shifting perceptions of Lincoln in the urban northeast between his nomination for president and his death was due, in some measure, to American intellectuals changing their

¹⁸ A wax figure of Jefferson Davis in women's clothing was on display at the fair. "The Capture of Jeff. Davis," *Chicago Tribune*, May 15, 1865. (Bridge Dissertation, 25-26); Jennifer R. Bridges, "Tourist Attractions, Souvenirs, and Civil War Memory in Chicago, 1861-1915" (PhD. Dissertation, Loyola University of Chicago, 2009), 25-26, 68.

¹⁹ Mark A. Plummer, *Lincoln's Rail-splitter: Governor Richard J. Oglesby* (Urbana :University of Illinois Press, 2001), 113.

²⁰ "President Lincoln's Log Cabin" from the *Boston Pilot*, republished in: *Daily Argus*, September 13, 1865.

opinion of Lincoln. Ralph Waldo Emerson and Nathaniel Hawthorn, initially critical northeastern literary celebrities, eventually warmed to Lincoln's manliness by 1865. When Hawthorne interviewed the president at the White House in 1862, he immediately noticed Lincoln's poorly kept appearance. "He had shabby slippers on his feet. His hair was black, still unmixed with gray, stiff, somewhat bushy, and had apparently been acquainted with neither brush nor comb that morning, after the disarrangement of the pillow," wrote Hawthorne in an article intended for but never published in *The Atlantic Monthly*. Hawthorne further noted, "and as to a night-cap, Uncle Abe probably knows nothing of such effeminacies." The President's uncouth appearance led Hawthorne to conclude that Lincoln has "no bookish cultivation" and "no refinement." According to Hawthorne, his description of Lincoln, which the editor removed from the article, was "the only part of the article really worth publishing." The editor refused to publish such a scathing analysis of the President. Steeped in a culture of refined taste, Hawthorne's instincts led him to immediately dismiss Lincoln.

Like Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson also initially wrote disparagingly about Lincoln. Educated at Harvard and thoroughly versed in genteel culture, Emerson believed in refined social mores as a measure of manhood. Emerson described Lincoln as a clown in 1863, claiming that his taste was unrefined and manners were poor, despite his admiration of hardy qualities of western manhood. Maintaining the Jeffersonian democratic ideal of the "natural aristocracy," Emerson—like most northern intellectuals—advocated for all men to adopt a refined taste. However, Lincoln's sloppy and ungainly appearance initially grated against deeply ingrained ideas of refinement. But by Lincoln's death Hawthorn and Emerson recast Lincoln's image as an elegant, though simple, western man. The prolific denouncement of Lincoln's awkwardness and ungainliness during his first presidential campaign faded from impressions of him.

Western manhood no longer stood in contrast to refinement. The humble image of Lincoln by his death was smoothed over previous derision of his uncouth western sensibilities. As the *Boston Herald* reported on the opening day of the Lincoln cabin exhibit in Boston Commons, the cabin logs appeared “roughly hewed” and assembled in “the most primitive pattern.” The conspicuous absence of doors and shutters were attributed to a “persistent, ubiquitous class” of relic collectors, according to the *Herald*. Regardless of its dilapidated condition, the exhibit was widely popular. It was not merely the cabin displaying on the Boston Commons that charmed spectators: Hanks was quick to flaunt a Lincoln rail, Lincoln’s personal razor, and Sarah Bush Lincoln’s—Abraham’s stepmother—alleged calico dress. The dated, coarse dress was the only Lincoln item not displayed at the Western Sanitary Fair. The garment illustrated the crude western lifestyle that Lincoln endured to urban northeast audiences. The *Herald*’s report summarized the experience: “[the exhibit will] excite a wonder if ever in the world’s history there went out from so humble a roof a man justly entitled to so much homage and respect, and who was elevated to such an exalted position as he who once made these walls his only abode.”²¹ As T.J. Jackson Lears contends, proponents of nostalgia seek “to transfigure the banalities of everyday life.” While spectators reveled in these relics, they did so not with the hope of returning to a former time. Rather, the rawness of the Lincoln items on display symbolized how an American hero overcame primitive beginnings. Thus, the exhibit was a commemoration of Lincoln’s ability to elevate his station of life from the frontier to the White House.²²

²¹ “Abraham Lincoln’s Log Cabin: The Structure in Boston,” *Boston Herald*, July 16, 1865.

