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ABSTRACT

Abraham Lincoln remains a popular figure both in the American memory and imagination. There is no shortage of presentations of Lincoln, some of which are fleeting, such as an ad campaign for a prescription sleep aid featuring Lincoln and a beaver, while others, like the Lincoln Memorial, are seemingly permanent. This dissertation will analyze five pathways of Lincoln presentations: private, public, revisionist, elided and imaginary. I will argue that the presentation of Lincoln given by Harry V. Jaffa and his student Thomas Krannawitter are meant for the few and not the many due to their reliance on Straussian political philosophy. Jaffa and Krannawitter view Lincoln as a hero with a noticeable lack of flaws and a penchant for hiding his intentions. However, presentations meant for public consumption like the five-dollar bill or Steven Spielberg's 2012 film *Lincoln* are allowed to be, and indeed by their very nature, are, more accessible and more frequently turned to by those interested in the sixteenth president. Yet, these presentations are usually narrowly focused and lack a feeling of completeness regarding Lincoln as a whole person. One avenue to take instead of making Lincoln whole is to call into question how he has been presented, which is especially true with the Great Emancipator image. Critiques of this kind are important to consider, but do they constructively lead us anywhere? Revisionism has also had precious little to say about Lincoln's relations with Native Americans. While the Civil War was a primary concern for Lincoln, we have no good reason to continue to minimize Lincoln's place in the history of Westward expansion and of the Native Americans who lived on the land upon which expansion took place. Paradoxically due to his assassination, the theme of the imaginary of what could have been with Lincoln has been much discussed but also limited in scope by the fact of the assassination. Given Lincoln's continued popularity, presentations should continue apace in the future. However, we should expect to see few

comprehensive presentations of Lincoln as what we get tends to reflect the limited presentation which is popular at the time.

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PREFACE

Anybody writing about Abraham Lincoln nearly 150 years after his death is confronted by the question: why Lincoln? In other, perhaps more honest words, isn't there enough written on Lincoln already? Historian James G. Randall posed this question in 1934 at a joint meeting of the American Historical Association and the Mississippi Valley Historical Association in a paper entitled: "Has the Lincoln Theme Been Exhausted?"¹ Thankfully for my purposes, Randall thought that the theme was far from wholly consumed. In reflecting on the many books and articles I leafed through in preparation to write this dissertation, not all of which made their way into its pages, I can say definitively that there is and there is not enough written on Lincoln. The "why Lincoln" aspect of my project will similarly need to be unpacked.

I did not come to the subject of Lincoln straight away but arrived at my topic through a circuitous path through pre-European contact Mesoamerica and pre-British contact Australia. However, the study of equivalent examples of the societal memory processing of origins was deemed not spirited enough in view for a man of my age. Manfred Henningsen's *Der Mythos Amerika* was in process at the time that I struck upon this expansive topic of origin memory processing in 2008. Henningsen, who had examined the Lincoln presidency and its significance in his book, suggested that I look into what happened to the memory of Lincoln after his death.² This conversation was the origin of the dissertation.

¹ This paper was published as J.G. Randall, "Has the Lincoln Theme Been Exhausted?" *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 42, No. 2 (Jan. 1936), pp. 270-294.

² Henningsen, *Der Mythos Amerika* [The Myth America] (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn Verlag, 2009), see pp. 38-47 and 52-57.

While trying to stick to the memory theme and the possible forgetting of Lincoln after his death³, I arrived at the section of the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawaii at Mānoa where the books on the sixteenth president were located. What I found was that the architecture of the building had literally cast a shadow on the books. Fortunately, a good deal of the books I slipped out from the dark shelves either covered the same ground on Lincoln or veered off into obscurity. There was still some Lincoln left to cover after all. To further my project I started a blog on the topic of Lincoln and Memory that ran from 2009-2010.⁴ If nothing else brushing up on Lincoln and Memory led me to understand the different constructions of the Lincoln memory that exist. Along the way I learned that after growing up in Louisiana and going through its school systems that my knowledge of Lincoln was as Lincoln said of his own education, “defective.”⁵

It later occurred to me after I presented my dissertation proposal that memory was not enough. I also would decide not to follow the path of the books that focused on how Lincoln was used as a representative figure. While this topic is far from exhausted, I felt that I need to lay ground work about the audiences for which portrayals of Lincoln was made manifest. After doing the background research and fleshing out the details of these different types of representations for different audiences, a study which sought to answer a question such as ‘was Lincoln the American Jesus?’ could be made into a more compelling analysis. In short, what this dissertation is primarily going to dive into is not

³ This is not meant to suggest that no one remembered who Lincoln was after his death and a process of recovering his memory was necessary. Rather, the implication is that the turn away from the freed slaves began with Andrew Johnson assuming the presidency and hardened into institutionalized racism as “Lincoln’s vision” of reestablishing the Republic failed to be translated after Reconstruction, see Henningsen, *Der Mythos Amerika*, pp. 53- 56.

⁴ The Lincoln and Memory blog and all of the old entries, from “Lincoln, Sun Yat-sen and the Gettysburg Address (and Theodore Parker)” to “Du Bois’ Lincoln,” still exist at <http://lincolnmemory.blogspot.com/>.

⁵ Lincoln, “Brief Autobiography,” [15?] June 1858, *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Vol. II, ed. Basler, Roy P., et al., 8 vols. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1953), p. 459. Hereafter cited as CW.

the Lincoln symbolism but the ways in which Lincoln has been packaged and how the packaging varies on the audience which is intended to receive the presentation. I also thought that perhaps the symbols and the discussion of memory had been obscuring a critical question: did the audience set the conditions of Lincoln symbolism? To put it another way, didn't I need to know something about the groups who were interested in hearing about Lincoln before I got to symbolic questions?

My research convinced me that what I had been running into in written words and visual media were presentations of Lincoln, not all of which had to do with what is remembered about Lincoln at all. At the same time it is the presentations that help us remember Lincoln whether the presentation is in accordance with history or not. I found that the presentations of Lincoln were not vehicles of memory. If Lincoln presentations were vehicles there would be too many of them on the road to get anywhere and all the parking spots would be filled if one could get to a destination. The presentations were and still are passive. People seek out the presentations and not the other way around. This fact makes the presenter something of a carnival barker. With so many attractions to choose from, one needs to stand out when presenting Lincoln.

What was novel about the presentations I picked in this dissertation was not necessarily their novelty. If originality was to be found in the presentation, then it was all the better. But, what I was after were presentations that hit upon the private Lincoln, the public Lincoln, the revisionist Lincoln and the elided Lincoln. After pondering the question during my comprehensive exams, I determined that my own Lincoln was to fall under the heading "imaginary." Imagining what might have been had Lincoln lived is not a new idea but I do believe that I have a fresh presentation.

In the private Lincoln, the Straussian presentation of Lincoln by Harry V. Jaffa and his student, Thomas L. Krannawitter, will be examined. The Jaffian Lincoln represents a very interesting contradiction. A common presentation (even if it is not so

common these days) of Lincoln is as the common man or the self-made man. Why is it that a political philosophy like that of Jaffa and Krannawitter, which is so enamored with esotericism, chose for a hero a public figure and not a philosopher? As we will see, they will say Lincoln is philosophic and only posturing as a commoner who was elevated to the presidential chair, thus eliminating the contradiction. This outcome has serious implications for a formerly prominent presentation of Lincoln if Jaffa and Krannawitter are correct.

In the public Lincoln, the masses are expected to be in attendance. In looking at the penny or the Lincoln Memorial or the film *Lincoln* for example, what is the public going to see and how can what they see be constructed in an obvious way so the meaning is clear? Depending on how much general knowledge about Lincoln one assumes the viewer has, how does the presentation change? Can a presentation which is intended for a crowd change or shape the public's understanding of Lincoln? These are just some of the questions that I needed to ponder in the chapter. All such public presentations are limited by their genres as surface area, artist's intention or feature film running time are all limited. Additionally, the influence of immigrants on public presentations is prevalent and represents an area of future study.

The revisionist Lincoln is not meant to suggest that revisions regarding what we have come to accept about the sixteenth president should be seen negatively. Revision is necessary because no one understood Lincoln perfectly the first time they came across him.⁶ Revision is also a product of the times. Someone who was born at the right moment could have seen dominant presentations of Lincoln change during their lifetime from Lincoln as "the first American" to Lincoln as "the Great Emancipator." Lincoln as

⁶ James Randall said on revision and Lincoln studies in 1934, "At many points in the larger Lincoln story the historian must turn revisionist. No longer can he explain the antislavery crusade in terms of a New England focus or a Garrisonian leadership," in "Has the Lincoln Theme Been Exhausted?", p. 288.

the Great Emancipator, as we know, has been called into question and could finally be in the process of being rewritten. In following the trail of revision, it is important to ask both where we are travelling and where we are not going.

The elided Lincoln is no fault of the revisions of Lincoln that have already been made. However, where revision does not go makes it possible to see what presentations will not be shown. For instance, where are the Native Americans in presentations of Lincoln? If they appear, why do they appear and for how long? Lincoln played a role in the killing and removal of Native Americans. If David A. Nichols wrote a book on *Lincoln and the Indians* in the late 1970s, why aren't there more monographs on the topic?⁷ Lincoln's "new birth of freedom" did not seem to apply to Native Americans. The facts of Lincoln's policy toward the Native Americans do not neatly fit into popular presentations of the sixteenth president but must be included in the revisionist presentations of Lincoln's views on race in the future if we wish to understand Lincoln better.

The imaginary Lincoln comes at the end and not the beginning of the study because to imagine what could have ended up differently cannot occur before surveying events that did occur. In trying to devise a plausible "what if" scenario, it is possible to happen upon presentations that are not often made. In presenting a Lincoln who was not assassinated by John Wilkes Booth, I ask how involved would Lincoln have been in Western expansion during his second term in office. If Lincoln had lived out his days and died as a former president, as I try to show in the chapter, we might have gotten a presentation of Lincoln as a "founding father of the West" rather than as the Great Emancipator.

What unites these presentations is what can be called the accessibility of Lincoln. Lincoln made deliberate and frequent efforts to allow himself to be seen as accessible by

⁷ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians: Civil War Policy and Politics* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000) was originally published in 1978 by the University of Missouri.

the American public. This image of accessibility led to a familiarity with Lincoln that resulted in a flood of presentations by academics, politicians and of course, the common citizen who felt a connection to Lincoln. These presentations, born out of a sense of familiarity, can and have been criticized as we will see with Jaffa and Krannawitter's Lincoln. Nevertheless, it is the primarily the sense that Lincoln was accessible to the common man that they argue against. On the flip side, in popular presentations this accessibility is assumed to be real and is used in presenting Lincoln to the public.

Taken as a whole, this dissertation does not focus on what Lincoln has come to represent or what type of representative Lincoln was. That is to say, I am not particularly interested in looking at Lincoln's symbolic use as much as I am interested in discussing the types of audiences Lincoln has been introduced to. Answering questions about the symbolism of Lincoln would have led to a differently type of study entirely. The dissertation also does not try to bring out "the real Lincoln." The late historian Richard N. Current pointed out the flaws of such an enterprise in 1958 when he said, "Abraham Lincoln, despite the wealth of words written by him and about him, remains in many ways a mysterious man. There is no formula which will reveal, once and for all, the whole truth about *The Lincoln Nobody Knows*."⁸ It is for that reason that the presentations in this work don't pretend to be comprehensive or all-revealing but are representative of a future presentation of Lincoln that is not wholly defined yet. The future presentation I envision will be nuanced and show a Lincoln who trod the Earth and lived in his time while still being able to transcend his limitations and speak to us in ours.

⁸ Current, *The Lincoln Nobody Knows* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1963), p. vi.

CHAPTER 1

LINCOLN FOR THE FEW: STRAUSSIAN PRESENTATIONS

1.1 What is a Straussian?

If the truth revealed by philosophy is meant to be known only by philosophers and not easily acquired by them, both of which are contentions of Straussian political thought, what role could Abraham Lincoln, who was not a philosopher, possibly have in this process? In this chapter, I will talk about Straussian, or more precisely Jaffian, thought on the sixteenth president. What Harry V. Jaffa and his student, Thomas L. Krannawitter, have to say about Lincoln is necessarily not intended for a large audience by their reliance on Strauss' political thought. Both Jaffa and Krannawitter present Lincoln as a paramount figure of American history because he represents a link to American Founding or a fulfillment of the natural rights philosophy they believe the United States was founded upon. Through their own reliance on esotericism and interest in refuting historicism, positivism and revisionism⁹, their representation of Lincoln is a private one despite easily acquired and moderately priced books which carry blurbs written by well-known Lincoln scholars on their back covers. Before addressing what Jaffa and Krannawitter say about Lincoln, it is necessary to unpack what I mean by Straussian political thought as my understanding of it informs my analysis of Jaffa and Krannawitter's work on Lincoln.

Leo Strauss (1899-1973) was a German-Jewish émigré and political philosopher who taught primarily at the New School in New York and at the University of Chicago. One of his first PhD students at the New School was Harry Jaffa.¹⁰ Before Jaffa wrote

⁹ As a general rule, almost any "ism" one can think of is a target for Straussians. I must admit that I am no fan of "isms" either and find Straussian commentary on them worthwhile. However, the Straussian attack on a particularly ideology usually goes too far and distracts from the main narrative of their work.

¹⁰ Catherine H. Zuckert and Michael Zuckert, *The Truth About Leo Strauss: Political Philosophy and American Democracy* (Chicago: University Press of Chicago, 2006), p. 218.

about Lincoln for the first time in his *Crisis of the House Divided: An Interpretation of the Issues in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates* (1959), he learned from Strauss about esotericism. The pervasiveness of esotericism in Strauss' thought has been pointed out by political scientist Sean Noah Walsh in a recent work as the "epistemology, ontology and methodology" of Strauss. Walsh continues,

Through esotericism, Strauss tells us how he knows what he claims to know, the nature of human being, and his approach to those subjects. It is the means by which Strauss can generate claims of knowledge about the history of political philosophy. It is, he tells us, a fact, an existent feature that distinguishes the philosopher from the vulgar. Additionally, it is a technique of reading and writing, an approach to understanding political life.¹¹

John A. Wettergreen would certainly add, as he says Strauss told him personally, that esotericism "is the means of defending morality."¹² I don't intend to say, and neither does Walsh, that Strauss *wrote* esoterically, at least not on purpose. Instead, I would agree with the statement that Strauss and Straussians see esotericism as "first and foremost a method for historically understanding writers in the past who incontestably lived in nonliberal societies."¹³ Lincoln, they believe, falls under this heading as well as we will see below.

Strauss himself lays out his theories on esotericism most thoroughly in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (1952), a collection of essays that he had originally

¹¹ Sean Noah Walsh, *Perversion and the Art of Persecution: Esotericism and Fear in the Political Philosophy of Leo Strauss* (Lanham, Md.: Lexington, 2012), p. 10.

¹² John A. Wettergreen, "The Politics of Moderation: Strauss's Esotericism", Claremont Review of Books, Vol. IV, No. 2, <http://www.claremont.org/publications/pageid.2568/default.asp>. One is left wondering however how this statement about morality squares with what Strauss said in "The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*": "While philosophy presupposes social life (division of labor), the philosopher has no attachment to society: his soul is elsewhere. Accordingly, the philosopher's rules of social conduct do not go beyond the minimum moral requirements of living together," in *Persecution and the Art of Writing* (New York: Free Press, 1952), p. 139. Hereafter cited as PAW.

¹³ Zuckert and Zuckert, *The Truth About Leo Strauss*, p. 121.

published in the 1940s. For Strauss, Socrates was the first political philosopher¹⁴, but one as we know who did not write. For that inconvenient reason, Socrates' student Plato, who did write, becomes Strauss' subject. Strauss said that Plato avoided the danger of his society with the art of his writing.¹⁵ Nevertheless, Strauss stressed, "the success of Plato must not blind us to the existence of a danger which, however much its forms may vary, is coeval with philosophy. The understanding of this danger and of the various forms which it has taken, and which it may take, is the foremost task, and indeed the sole task, of the sociology of philosophy."¹⁶ On Strauss' view, the historical record and indeed even the time he lived in (in certain countries) shows that philosophy is encircled by danger, or in other words, the threat of "persecution." It is this threat of persecution, Strauss says, which leads to skilled men "of independent thought" to cover their heterodox viewpoint. Thus, the skilled man may speak freely and even write freely, "provided he is capable of writing between the lines." Such writing, metaphorically speaking, is a "peculiar technique" espoused by "all writers who hold heterodox views."¹⁷ Though physically writing between the lines is a metaphor, it is very real for those "young men who love to think" who will be able to pick out lines which have been delivered in the crucial places that constitute, "the forbidden fruit", which is to say the truth. Esoteric

¹⁴ Strauss, *The City and Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), p. 19. Socrates earns the honor over Hippodamus for Strauss because it was Socrates who began with such questions as "what is political?" or "what is the polis?"

¹⁵ Sean Noah Walsh takes issue with this contention and states that Plato's attacks on men of his time are marked by clarity. Further, Walsh writes that Plato "confronts fear, harnesses it and incorporates it into his work as the inauguration of the political" while Strauss sees philosophers running to "the presumed safety of a literary ghetto," *Perversion and the Art of Persecution*, p. 9.

¹⁶ Strauss, PAW, p. 21. Strauss says about the "sociology of philosophy" that it doesn't exist at the time he is writing, but that it can be considered "a legitimate subdivision of sociology of knowledge." The sociology of knowledge in turn can be considered "the subject matter" of the essays in PAW, p. 7. According to Strauss, the presentists who began the sociology of knowledge had no appreciation of the past and could not "consider the possibility that all philosophers form a class by themselves," PAW, pp. 7-8.