²² T.J. Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 405; Jacqueline M. Moore reveals how cowboys and cattlemen became the object of dime novels, movies, Buffalo Bill’s Wild West Show, and general nostalgia for cowboys. Moore, *Cow Boys and Cattle Men: Class and Masculinities on the Texas Frontier, 1865–1900* (New York: New York University Press, 2010).

The memorialization of Lincoln drove patrons to pay a tribute to view their martyred president's rustic cabin. Whereas Lincoln's western manhood was ridiculed by the urban northeast in 1861, by 1865 his life—and western manliness—took on a sacred dimension. On a tour of America, Henry Moore and his wife Mary, the Marquis and Marchioness of Drogheda, paid a visit to the cabin in the Commons. Despite presenting the ramshackle hut to English royalty, the hosts radiated with pride in the logs. Charles Hale of the Republican leaning *Boston Daily Advertiser* reported Marquis and Marchioness impression. "The distinguished visitors, however, honored themselves no less than the humble cabin by the respect which they thus unostentatiously paid to our martyred President's memory," he wrote. The *Illustrated London News* also gave a two-sentence account of the Marquis and Marchioness of Drogheda visit to the cabin, which according to their report was built "mainly with his [Lincoln's] own hands." Interestingly, the *Illustrated London News* made sure to note, "It [the cabin] is now a show place, but bids fair to be carried off piecemeal by relic hunters." After inspecting the abode, both guests cordially shook hands with John Hanks. In a marked turn of social mores, the urban northeast took pride in the symbol of Lincoln's western manliness, even in the presence of European dignity.²³

By 1865 the martyred president's western manliness was ubiquitous. An intense public demand to pay tribute to the simple, western man who saved the nation and lost his life in the process mushroomed. Once the cabin attraction ran its course on the Commons, John Hanks arranged for the exhibit to be displayed at Barnum's museum from September 25 until the end of October, 1865. Unfortunately, disaster struck as Barnum's American Museum burned down on

²³ As a reward for service Charles created a distinguished place for Marquis of Drogheda in 1791. Charles Hale, "The English Nobility in the Lincoln Log Cabin," *Boston Daily Advertiser*, July 29, 1865; *The Illustrated London News*, vol. 47, no. 1329, p. 158. August 19, 1865.

July 13, 1865. Quick to get back in business, Barnum opened the New Museum roughly a mile south from his previous building, on Spring Street and Prince Street on September 6, 1865.

Wasting no time, Barnum ran ads boasting that the New Museum held 300,000 curiosities.²⁴

Hanks' style of showmanship was a familiar sight to New York city-goers. Beyond the initial lure of the cabin, the *New York Times* declared Hanks an attraction in his own right. "Its exhibition is rendered more interesting by the presence of Mr. Hanks himself, who knew Mr. Lincoln well, and who relates some interesting reminiscences of our martyred President," remarked the *New York Times*.²⁵

Newspaper advertisements for Barnum's new acquisition underscored that it was indeed the real Lincoln cabin, a task that required sufficient proof to convince a wary public. An ad for the New Museum in the *New York Daily Tribune* on September 25, 1865, confirmed that the exhibit held, "The Identical Lincoln Log-Cabin built by Abraham Lincoln in Macon County, Illinois." Gauging the response on the first day of its exhibition in the city, the *New York Times* noted, "Some doubts having been expressed as to the cabin on exhibition being the actual one built and occupied by Mr. LINCOLN, Mr. HANKS procured the following letter from Gov. OGLESBY, which sets all questions on the matter to rest."²⁶ The next day the *New York Times* put forth a convincing case for its authenticity, printing; "Original letters from Gov. R. J. Oglesby of Illinois, Gov. Andrew of Massachusetts, and other distinguished personages prove the identity of this historic relic, made sacred for having been touched by that once powerful but now motionless hand. The Common Council of Boston granted the use of the Common for its

²⁴ Barnum's New Museum burned down on March 2, 1868. Saxon, A. H. "P. T. Barnum and the American Museum." *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-) 13, no. 4 (1989): 130-139; J. Frank Kernan, *Reminiscences of the Old Fire Laddies and Volunteer Fire Departments of New York and Brooklyn: Together with a Complete History of the Paid Departments of Both Cities* (New York: M. Crane, 1885), 196.