¹⁷ Strauss, PAW, p. 24.

writing is not only written to young men who can become future philosophers, “trustworthy and intelligent readers” of any age are to be the sole recipients of the true views of the author.¹⁸

As esoteric writing has its genesis in the need to avoid persecution, Strauss says, “[i]f it is true that there is a necessary correlation between persecution and writing between the lines, then there is a necessary negative criterion: that the book in question must have been composed in an era of persecution, that is, at a time when some political or other orthodoxy was enforced by law or custom.”¹⁹ The skilled author is unlikely to put heterodox statements between the lines of the “preface or other very conspicuous place.”²⁰ The chief reason for this strategy is that the society which threatens persecution will have censors. Therefore the author must avoid too easily giving the censor “proof” of the heterodoxy in the work. Here, the argument of Strauss runs into a serious issue for whether or not the censor is intelligent, the censor need not follow the rules of the game.

The rules to dissecting an esoterically written text, mapped out by Strauss, are as follows. The text will tell the reader, not literally of course, when to read between the lines. The hint or wink of the author to alert the reader to take a closer look is error. Strauss says, for example, “if the master of the art of writing commits such blunders as would shame an intelligent high school boy, it is reasonable to assume that they are intentional, especially if the author discusses, however incidentally, the possibility of intentional blunders in writing.”²¹ Strauss wrote about Xenophon, who at first glance, was sloppy in hiding his critique of contemporary Sparta in his *Constitution of the*

¹⁸ Strauss, PAW, pp. 24-25.

¹⁹ Strauss, PAW, p. 32.

²⁰ Strauss, PAW, p. 32.

²¹ Strauss, PAW, p. 30.

Lacedemonians, “considering his literary gifts, any hypothesis is preferable to the assumption that he used a literary device awkwardly.” Strauss says far from committing an error, “that if in a given case he apparently happens to do a bad job as a writer, or as a thinker, he actually does it deliberately and for very good reasons.” Strauss says what appears to be a grave error by Xenophon is nothing other than the clever deceit of misdirecting the reader away from “much more important views of his.”²² This is the same view Strauss takes of any canonical writer, or those he considers to be canonical. Errors by great men are not possible on this view. Their seeming errors are nothing more than their greatness on display and a signpost for the initiated reader. Strauss and his followers could not be more wrong about this rule and this idea will form the most important part of my critique of the rulebook as regards the presentation of Lincoln. This is a point I will come back to in short order as I believe this deification of the ancients is at work in Jaffa and Krannawitter’s writing, although in their case ‘ancient’ need only be 19th century America. In any event, for Strauss, the errors show one where to look for hints at the real view of the author but the work as a whole must still be considered.²³

In addition, the characters of a work, in a dialogue for example, should not be thought to represent the view of the author, either singularly or taken as a whole. Numerology is also to be considered by the reader as the author has arranged everything where it is in a work on purpose, Strauss maintains as a corollary to the earlier rule of author infallibility in grammar and literary devices. What this means in a practical sense is the counting of words, sentences, paragraphs, etc. to find something meaning behind the order or where a word, phrase or passage occurs in the work. To conclude with the rules for reading, Strauss says “there is probably no better way of hiding the truth than to

²² Strauss, “The Spirit of Sparta or the Taste of Xenophon,” *Social Research*, Vol. 6, No. 4 (Nov. 1939), p. 503.

²³ Strauss, PAW, p. 30.

contradict it.”²⁴ Obviously, this point will need discussing when it comes to Lincoln to examine if the sixteenth president felt the same way about contradictions. Will any of this masking done by the author and uncovered by the wise be of any use when guarding against the censors of a society bent on persecuting philosophers?

One cannot help but think of Vladimir Lenin’s “Philosophers’ Ships” by way of example in light of what Strauss says about censorship. While Strauss contends that the burden of proof lies with the censor and Lenin said the same to the GPU (the Soviet security and intelligence service), it was simply not the case as Lesley Chamberlain points out.

In fact although the GPU was several times warned by Lenin that it would have to make its cases against the intelligentsia convincing, it never managed to do so. Bright members of Narkompros were called in to help fabricate arguments but failed to make things better. Characterizations in the files which were supposed to be incriminating, and which we can now read for the first time since the event, focused on irrelevant information like ‘knows a foreign language’, ‘only explains himself and teaches in Ukrainian’ and ‘is ironic and fools about in his lectures.’²⁵

Ultimately the proof, such as it was, did not matter. Lenin still exiled more than 150 intellectuals and threatened them with death if they returned home. What good are Strauss’ rules if the censor simply refuses to play the game within the confines of them? In Lincoln’s case, regardless of his intent, John Wilkes Booth chose to interpret Lincoln’s words in his final public address on April 11, 1865, to mean that African American citizenship was on the horizon. Booth shot Lincoln before truly finding out what the president meant. If Lincoln had any streak of esotericism in him, we have to conclude that he was a horrible practitioner of the strategy.

²⁴ Strauss, PAW, p. 73. For more on Strauss’ rules for reading see, PAW, “The Literary Character of the Guide of the Perplexed,” pp. 38-94, especially 43-73 and “The Law of Reason in the *Kuzari*,” especially pp. 139-141; “On a New Interpretation of Plato’s Political Philosophy,” *Social Research*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (Sept. 1946), pp. 351-352; “How to Begin the Study of the Guide of the Perplexed,” pp. xi-lvi in Moses Maimonides, *The Guide of the Perplexed*, tr. Shlomo Pines, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963).

²⁵ Leslie Chamberlain, *Lenin’s Private War: The Voyage of the Philosophy Steamer and the Exile of the Intelligentsia* (New York: Atlantic, 2006), p. 95.

But, this chapter is not about Strauss or Straussians. The foregoing was to merely provide the ground upon which I will talk about a Jaffian presentation of Lincoln and discuss the Straussian intellectual standpoint which is shared to an extent by Jaffa and Krannawitter.²⁶ To get directly to the point of the matter, as the reader's patience undoubtedly wears thin, it is now time to ask who are Harry Jaffa and Thomas Krannawitter and why did they write about Lincoln?

1.2 Jaffa, Krannawitter and Strauss' Lincoln

Jaffa, born in 1918 on Long Island, New York, by his own admission had no serious contact with American history or Lincoln until he was a graduate student at the New School in 1946. It was at that time that he picked up a copy of the Lincoln-Douglas debates for five dollars from a used bookstore. Jaffa said about his reading of the debates, "I saw that there was something classical. I was studying with Strauss and I didn't see this right away but I did after awhile that the issue between Lincoln and Douglas was *not similar to but identical* to the difference between Socrates and Thrasymachus in the first book of the *Republic*. This question of whether or not the people make the moral law or the moral law makes the people."²⁷ Already we see that not only is there a classical nexus for Lincoln, but also that he is participating in an "identical" discussion to a Platonic dialogue. Jaffa's book itself is also written in this "form of the Socratic dialogue." Despite the label on the back cover which says *Crisis of the House Divided* is a work of "American history," Jaffa says it was not his intention to

²⁶ How much Jaffa still represents Straussian political thought, especially after the publication of *A New Birth of Freedom* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), is a bone of contention among the various stripes of Straussians. This is a subject best left to the Straussians themselves, but a good foray into this realm can be found in Jaffa's *Crisis of the Strauss Divided: Essays on Leo Strauss and Straussianism, East and West* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012).

²⁷ Jaffa quoted in transcript of his appearance on *Uncommon Knowledge with Peter Robinson*, Aug. 24, 2009, Hoover Institution, <http://media.hoover.org/sites/default/files/documents/uk-jaffa-transcript.pdf>, my emphasis. In *A New Birth of Freedom*, Jaffa says nearly the same thing as he does in the interview about the similarities in the difference in the issue between Lincoln and Douglas and Socrates and Thrasymachus, see p. xi.

write American history, “except incidentally.”²⁸ Jaffa is instead out to settle a disputed question between Lincoln and Douglas. While American history may matter in the answering of the question, Jaffa is more interested in which debater espoused a view that corresponded to the natural rights philosophy of the Founding, by which he means that “all men are created equal.”²⁹

The theme of universalism has to do with immutable truth that is true in all ages. That truth in the case of the American Founding and of Lincoln is that the United States’ moral law has its root in its claim to independence based on rights which are true for people everywhere (“all men are created equal”). The relativist position, of the common people and their changeable opinion, is represented by Douglas in the debates. Jaffa wrote two books on Lincoln. The first book, *Crisis of the House Divided*, dealt with the 1858 debates. The latter book, *A New Birth of Freedom: Abraham Lincoln and the Coming of the Civil War*, appeared 41 years later in 2000 and has more in common with Krannawitter’s *Vindicating Lincoln* than with *Crisis of the House Divided*. As such I should introduce Krannawitter before turning to the debates and Jaffa’s initial presentation of Lincoln.

Like Jaffa with Strauss, Thomas Krannawitter was Jaffa’s student at the Claremont Graduate University and is now a fellow in political philosophy at Colorado Christian University’s Centennial Institute.³⁰ The teacher-pupil bond from the student’s end seems to be no less strong between them as with Jaffa and Strauss. Krannawitter says in the acknowledgments to his book, “. . . I should have concluded almost every

²⁸ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. xi.