²⁵ "The Lincoln Log Cabin," *New York Times*, September 17, 1865.

²⁶ "The Lincoln Log Cabin," *New York Times*, September 17, 1865.

exhibition. John Hanks of Illinois, who assisted Mr. Lincoln in its erection, will be in the cabin to answer all questions."²⁷ An interest in rooting out whether the cabin was comprised of bona fide Lincoln logs illustrated the extent the public was imbued in a consumer imaginary.

Lincoln's cabin, as a source of consumer interest and longing, fit firmly within a consumer culture sweeping New York City. As observers stepped into the rustic cabin walls, a wonderment and awe overcame them at the thought that an American hero could rise from such dire conditions. Paying the ticket cost to view the cabin, like an offertory, took on a spiritual meaning. Entering the actual premises that sheltered a martyred hero triggered imagining Lincoln—visualizing him reading by candlelight and the determination he mustered between those walls to improve himself so that he could eventually lead a nation. The physical space of the cabin nurtured the caprices of sensation and authenticity. Yet, by November of 1865, public demand had run its course and the exhibit was spent. The city's appetite for something new did not pause, even when it pertained to the recently martyred president.

Reports of the display of Lincoln's cabin circulated outside of the urban northeast. The article, "Abraham Lincoln's Log Cabin," ran in newspapers across the South and rural North describing the attraction in November of 1865. "A very interesting relic," the author began, following it with the inaccurate report that the cabin had been on exhibit in New York and was now on display at Boston Commons. The author continued by noting that John Hanks, who had joined Lincoln on his "somewhat celebrated flatboat excursion to New Orleans," curated the exhibit. Interestingly, the author adds that the cabin flopped in New York because Barnum's museum had gained the "reputation of containing so many humbugs" that the public believed it a

²⁷ *Otto R. Kyle, Abraham Lincoln in Decatur* (New York: Vantage Press, 1957), 10.

forgery.²⁸ Despite no evidence of Lincoln's log cabin failing in New York, the report sheds light on censure of exhibits that appeared inauthentic. After October 30, 1865, advertisements for Barnum's New Museum did not mention Lincoln's log cabin. In November the *Decatur State Chronicle* reported that the Lincoln's log cabin was headed for exhibit in Philadelphia and then Europe. Once removed from the New Museum, the cabin was never displayed again. Rumors circulated that the cabin was accidentally destroyed or lost, thus ending Lincoln's cabin exhibit with little fanfare.²⁹

Advertisements, entertainers, and religious speakers beckoned their followers towards the authentic representation in the signs and symbols pervading northern metropolises. As Miles Orvell identifies, "the new culture of authenticity derived its form more specifically as a response to the vast consumer culture." Lincoln's cabin affirms Orvell's argument that audiences were actively seeking genuine items or experiences to consumer, "as if there were some defect in everyday reality that had to be remedied by the more authentic reality of the object to be consumed." Orvell categorizes this fascination of the novel as part and parcel with the search for the "authentic." Lears expounds upon Orvell's analysis by averring that authenticity is in its very essence inseparable from "individualistic consumer culture." A consuming mindset proved a sly means of inculcating a diverse public to search for and relish in homogenous spectacles.³⁰

City goers' earnest pursuit of an authentic Lincoln attraction is best illustrated in his funeral procession in New York City. On April 24, 1865, Lincoln's funeral train arrived in New York City, where he was transported to City Hall for display. For viewing purposes, the martyred president's head was elevated above his feet as a throng passed by over the course of

²⁸ "Abraham Lincoln's Log Cabin" in: *Bradford Reporter*, November 9, 1865; *Charleston Daily News*, November 9, 1865; *The Edgefield Advertiser*, November 29, 1865.

²⁹ Otto R. Kyle, *Abraham Lincoln in Decatur* (New York: Vantage Press, 1957).

³⁰ Orvell, *The Real Thing*, 144-45; Lears, *Fables of Abundance*, 345-78.

twenty-four hours. As Illinois Congressman Shelby M. Cullom, who accompanied the President's train back to Springfield, correctly assessed; "In New York I suppose not less than half a million-people passed by to view the body." As Lincoln's body was transported from City Hall to the train depot, a mournful parade ensued. Musical bands, floats, and extensive marching brigades were out in force. Lloyd Lewis wrote, "Cleverness collaborated with invention to devise spectacular floats, impressive mottoes, lavish effects. Lodges, labor unions, commercial bodies, sought to outdo each other like so many Mardi Gras clubs or 'mummers' societies." Spectators, importantly, were not idle: they participated by donning Lincoln ornaments. Victor Searcher described the scene; "It was a day of oriental sunshine and balmy air and gentle breezes, one of the most perfect days of spring. Street vendors did a thriving business selling mourning badges and buttons bearing the likeness of the Emancipator." The city paused and came out in full to view the spectacle that was Lincoln's body.³¹

This spectacle was not unique to Lincoln, peering at the dead triggered a sensational reaction, morbid and intriguing at once. The half-million who viewed Lincoln's body in New York City were part of a larger pastime of viewing the recently deceased in the late 1860s. Originating in Paris, viewing bodies on display at small, crowded city morgue rooms tapped into the unnerving desire to view the gruesome and authentic. One American traveler described visiting a Paris morgue, noting, "There is always a chattering crowd delighting itself with the spectacle in front of the glass." This entertainment first emerged in New York City after tragic events where the deceased were taken to the morgue. For example, following a tenement house fire that killed seven women and children in early December 1867, their bodies were put on

³¹ Lloyd Lewis, *The Assassination of Lincoln: History and Myth* (Harcourt, Brace, 1929), 120; Shelby Cullom, *Fifty Years of Public Service: Personal Recollections* (Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1911), 107; Victor Searcher, *The Farewell to Lincoln* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), 138.

display at a city morgue. Philadelphia's Evening Telegraph described this scene; "the spectacle of the seven corpses, which formed such a sad attraction at the Morgue." As American cities swelled the popularity of peering at lifeless bodies on display at mortuaries grew. New York City brimmed with spectators eager to gape at objects or persons that would trigger sensation, whether the exhibit of Lincoln's log cabin or the deceased.

By Lincoln's death his association with western manliness was both ubiquitous and captivating to the northern audiences. So powerful was the legacy of Lincoln virile manhood that woven into evaluating Garfield and Hayes for presidency was gauging their manliness in comparison to Lincoln's western manliness. During the campaign of 1876, New York's *Albany Express* baited, "And who is Rutherford B. Hayes? Not unlike the noble Abraham Lincoln in many respects, for his life is as simple and as pure and as unassailable as was that of our martyred President."³² The *New York Times* was more obvious in its use of Lincoln to support Hayes; "History does repeat itself after all," its editors wrote in June of 1876, "In 1876, as in 1860, the Republican Party has its Lincoln to lead it on to victory."³³ Shelby M. Culloms, an Illinois politician campaigning for Hayes, bellowed to a Midwest crowd, "Go with me to 1860, when honest old Abe Lincoln carried our banner to victory. 'Old Abe' the grandest man and noblest statesman since Washington."³⁴ Other Republicans speakers used the same tactic.³⁵ Four years later Lincoln was again employed to reach voters. Within days after Garfield won the Republican ticket, *The Cleveland Leader* used the unrefined qualities of Old Abe to Garfield's

³² *The Albany Express* [Albany, New York] republished in *Indiana Progress* [Indiana, Pennsylvania], June 22, 1876.

³³ "The Cincinnati Nominees," *New York Times*, June 17, 1876; Charles Richard William and William Henry, *The Life of Rutherford B. Hayes: Nineteenth President of the United States*, 2 Vols. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914), I: 386.

³⁴ *The Decatur* [Illinois] *Republican*, August 31, 1876.