²⁹ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. iii.

³⁰ Jaffa is Professor Emeritus at Claremont McKenna College and Claremont Graduate University. The Centennial Institute seeks to “renew the spirit of 1776” by “proclaiming Truth” in their publications and events, see Centennial Institute, “About Us,” <http://www.ccu.edu/centennial/aboutus/>.

paragraph with a footnote acknowledging Jaffa's teaching, but I knew the reader would tire of it, so let me state here that Jaffa's influence is present throughout the book." Despite Krannawitter's claim that "Professor Jaffa is perhaps the closest thing to a living Socrates," Jaffa has written quite a bit more than Socrates.³¹ Nevertheless, Krannawitter's book is like early Plato in the sense that he is writing as Jaffa's mouthpiece. Before getting to the students, I must return to the Strauss for one last detour, this time on his very brief references to Lincoln.

Any presentation of Abraham Lincoln by a Straussian, or any attempt to construct a Straussian presentation of Lincoln whether one is a Straussian or not, cannot be done with reference to the work of Leo Strauss himself. The simple reason for this is of course that Strauss did not appear to write about Lincoln in his work. As far as I have been able to ascertain, the only place a reference to Lincoln in Strauss' published work can be found is in *Natural Right and History* (which is the published form of his Walgreen Foundation Lectures at the University of Chicago).

In the second chapter of *Natural Right and History*, "Natural Right and the Distinction Between Facts and Values," Strauss is engaged in a discussion of Max Weber, primarily of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Strauss says, citing Weber, that the ethics of both intention and responsibility are not wholly different but "supplement each other." In addition, these two ethics are in conflict fundamentally in such a way that "human reason" cannot figure out a way to resolve the conflict, according to Strauss on what Weber "really meant" in referring to the conflict as "insoluble."³² If one is not careful, the reference here to Lincoln is so thin that it is possible to miss it completely. Strauss sends readers in a footnote to this passage to Thomas Aquinas, Edmund Burke, Winston

³¹ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln: Defending the Politics of our Greatest President* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield: 2008), "Acknowledgments".

³² *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), p. 70.

Churchill, several of Weber's works, and Lord Charnwood's Lincoln biography, "For a more adequate discussion of the problem of 'responsibility' and 'intention.'" ³³

Charnwood, who was also a biographer of Theodore Roosevelt, published his Lincoln biography in 1916. Strauss refers his readers to two passages of Charnwood's biography in particular to clarify his meaning on the aforementioned "problem of responsibility and intention." It is a bit peculiar to reference these passages in Charnwood's book as Lincoln does not speak in either of them. ³⁴ However, one thing is telling about Strauss' references to the biography as they both come from the section on the "rise" of Lincoln. The most important years of Lincoln's life for Straussians comes before the presidency, with nothing being so crucial representatively as the debates with Stephen A. Douglas in 1858. ³⁵

The first passage in Charnwood's *Lincoln* which Strauss refers to deals with Lincoln's oratorical style and coincidentally, or perhaps not, ends right before a section on Lincoln and Douglas. The focus for Charnwood is on Lincoln's honesty in political speech. It is admitted that Lincoln may have erred in the selection of a particular argument, but not that he had any intention to deceive his listeners. Lincoln's ability to know what was in the minds of the people is praised by way of anecdote. This factor of familiarity with the minds of the people combined with an "honest" approach may explain some of the success of Lincoln's political speeches. ³⁶ With that, Charnwood turns to Lincoln and Douglas and the first reference to Charnwood's *Lincoln* by Strauss, ends.

³³ Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p. 70, fn 29.

³⁴ Lord Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, 2nd ed. (Holt: New York, 1917), pp. 136-137, 164-165.

³⁵ They are not alone in arguing against skeptics such as James G. Randall, David Potter and David Zarefsky that the debates carried great importance, see Allen C. Guelzo, *Lincoln and Douglas: The Debates that Defined America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2008).

³⁶ Lord Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 136-137.

The second passage in Charnwood's biography narrates the story of Lincoln promising and delivering \$100 to Mark Delahay, a man who failed to become a delegate from Kansas for the Republican convention in Chicago in 1860. Delahay remained friendly with Lincoln and after other political failures was eventually placed in a federal judgeship in Kansas by Lincoln via recess appointment. Delahay resigned from the bench before he could be impeached. Charnwood writes sympathetically of Lincoln, stopping short of saying that he abused the patronage. What this passage or the one before it has to do with an "insoluble" tension between responsibility and intention is hard to determine. We know for certain that Lincoln abused the patronage and did not seem to have any second thought about doing so in his political career.³⁷

At best, these two passages only help us to clarify what Strauss thought about Weber, not Lincoln. In this case, we have the responsibility versus intention conflict, and we can see where Lincoln fell. According to Weber, responsibility lends itself "to the foreseeable consequences of his actions" and intention refers to the "intrinsic rightness of his actions." With Lincoln, the primary concern in both above passages from Charnwood appears to be intention and not responsibility, which is not to say that sums up his political career as a whole or that Lincoln threw out considerations of responsibility when considering action. "When the conduct of men is designed to be influenced," Lincoln thought gentle persuasion "should ever be adopted," as he said in his Temperance Address.³⁸ Delahay was given to drink to excess and was not worthy of political office, but he was an early sponsor of the nascent Republican Party and a friend

³⁷ Lord Charnwood, *Abraham Lincoln*, pp. 164-165. I discuss the matter of the patronage further in Chapter 4. It is important to note that even if had Lincoln wanted reform of the "spoils system," he would have been facing an uphill battle. True Civil Service reform did not occur until 1883 after James Garfield became the second U.S. President to be assassinated.

³⁸ Abraham Lincoln, "Temperance Address," 22 Feb. 1842, CW, Vol. I, p. 273.

to Lincoln (and apparently a distant relation by marriage).³⁹ While Delahay was not a good candidate for office, he was loyal and was rewarded, a theme which is consistent with Lincoln's career. Lincoln's decision to reward loyal but mediocre men with public office does not show a concern for what justice in social policy might require, which is what Strauss' broader discussion was about when we find the reference to Charnwood's *Lincoln*.⁴⁰ It should be sufficient at this point to say that Strauss' documented interest in Lincoln was little more than tangential. Now we must turn to the primary source of a Straussian presentation of Lincoln, Strauss' student Harry V. Jaffa.

Jaffa includes an updated introduction to his *Crisis of the House Divided* for its 50th anniversary edition in 2009. In this edition of the introduction, which was released after Strauss died, Jaffa tells us what Strauss thought about Lincoln beyond what I have spelled out above.

According to Strauss, the classics were abandoned but were never refuted. Among so called Straussians there is a division as to whether he actually believed that modern philosophy had not refuted the classics, and whether Strauss' assertion was real or merely exoteric. But there can be no doubt that Strauss regarded Lincoln's statesmanship, as revealed in *Crisis of the House Divided*, although prudential in the last degree, as perfectly Aristotelian.⁴¹

But, where is the evidence to back such a claim? Jaffa says that Strauss discovered that the "Declaration of Independence was actually the most prudent form that classical

³⁹ See Lincoln's "Letter to Henry E. Dummer," 18 Nov. 1845, CW, Vol. I, p. 350, fn. 3. "Mark W. Delahay, attorney and newspaper editor whose association with Lincoln was of long standing and who married a distant relative of Lincoln's mother."

⁴⁰ Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, pp. 67-68. Weber, according to Strauss, says that what is just in social policy cannot be determined by ethics and that two legitimate views are possible. One view favors a man "who can achieve or contribute much", thus men of talent are to be rewarded. On the second view, the talented man must be held in check from "exploiting his superior opportunities." Delahay does not fit the criteria of talent, nor, for example, does a man who has never met a Native American but who was still appointed to the "Indian System" as an agent on the word of a friend of Lincoln.

⁴¹ Harry V. Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, 50th Anniversary ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. v.

political philosophy could take in the postclassical world.”⁴² This notion about the Declaration was not revealed like a bolt from the blue to Strauss. It took time and Jaffa’s influence. Jaffa says that Strauss changed the beginning to *Natural Right and History* from the spoken form at the lectures to what we find in the written book. Without stating what the wholly different opening statement to the lectures was, Jaffa quotes Strauss quoting the Declaration, “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”⁴³ Jaffa awkwardly stops the quote there before the multiple “truths” are given by Jefferson that we are so accustomed to hearing next. Strauss’ actual quote was “We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness.”⁴⁴

Strauss then follows his acknowledged quote from the Declaration with the words “The nation dedicated to this proposition has now become, no doubt partly as a consequence of this dedication, the most powerful and prosperous of the nations of the earth.”⁴⁵ Jaffa notes that the language “dedicated to this proposition” comes directly from Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address.⁴⁶ Strauss’ reference (not a quote as he uses no quote marks) to Lincoln is not wholly accurate, albeit unmistakable. For while Strauss quotes the Declaration on the “unalienable Rights” of “all men”, at Gettysburg Lincoln says nothing of the rights that “all men” are “endowed by their Creator with.” Instead, Lincoln in giving his requested brief remarks to dedicate a cemetery, says that the “new nation,

⁴² Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. vi.

⁴³ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. vi-vii

⁴⁴ Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p. 1.

⁴⁵ Strauss, *Natural Right and History*, p. 1.

⁴⁶ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. vi-vii.

conceived in Liberty” was “brought forth” and “dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”⁴⁷

In any event, the reason why the Declaration is so important in this context is not just the Gettysburg Address reference which is the only connection Strauss makes between Lincoln and the Declaration. Indeed, Jaffa says

Lincoln’s reasoning was grounded, as was the Declaration of Independence itself, in a philosophic tradition that extended back to Aristotle. With the exception of Lord Charnwood’s 1917 biography (by an Englishman), scarcely any of the Lincoln literature shows any awareness of this tradition or, if it does, takes it seriously. Lincoln hailed Jefferson for incorporating in the Declaration ‘an abstract truth, applicable to all men and all times.’ I believe I am the first American Lincoln scholar to believe--as Lincoln believed--in the existence of such truth, and of the reasoning by which it is supported.⁴⁸

Strauss was, according Jaffa, sufficiently moved by Jaffa’s 1951 lecture at St. John’s College in Annapolis on “Expediency and Morality in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates” to change the beginning of *Natural Right and History*. However, Strauss never thought to return or perhaps was moved enough to return to answer the question of whether or not the United States still held firm to the self-evident belief that “all men are created equal.” We are told that Strauss’ interest in Jaffa’s Lincoln work before the publication of *Crisis of the House Divided* continued with “the keenest interest and encouragement.”⁴⁹ Such encouragement is the best a student can hope for from a teacher, whether the interest in the subject matter is feigned or not. I am not accusing Jaffa of totally misrepresenting the truth about Strauss’ interest in Lincoln or Jaffa’s work on the sixteenth president for we do not know the content of Jaffa and Strauss’ private conversations. However, it is more than a bit of a stretch to present us with a Strauss who seemingly hung on every

⁴⁷ Lincoln, “Address Delivered at the Dedication of the Cemetery at Gettysburg,” 19 Nov. 1863, CW, Vol. VII, p. 23.

⁴⁸ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. iv.

⁴⁹ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. vii.

word from Jaffa about Lincoln but made no effort himself to consider Lincoln in a “definitive” work on natural right philosophy when that philosophy, according to Jaffa, is “nothing less than the form of the political philosophy that informed the understanding and practical judgment--the statesmanship--of the Founders and Lincoln.”⁵⁰ As we recall, Strauss does not even mention the Gettysburg Address by name when making an obvious reference to it. Whether or not he believed the reference was so clear it did not need acknowledgment, it is the last reference of any kind to Lincoln in *Natural Right and History*, save for the footnote referencing Charnwood’s biography which I mentioned earlier in this chapter.

That effort not made by Strauss regarding Lincoln and natural right, is made by Jaffa. Without a single shred of evidence beyond hearsay from Jaffa himself after the death of Strauss, we do not need to take seriously statements about Strauss’ scholarly interest in Lincoln or America when Strauss’ own written corpus practically ignores the subjects. This point becomes more marked when we consider the fact that Jaffa himself claims to have introduced “the first generation of Strauss students at Chicago to questions of the American regime” with Lincoln-Douglas lectures in 1950.⁵¹ In an essay after Strauss’ death, Jaffa goes even further, stating Strauss did not explore in *Natural Right and History* how “the authority of those principles” of the Declaration could be restored. However, Strauss did find a source to restore “the authority of those principles.” According to Jaffa, Strauss found the source in his work:

I believe that Strauss believed that my restoration of Lincoln was the most apt way to restore the aforesaid authority, and that this was the form in which the statesmanship of classical political philosophy might become authoritative in our world. While Strauss articulated the connection between Plato, biblical religion, and medieval political philosophy, to discover the presence of classical principles in the post-classical world, he propelled my articulation of the connection

⁵⁰ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. v.

⁵¹ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. vii, f. 4.

between Plato, biblical religion, Shakespeare, and Lincoln. And Lincoln's recovery of the Founding corresponded closely with the Maimonidean recovery of the rational origins of prophecy.⁵²

I take this to mean that Strauss saw in Jaffa's Lincoln, an equivalent example to his work on Maimonides esotericism. In other words, Strauss felt that Jaffa had accomplished the feat of demonstrating that Lincoln had different messages for different audiences as Strauss had thought he had done with Maimonides. I cannot claim to know why Jaffa feels the need to present us with a stamp of approval from Strauss, perhaps this is a shot across the bow at Straussians who want to criticize his work on their own philosophical grounds. My purpose is to show Jaffa's Lincoln, but it seems impossible to get right to Jaffa's Lincoln without the Leo Strauss interlude. Having gone over this very odd way to begin a work on Lincoln, I can turn to Jaffa's Lincoln in earnest.

1.3 Lincoln as Master Actor

Crisis of the House Divided presents Lincoln as "a great actor... he did not step out of character." Jaffa tells us that Lincoln "believed in the role he played."⁵³ What the role was Jaffa was able to say more clearly decades later. *A New Birth of Freedom* presents Lincoln as "tragic hero" of the Civil War, playing his part in a world-historic drama. The work itself is a commentary on the Gettysburg Address, which was for Jaffa, "a speech within a drama."⁵⁴ Despite the internecine Straussian struggle I referred to earlier in this chapter, Jaffa maintains his dedication to his teacher: "My hermeneutics are, so far as I have been able to make them so, those of Leo Strauss." What this means is that historicism must be avoided and that "what is left unsaid" is at times more

⁵² Jaffa, "Strauss at One Hundred," in *Leo Strauss, the Straussians, and the Study of the American Regime* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1999), ed. Kenneth L. Deutsch and John A. Murley, p. 43.

⁵³ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 188.

⁵⁴ Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom* (Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004), p. xi.

important than “the small details of what is said.”⁵⁵ The language of “vindication” which Krannawitter uses begins with Jaffa, who says about his “definitive critique of the political science of John C. Calhoun”, “I believe I have vindicated not only Lincoln’s rejection of the Southern state rights dogma but also the intrinsic validity of the natural rights of the Declaration of Independence, encompassing the proposition that all men are created equal.”⁵⁶

Sticking with the Straussian dictum that one cannot know the past better than those who lived in the past knew it, Jaffa lets Lincoln speak about the “facts” he was faced with upon entering the presidency. In quoting Lincoln’s July 4, 1861, message to the U.S. Congress, the subject of Chapter Six of *A New Birth of Freedom*, Jaffa directs our attention to the fact that Lincoln wrote the word “confederate” in lower case as if that is indicative of something “left unsaid,” namely that secession was illegal.⁵⁷ Proving that Lincoln thought that the actions of the secessionists were illegal need not be so tedious. While spending so much time on a single word from a single speech might seem excessive, I pause here to note that this business over the lowercase confederate is a Jaffian fabrication of esoteric meaning where none was intended by Lincoln. Straussians have a reputation for being close readers of texts but Jaffa has not read the document he has quoted from in the *Collected Works* with any care at all. The passage he quotes includes the words “illegal organization” so the reader should not be confused as to what Lincoln thought about the Confederacy. The word “confederate” appears in both lowercase and uppercase interchangeably throughout the *Collected Works* and even appears capitalized later in the message after the passage quoted by Jaffa. Thirdly, as one

⁵⁵ Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom*, p. xii.

⁵⁶ Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom*, pp.xii-xiv.

⁵⁷ Jaffa, *New Birth of Freedom*, p. 359.

can clearly read in the footnotes, the document in the *Collected Works* is not based on the official text as “no official copy of the Message of July 4, 1861 has ever been found.”⁵⁸ This point about punctuation seems minor in comparison with the main thrust of the Jaffian presentation, namely that Lincoln was not actually a common man and presentations of Lincoln as common man have failed to penetrate down through the character Lincoln played to the man he was.

Did Lincoln have the masses fooled? Was Lincoln really pretending to be from common stock when he was really a great man? Jaffa believes this is the case. In *Crisis of the House Divided*, two of Lincoln’s early speeches (the Lyceum address and the Temperance Address) are analyzed, or rather interpreted, as evidence that not only he was playing a part, that he also had precognition of the events that were to come and of his future role as emancipator. Slavery is not the main problem to be overcome in either speech but the “eternal problem created by the power of evil passions—of which slavery is but a particular manifestation—over mankind,” Jaffa says.⁵⁹ The implications are great if Jaffa is correct for it means that one of the main presentations of Lincoln is false and always has been.