³⁵ *Kennebec* [Maine] *Journal*, August 10, 1876; "Address of General Kilpatrick," *New York Times*, June 13, 1876.

advantage. The paper declared, “Lincoln in early life was a flatboatman and rail-splitter. Garfield was a canal-boat driver and carpenter. Lincoln afterward studied law, so did Garfield. Lincoln’s first name was Abraham, Garfield’s middle name is Abraham. Lincoln was nominated at Chicago, so was Garfield. Lincoln was elected, and so will Garfield be.” The article was then reprinted in newspapers in Indiana, Pennsylvania, and Ohio.³⁶ *The Athens Messenger* unabashedly appealed the common laborer in their article, “self-made-man.” Published on June 17, 1880 the article claimed, “Every man the Republican Party has nominated for president within the last twenty years had a lowly beginning in the world... Lincoln was an uncouth farmer boy and rail-splitter... Garfield bossed a canal boat mule.” The article concluded, “The popular heart responds to Garfield’s nomination with a spontaneous enthusiasm which it has not shown for a Presidential candidate since Lincoln.”³⁷

The commodification of western manhood gained traction among wealthy northeasterners who sought to personify the gritty, virile masculinity. Finding romanticized qualities agreeable, western manliness underwent appropriation. Men of means and education bred in the urban northeast ventured into the Rocky Mountains for hunting excursions outfitted in western garb.³⁸ Muscular Christianity proved another motivation for displaying the air of virility that western manhood embodied in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Championed by Dwight L. Moody, this nuanced brand of Christian theology evangelized the Jesus who whipped moneychangers in the temple and came to maturity working as a carpenter. In other words, Moodyites preached about a virile Jesus instead of the overtly compassionate, gentle

³⁶ *Cleveland Leader* reprinted in: *Logansport [Indiana] Daily Journal*, June 13, 1880; *The Messenger* [Indiana, Pennsylvania], June 30, 1880; *The Athens [Ohio] Messenger*, July 8, 1880.

³⁷ *The Athens [Ohio] Messenger*, June 17, 1880.

³⁸ For how aristocratic men took hunting excursions in the Rocky Mountains and attempted to personify western men see: Monica Rico, *Nature's Noblemen: Transatlantic Masculinities and the Nineteenth-Century American West* (New Haven: Yale University press, 2013).

Jesus, which smacked of femininity. Evangelicals supporting this modern Muscular Christianity found a saint in Lincoln. Proponents of this theological interpretation crooned that Lincoln overcame the wilds of Illinois as young man and, once President, often “wrestled with God” in prayer late into the night during the tumultuous Civil War. Theodore Roosevelt, a product of Moody’s muscular Christianity, savored every element of this gritty western manliness. Roosevelt ached to share in the genuineness of Lincoln’s western masculinity, one that he read about and saw in popular depictions.

By 1865 the lingering influence of genteel taste did not oppose Lincoln’s western manhood as it did leading up to his presidency. A consumer social imaginary proved dynamic and relentless, overwhelming the tradition of refined taste by turning a repugnance for western men into an affinity the virile manliness. Western men no longer stood as the uneducated, boorish antithesis of cultivated northeastern gentlemen. After the Civil War men of wealth and civility sought to acquire the authentic virile courage and self-made character of the western men they read heroic tales about. While certain behavior popularly associated with western life in the northeast was still disparaged, like drinking, coarse behavior, and dearth of education, other types were sought after. In this turn of events Lincoln’s western manhood was not simply a spectacle and object of consumer desire; men now sought to personify aspects of western manliness. Reversing the refined scorn western manhood near mid-century, as evident in Lincoln, to appropriating aspects of western manhood by the end of the 1860s marks the transformation of western manhood in the urban northeast’s mind. Tracing the perceptions of Lincoln’s western manhood in the urban northeast over this period cogently illustrates how a consumer imaginary recast it in compelling objects, stories, and images to the urban northeast.