In his 1838 Lyceum address, Jaffa writes, Lincoln already “pondered and matured” ideas that “crystallized in 1863.”⁶⁰ In preparation “for the greatest role in the greatest crisis he could imagine coming in his lifetime,” Lincoln was “outwardly leading a

⁵⁸ Lincoln, “Message to Congress in Special Session,” 4 July 1861, CW, Vol. IV, pp. 421-441. I should also note that it is impossible in any event to attribute exact punctuation to Lincoln in the message as it underwent revisions from Secretary of State William H. Seward which were written out “for the most part in the handwriting of Frederick W. Seward, with Lincoln’s final revisions,” p. 441, fn. 1.

⁵⁹ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 185.

⁶⁰ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 183.

life hardly distinguishable from countless others.”⁶¹ And, in seeing that he was to play this role, Jaffa states, Lincoln “anticipated in principle every profound objection to the role he one day unhesitatingly played.” Therefore, Lincoln saw the script of this drama and his role in it and the role of “the American Brutus twenty-seven years before it was played by Booth.”⁶² In the Lyceum address, Lincoln makes an exhortation to his listeners to revere the laws.

Let reverence for the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that prattles on her lap---let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges;---let it be written in Primmers, spelling books, and in Almanacs;---let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in courts of justice. And, in short, let it become the political religion of the nation; and let the old and the young, the rich and the poor, the grave and the gay, of all sexes and tongues, and colors and conditions, sacrifice unceasingly upon its altars.⁶³

This message, Jaffa says, is not intended “for the people, but for their leaders” who would use it “to penetrate the disguises in which their enemies come.”⁶⁴ While the Lyceum, organized in part by Dan Stone (who was the only other Illinois State Representative to join Lincoln in a protest on slavery in 1837) might have been “one of the leading forces in the cultural activity of Springfield,”⁶⁵ it is dubious to suppose it had much impact outside Springfield.

The importance of the speech for Jaffa comes not from the whole of the words at all but only one word in particular: Caesar. The rest of the meaning is injected because

⁶¹ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 186; cf., *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 219 in which Jaffa says Lincoln, the future emancipator, the future savior of the Union “seems to have concentrated his whole inner life upon preparing for the crisis foretold in the Lyceum speech.”

⁶² Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 184.

⁶³ Lincoln, “Address Before the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois,” 27 Jan. 1838, CW, Vol. 1, p. 112.

⁶⁴ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 215.

⁶⁵ See Lincoln, “Address Before the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois,” p. 115, fn. 1.

Lincoln said the magic word (and he only said it one time in the speech). This is Lincoln's passage in which he mentions Caesar:

Many great and good men sufficiently qualified for any task they should undertake, may ever be found, whose ambition would aspire to nothing beyond a seat in Congress, a gubernatorial or a presidential chair; *but such belong not to the family of the lion, or the tribe of the eagle*,[.] What! think you these places would satisfy an Alexander, a Caesar, or a Napoleon? Never! Towering genius disdains a beaten path. It seeks regions hitherto unexplored. It sees *no distinction* in adding story to story, upon the monuments of fame, erected to the memory of others. It *denies* that it is glory enough to serve under any chief. It *scorns* to tread in the footsteps of *any* predecessor, however illustrious. It thirsts and burns for distinction; and, if possible, it will have it, whether at the expense of emancipating slaves, or enslaving freemen. Is it unreasonable then to expect, that some man possessed of the loftiest genius, coupled with ambition sufficient to push it to its utmost stretch, will at some time, spring up among us? And when such a one does, it will require the people to be united with each other, attached to the government and laws, and generally intelligent, to successfully frustrate his designs.⁶⁶

Why is Caesar more interesting than an Alexander or a Napoleon? The importance of Caesarism in Straussian thought dates back to Strauss' response to the political philosopher Eric Voegelin. Voegelin, in a review of Strauss' *On Tyranny* (1949), had denied that classical thinkers were able to conceive of "Caesarism" (Strauss' term for Voegelin's concept of "rulership in the post-constitutional situation") in conversations of tyranny and thus that classical thought was not adequate for dealing with modern tyranny.⁶⁷ For Jaffa, Lincoln is the American "savior" who guards against the Caesarian "destroyer." According to Jaffa, "Caesar must be encountered by one who has all Caesar's talent for domination, one who could, if he would, govern the people without their

⁶⁶ Lincoln, "Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois," p. 114, original emphasis.

⁶⁷ See, "Appendix to Letter 20," in *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934-1964*, translated and edited by Peter Emberley and Barry Cooper (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), pp. 44-57. This interest in "Caesarism" for Straussians has not dissipated as evinced by Christopher Nadon's recent chapter, "Philosophic Politics and Theology: Strauss' 'Restatement,'" in *Leo Strauss' Defense of the Philosophic Life: Reading 'What Is Political Philosophy?'*, ed. Rafael Major (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 80-97.

consent, but who prefers the people's freedom to their domination."⁶⁸ Lincoln is the man for the job of opposing Caesar and Stephen Douglas is the representative Caesar, whose "doctrine of popular sovereignty...was the essence of the Caesarian danger."⁶⁹ The long battle between the two men was, Jaffa says, "above all a struggle to determine the nature of the opinion which should form the doctrinal foundation of American government."⁷⁰

In Lincoln's other telling speech, the Temperance Address from 1842, we are told by Jaffa that it is "a literary masterpiece and a masterpiece of political satire."⁷¹ In other words, Lincoln went into the Second Presbyterian Church in Springfield, Illinois and gave a speech full of "all the clichés that the occasion called for. But they were not the clichés of *his* soul" but those the "reformed drunkards" which made up most of the crowd that day wanted to hear.⁷² Their cause is not his. For Jaffa, this speech is such a shining document because it reveals

a method whereby a public man can both accept and reject the prejudices of his contemporaries; how he can, at one and the same time, flatter their vanity and chasten their egotism; how he can, appearing to agree with their opinions, modify them, however little, or failing that, so to promote his own leadership that, when these opinions come to be applied, they will be applied by a man whose judgment is not chained to them and who can utilize them for wiser purposes.⁷³

Lincoln speaks in a fervent manner which will convince true believers he is one of them but will also "indicate to any shrewd non-enthusiast" that Lincoln was not a true believer himself.⁷⁴ Near the end of his speech Lincoln, someone who once had a license to sell

⁶⁸ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 225.

⁶⁹ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 224.

⁷⁰ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 309.

⁷¹ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 185.

⁷² Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, pp. 247, 246.

⁷³ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 249.

⁷⁴ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 250.

liquor by the glass at his New Salem store, says of former “dram sellers” that they would be allies of the movement.⁷⁵

And what a noble ally this, to the cause of political freedom. With such an aid, its march cannot fail to be on and on, till every son of earth shall drink in rich fruition, the sorrow quenching draughts of perfect liberty. Happy day, when, all appetites controlled, all poisons subdued, all matter subjected, *mind*, all conquering *mind*, shall live and move the monarch of the world. Glorious consummation! Hail fall of Fury! Reign of Reason, all hail!⁷⁶

Jaffa is one of the “shrewd non-enthusiasts” who sets about counting paragraphs and discovers that “more than two thirds of the body of the speech consists of criticisms and attacks on temperance movements.”⁷⁷ What then was Lincoln’s *exoteric* goal in making the speech? Jaffa says that the temperance movement was becoming a “movement for legislation, a plank in party platforms” and Lincoln didn’t want to miss the “temperance tide.”⁷⁸

Whether or not Jaffa agrees with Lincoln from the Lyceum address that “Reason, cold, calculating, unimpassioned reason, must furnish all the materials for our future support and defence,”⁷⁹ Jaffa states that reason failed on the eve of the Civil War. Speaking about Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address, Jaffa calls it “philosophy...descended from the heavens into the affairs of mortal men.” But, philosophy’s import into the world of politics, “the realm of the tragic,” is limited. Jaffa says Lincoln in the First Inaugural was “delivering a lecture to all men and all times on the essentials of free government” in the speech but at the same time “knew when he spoke these lines that they would have no effect on the actions or passions of his antagonists.” The passions slavery stirred up

⁷⁵ See Michael Burlingame’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Life, Vol. 1*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), p. 76.

⁷⁶ Lincoln, “Temperance Address,” p. 279.

⁷⁷ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 252-253.

⁷⁸ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 255.

⁷⁹ Lincoln, “Address Before the Young Men’s Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois,” p. 115.

“were immune to reason.”⁸⁰ The war came and Lincoln played his tragic part, killed by Booth who misapplied tyrannicide on “the greatest enemy of tyranny the world has ever known.”⁸¹ Michael Burlingame sees the situation differently when he says about Lincoln early in his political career, “There is a grim irony in Lincoln’s denunciation of Van Buren’s support of limited voting rights for blacks, for in 1865 John Wilkes Booth murdered Lincoln for publicly endorsing that very policy.”⁸²

1.4 Lincoln as Greatest President

Whereas Jaffa’s *A New Birth of Freedom* does more talking around Lincoln than talking directly about Lincoln in defending him, Krannawitter jumps in with both feet to come to the rescue of Lincoln, who he says has no equal among American statesmen and America’s “great heroes.”⁸³ Krannawitter warns us that “we stand to lose much if we lose the example of Lincoln” because “he represents the very possibility of democratic greatness.”⁸⁴ When one utters such statements, it is hard to take seriously the previously stated notion by Krannawitter that “I am not suggesting that we look at Lincoln through rose-colored glasses in order to provide Americans with a much needed heroic figure.” Attacks on Krannawitter’s hero are “sorely mistaken” because they are “based on misunderstandings of Lincoln’s words and actions.” In order to correct these “misunderstandings,” Krannawitter has selected what he calls the “books and articles which best represent and articulate the most powerful criticisms leveled against

⁸⁰ Jaffa, *New Birth of Freedom*, p. 280.

⁸¹ Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom*, p. 141.

⁸² Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 108.

⁸³ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, p. 8.

⁸⁴ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, p. 9.

Lincoln.”⁸⁵ Lincoln must be guarded against any attack because it is through him the “souls of all men” can be “elevated” by being taught the “source of goodness and right, that natural right principle that all men are created equal.”⁸⁶

The “misunderstandings” of Lincoln reviewed in Krannawitter’s book are as follows: Lincoln was a racist⁸⁷, Lincoln was “pro-choice” regarding slavery, Lincoln inaccurately represented the Constitution as a “pro-freedom document”, Lincoln was merely a “child of his age”, Lincoln was wrong about Constitutional secession and was wrong to assert that the Civil War was about slavery, Lincoln fought the war to preserve the Union and not to end slavery, Lincoln initiated “big government” and Lincoln was a tyrant. The reason for Krannawitter to put the race question first seems to be that it holds the most power to destroy the Jaffian Lincoln who is great and is a hero because he believes in equality without reservation. Krannawitter’s book suggests that most of the other mistakes people have committed in understanding Lincoln revolve around slavery but there are still other errors that have to do with economics. Although the race question comes first in Krannawitter’s work, I will reserve it for the end as it deserves extensive attention while the other elements do not.

Krannawitter has already determined his answers to the charges against Lincoln by the fact that they see Lincoln endorsing the natural rights grounding of the Founding in the “all men are created equal” statement of the Declaration. This morality that is good for anybody in any society at any time informs seemingly everything Lincoln decided. This process of applying the principle to the specific charge makes it easy to summarize Krannawitter’s arguments:

⁸⁵ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 8-9.

⁸⁶ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 11-12.

⁸⁷ I deal with Lincoln and race at length in Chapter 3.

- Lincoln could not be “pro-choice” on the Kansas-Nebraska Act because that would cause him to take a “don’t care” position like Douglas’ “popular sovereignty” and would deny the natural rights of African Americans.⁸⁸
- Likewise, Justice Taney could not be correct about the Founding in *Dred Scott* because he denied that “all men are created equal.”⁸⁹
- Krannawitter believes Lincoln’s ideas, such as that human nature is immutable, “are true...they *continue* to be true today.” However, few people see Lincoln in this light and think of him as a “child of his age” because they reject Truth.⁹⁰
- Lincoln did not commit the nation to an “unconstitutional and unjust war” because humans have a natural right to revolution, not states.⁹¹
- Lincoln understood, as did the leading secessionists, that the Civil War was about slavery and not sectional economic disputes.⁹²
- Lincoln, though never an abolitionist, had the goal of ending slavery which made the Union one that was worth saving. Opponents set up a false dichotomy by attempting to use Lincoln’s restraint in eliminating slavery against him.⁹³
- Lincoln could not be “the Father of Big Government” because of his belief in unchangeable human nature and thus his understanding that the limited and primary role of the government is that of securing the natural rights of its citizens.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 47-74

⁸⁹ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 77-112.

⁹⁰ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 116, 135-138, original emphasis, cf. pp. 115-140.

⁹¹ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 145-198.

⁹² Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 205-256.

⁹³ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 263-286.

⁹⁴ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 289-313.

- Lincoln was not a tyrant because he limited his use of executive power to ‘preserve and extend the liberty of the American Founding,’ in Herman Belz’ words. Further, any restrictions on liberty imposed by Lincoln had evaporated by 1866.⁹⁵

In each case, Krannawitter will not admit of any failings by Lincoln because he believes Lincoln’s morality which is based in the Declaration is “true.” Are there really any grounds on which to argue with Krannawitter if he will not admit Lincoln was not perfect? There is one area, by Krannawitter’s own admission, which threatens his whole “vindication” and that area is race.

Now we turn to the heart of the matter for Krannawitter. Lincoln’s views on race and slavery run through most of his other defenses of Lincoln. If we find Lincoln to be racist, the implications go beyond his mantle as the Great Emancipator. If Lincoln was racist, then America’s reputation as a land founded upon equality and as a “kind of political and moral role model for the rest of the world” is at stake.⁹⁶ President Barack Obama is included in the book as representative of the view that Lincoln believed in something less than equality when it came to race.⁹⁷ However, Krannawitter is unmoved. In fact, one wonders why he trots out any counterviews at all when he says “after close analysis of Lincoln’s words and deeds” that “there is much to suggest that Lincoln did in fact believe in the equal rights of whites and blacks, even if he often presented those beliefs in *an esoteric manner*.”⁹⁸ Krannawitter then makes a strange misstep of his own

⁹⁵ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 334, 332, cf. pp. 317-334.

⁹⁶ *Vindicating Lincoln*, p. 14.

⁹⁷ Krannawitter references an article then Senator Barack Obama wrote in *Time* magazine in which Obama says he is not interested in unquestionably accepting the view of Lincoln as the Great Emancipator, see *Vindicating Lincoln*, p 14.

⁹⁸ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, p. 18, my emphasis.

in trying to defend Lincoln's statements, first uttered by Lincoln in the first debate against Douglas at Ottawa, Illinois about having no interest in bringing about "political and social equality between the white and black races."⁹⁹

Lincoln either repeats his lines or defends his statements that were read back to him at Ottawa, at Charleston, at Galesburg and at Quincy (four of the seven total debates) about the "physical difference between the two" races, in Lincoln's view, that "will probably forever forbid their living together upon the footing of perfect equality."¹⁰⁰ Additionally, Lincoln makes a speech at Columbus, Ohio in 1859 where he again defends his statement in the first debate and refers to his defense of his position at Charleston. Lincoln cites a query from a man at his hotel for the reason for giving a statement on his intentions, or rather lack thereof, of bringing about social and political equality. Lincoln also injects into that statement, which he repeats at Columbus in 1859, "I will add to this that I have never seen to my knowledge a man, woman or child who was in favor of producing a perfect equality, social and political, between negroes and white men."¹⁰¹ Krannawitter concedes the "physical difference" Lincoln mentions but does not exactly spell out the meaning of. Krannawitter jumps to the conclusion that Lincoln means skin pigmentation and says "Of course: blacks are black, and whites are white. And while this simple difference of skin color, in itself, does not imply or require political and social

⁹⁹ Lincoln, "First Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Ottawa, Illinois," 21 Aug. 1858, CW, Vol. 3, p. 16.

¹⁰⁰ "First Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Ottawa, Illinois," p. 16. For the other utterances along these lines by Lincoln during the debates, see "Fourth Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Charleston, Illinois," 18 Sept. 1858, CW, Vol. 3, pp. 145-146; "Fifth Debate with Stephen A. Douglas, at Galesburg, Illinois," 7 Oct. 1858, CW, Vol. 3, p. 214; "Sixth Debate with Stephen A. Douglas, at Quincy, Illinois," 13 Oct. 1858, CW, Vol. 3, pp. 248-250.

¹⁰¹ Lincoln, "Speech at Columbus, Ohio," 16 Sept. 1859, CW, Vol. III, p.402; cf. "Fourth Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Charleston, Illinois," pp. 145-146.

inequality, the distinction of color in America had become deeply entwined with slavery and questions of racial hierarchy.”¹⁰² What Lincoln actually said about skin color can be found in a few places in the *Collected Works*. In a speech at Cincinnati in 1859, Lincoln poked fun at Douglas who was trying to use the Bible to defend slavery by pointing out that the slaves in the Bible were “*white* men - of men without reference to color.”¹⁰³ In Lincoln’s “Fragment on Slavery”, he says

If A. can prove, however conclusively, that he may, of right, enslave B.--- why may not B. snatch the same argument, and prove equally, that he may enslave A?---

You say A. is white, and B. is black. It is *color*, then; the lighter, having the right to enslave the darker? Take care. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with a fairer skin than your own.

You do not mean *color* exactly?---You mean the whites are *intellectually* the superiors of the blacks, and, therefore have the right to enslave them? Take care again. By this rule, you are to be slave to the first man you meet, with an intellect superior to your own.

But, say you, it is a question of *interest*; and, if you can make it your *interest*, you have the right to enslave another. Very well. And if he can make it his interest, he has the right to enslave you.¹⁰⁴

Lincoln also says at a speech at Springfield, Illinois in 1858, that the Declaration of Independence did not mean that “men were created equal in all respects.” Equal rights referred to “‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness’ as “the negro is not our equal in color - - - perhaps not in many other respects...”¹⁰⁵ In none of these statements do we get the reification of race found in Krannawitter’s “blacks are black.” One cannot simply pass over this statement without comment because a critical understanding of race is a major

¹⁰² Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, p. 21.