In conclusion, this dissertation contributes to three fields of nineteenth century American

history: Lincoln scholarship, manhood, and urban culture. These three strands of study coalesced around reactions to Lincoln. First, this dissertation explored the conceptual optic Lincoln was seen, read about, and evaluated from in the urban northeast. While not a comprehensive evaluation of Lincoln himself or a consumer imaginary in the urban northeast, I bring the consumer imaginary as it related to Lincoln's western manhood into focus. By drawing out the cultural terrain the antebellum urban northeast approached Lincoln from, with a strong penchant for the amusing, this study complicates and adds to Lincoln scholarship. Notwithstanding the national crisis of slavery swallowing the country during Lincoln's rise to national prominence, urban northeast populaces viewed Lincoln through a kaleidoscopic lens, one that was not strictly political. Applying the same filter to him as perplexing, beguiling city spectacles, urban northeastern audiences consumed Lincoln's western manhood. In the process I expose Lincoln's lack of refined taste and its social significance in the bustling northeast.

By situating Lincoln in the context of urban refinement, this dissertation provides a better understanding of the cultural obstacles Lincoln confronted and overcame to win the presidency in 1860. Further, it suggests that by not performing as a statesman-like gentleman in the urban northeast to pander for approval, Lincoln proved authentically western. Moreover, it is doubtful that Lincoln could have convincingly passed as a statesman in the manner of a William Seward even if he truly tried. Lincoln's behavior, appearance, and manner of speaking were generally consistent regardless of whether he was in Springfield, Illinois or New York City.

Uncharacteristic of Lincoln scholarship, this dissertation grants more agency to the purveyors and consumers of Lincoln's western manhood than it does to Lincoln himself. In doing so I offer a vantage point that both challenges and compliments the historiography of Lincoln.

Second, this dissertation contributes to the study of nineteenth century American manhood by illustrating that western manhood was a source of entertainment—and therefore consumption—in the urban northeast. Consuming sights, sounds, print, and bauble gave prolonged attention to the crude and vulgar, an affront to genteel protocol. Worse, admiring western men for their virility and courage, undermined the genteel virtues as the guide of true manliness in these cultural milieus. A longstanding tradition of European genteel thinking and practices could not topple the consumer desire for the intriguing and the unusual. Captivated by Lincoln’s western manhood, this region perceived Lincoln’s rise to the presidency as markedly different than Thomas Jefferson, Andrew Jackson, or William Henry Harrison. The presidency, the highest rank previously reserved for refined gentlemen, was granted to a western man that sharply contrasted this image. While the urban gentry naturally showed disapproval in Lincoln’s western manhood, an overwhelming desire to see, hear, and read about him engrossed all social classes in the urban northeast.

An appetite for novelty in late antebellum cities served to cast Lincoln’s manhood as an object of derision and fascination at once. This manner of assessing manhood intersects with scholarship of nineteenth century American cities. Actions and reactions borne out of a consumer imaginary were accepted as legitimate and absorbed into the patterns of urban life. Consuming increasingly permeated into the practices of those in and around the urban northeast. Interestingly, the ubiquity of consumercentrism in cities by 1860 can serve as a smoke-screen to historical studies of it—obscuring its percolation into mundane and wide-ranging practices and collective thinking. While scholars generally point to the end of the nineteenth century as the rise of a consumer society in the urban northeast, I contend it gripped northeastern city dwellers

by mid-century. Fueled by technology and leisure time, the consumer imaginary became more apparent with the advent of electricity and cinema towards the end of the century.

Lastly, this dissertation is crafted in the hope that by uncovering the longings grafted into the mind's eye exposes how consumerism was, and still is, entwined with individualism, technology, and modernity. Undergirding this dissertation are a set of questions about how the impulse to gratify—even physiological reaction—through purchasing, hearing, seeing, and touching deeply affected modern perception. I submit that western manhood at mid-century, which was closely associated with Lincoln in the northeast, was a manufactured with the intention of appealing to urban northeast audiences. Broadly, this dissertation's assertion that conceptions of manhood were forged by consumer capitalism suggests that studies of nineteenth century gender need to account for the influence of consumerism. More pointedly, this study prods at an overarching question of how a consumer imaginary—whether orchestrated from producers or inspired by procurers—filtered into cultural assumptions of urban northeast politics, gender, refinement, patriotism, and even religion around mid-nineteenth century. It is an effort to shine light on what was—and still is—lodged deep within American culture but concealed by its own ubiquity.

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