¹⁰³ Lincoln, “Speech at Cincinnati, Ohio,” 17 Sept. 1859, CW, Vol. III, p. 445, original emphasis.

¹⁰⁴ Lincoln, “Fragment on Slavery,” [1 April 1854?], CW, Vol. II, pp. 222-223, original emphasis.

¹⁰⁵ Lincoln, “Speech at Springfield, Illinois,” 17 July, 1858, CW, Vol. II, p. 520; cf. “Seventh and Last Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Alton, Illinois,” 15 Oct. 1858, CW, Vol. III, p. 301.

blind spot of Jaffian and Straussian political thought. Without an understanding of race as a social construct, how can a Straussian tell us if Lincoln was racist?

The social construction of race which Krannawitter does not see as a social construction was obvious to Lincoln who as a lawyer defended William Dungey against the charge that he was black in 1855. Dungey, an Illinois resident of Portuguese descent, hired Lincoln to bring a suit against his brother-in-law Joseph Spencer, who had made the slanderous claim. Being perceived to be black in Illinois in 1855 was a major problem as the 1848 state constitution required the General Assembly to ‘pass such laws as will effectively prohibit free persons of color from immigrating to and settling’ in Illinois. The Assembly did so in the “Black Codes” in 1853. Dungey was facing the loss of his marriage, property, and ability to stay in Illinois. Luckily for Dungey, Lincoln won the case with a jab at the social construction of race. Lincoln pointed out that Dungey’s skin was darker than the skin of others in the community but contended that Dungey was not black. In doing so Lincoln pointed out it was a crime in Illinois “to be a Negro—no crime to be born with black skin.”¹⁰⁶

The social construction of race continued to live on in the law long after Lincoln’s day. On the other extreme from the Dungey case, in 1982 in Louisiana, Susie Guillory Phipps sought to change her racial classification on her birth certificate from “colored” to “white.” Phipps had been denied a passport because she checked off white on the form when she was “colored” according to the state’s one-thirty-second rule. During Phipps’ court case against the state, officials produced “two large cardboard boxes full of exhibits--dozens of pages of depositions’ and a genealogy documenting Guillory’s family back to 1762.” Guillory’s great-great-great-great grandmother was an emancipated slave named Margarita. Margarita’s white master, Jean Gregoire Guillory, was Phipps’ great-

¹⁰⁶ “Lincoln Defends ‘Black Bill,’” Illinois Historic Preservation Agency, Papers of Abraham Lincoln, Legal Briefs, No. 23 (July-Sept. 1992), <http://www.papersofabrahamlincoln.org/Briefs/briefs23.htm>.

great-great-great-grandfather. Phipps' protested "I was raised as a white child. I went to a white school. I married white twice." Louisiana found this irrelevant to the case and had gone to great lengths to prove that an ancestor Phipps had never known had existed made her something other than white. The state also prevailed in the case.¹⁰⁷ One wonders how Lincoln would have argued the case and if Krannawitter would have understood the proceedings at all.

Krannawitter points out that Lincoln had little choice but to pander to the racism of his day to get elected and follow laws which were on the books such as the fugitive slave law. This decision to respect existing laws, however odious to liberty, did not sit well with abolitionists during his time nor with Lerone Bennett, Jr., derided as a modern abolitionist by Krannawitter, during our time. Lincoln had to go slow and "reshape public opinion so that, at a minimum, Americans would discuss the possibility of emancipation," Kranwitter writes.¹⁰⁸ The word "Americans" here does not refer to abolitionists who did not shy away from discussions of emancipation and more for blacks. They were practically outside the political realm, according to Krannawitter, who refers to abolitionists as "almost irrelevant politically."¹⁰⁹

Krannawitter is so caught up in presenting a perfect Lincoln that he repeats the mistake of his teacher and mentions the fourth debate with Douglas at Charleston and Lincoln's remarks on Colonel Richard M. Johnson and equality. Lincoln says in his speech

¹⁰⁷ Quoted in Anthony G. Barthelemy, "Light, Bright, Damn Near White: Race, the Politics of Genealogy, and the Strange Case of Susie Guillory," in *Creole: The History and Legacy of Louisiana's Free People of Color*, ed. Sybil Kein (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), pp. 252-275.

¹⁰⁸ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, p. 33.

¹⁰⁹ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, p. 32.

I am now in my fiftieth year, and I certainly never have had a black woman for either a slave or a wife. So it seems to me quite possible for us to get along without making either slaves or wives of negroes. I will add to this that I have never seen to my knowledge a man, woman or child who was in favor of producing a perfect equality, social and political, between negroes and white men. I recollect of but one distinguished instance that I ever heard of so frequently as to be entirely satisfied of its correctness---and that is the case of Judge Douglas' old friend Col. Richard M. Johnson. [Laughter.]¹¹⁰

Jaffa says “Lincoln was using this hilarity to both conceal and to reveal some serious thoughts.”¹¹¹ Both Krannawitter and Jaffa talk about who Johnson was (among other things, Vice-President under Van Buren) and detail via a letter who he loved (his two daughters and the “mulatto slave woman” who gave birth to them). Krannawitter and Jaffa praise Lincoln for bringing up Johnson to “serve as a model for Americans in 1858 as well as for future Americans seeking to learn what ‘perfect equality’ means” or alternatively, “the logical contradiction inherent in the law of slavery but also of the pathos and tragedy inherent in that contradiction.”¹¹²

Michael Burlingame has noted that Lincoln was likely the author of a letter “ostensibly written by a black gentleman named ‘Sees-Her’” in 1836. In the letter, Sees-Her says that Martin Van Buren that he will make African Americans voters and that Richard Johnson will make all the African American women’s children white. The language of the letter is a racialized dialect and makes frequent use of the N-word.¹¹³ Lincoln would eventually stop writing these petty political letters, either anonymously or using a pseudonym, after narrowly avoiding a duel with the Illinois State Auditor James Shields in 1842. Lincoln had written a letter which insulted Shields that resulted in the men crossing the border into Missouri (where dueling was not illegal) with broadswords.

¹¹⁰ Lincoln, “Fourth Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Charleston, Illinois,” p. 146.

¹¹¹ Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom*, p. 331.

¹¹² Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, pp. 29-30; Jaffa, *A New Birth of Freedom*, pp. 331-333.

¹¹³ Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln*, p. 109., cf. Richard Lawrence Miller, *Lincoln and His World: Prairie Politician, 1834-1842*, Vol. 2 (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole, 2008), p. 84.

The seconds for both men intervened before the duel got underway.¹¹⁴ While Lincoln was embarrassed by the duel and refused to discuss it later in life,¹¹⁵ the comments about Van Buren and Johnson were reserved for later against Douglas.

Lincoln emerges from Krannawitter's book as a statesman who attempted to return the climate of opinion back to "the principles of the Declaration of Independence." There is no growth in Krannawitter's Lincoln. He was already perfectly capable of shaping opinion or finding support for a 13th Amendment even before he debated Douglas. Like his teacher Jaffa, Krannawitter is interested in restoring a climate of opinion that shows respect for the American Founding and of the man who reminded Americans of "their 'ancient faith' in human equality."¹¹⁶

1.5 Was Lincoln a Man of the People?

Lincoln has never been presented as merely a common man. Merrill Peterson elaborated on this presentation of Lincoln: "He was the common man writ large, the common man became master."¹¹⁷ Though he became President, Lincoln's habit of telling humorous, often ribald stories finds its way into virtually every book on the man. Barry Schwartz sums up the presentation of Lincoln as the man of the people by calling him the "accessible man." Schwartz reminds us that Lincoln set aside hours of his day to receive visitors for what he called his "public opinion baths." Schwartz also writes that Lincoln visits to military hospitals left a lasting intimate connection between soldiers and the president in memory.¹¹⁸ There was also a remembered story of Lincoln playing baseball

¹¹⁴ David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln*, pp. 90-93; Ronald C. White, Jr., *A. Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: Random House, 2009), pp. 114-116.

¹¹⁵ White, Jr., *A. Lincoln*, p. 116.

¹¹⁶ Krannawitter, *Vindicating Lincoln*, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, p. 385

¹¹⁸ Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2000), pp. 167-174.

with children on a Maryland farm. What could be more appealing to common man than a baseball playing president?¹¹⁹

These are the types of details of Lincoln's life that Jaffa said Lincoln "was singularly uninterested in."¹²⁰ Or perhaps, it is Jaffa who is so uninterested in such details that he would rather perform literary atom-splitting before admitting that maybe Lincoln was common after all. That Lincoln was a politician and therefore might have said things he didn't believe in wholeheartedly is readily admitted. Does that mean that like Krannawitter on Lincoln's use of Colonel Johnson that we should go out of our way to assume, against evidence to the contrary, that Lincoln was teaching America a lesson about race rather than recalling a cheap race-baiting tactic he had used before? Lastly, why should we read Lincoln esoterically at all? Beyond the interpretations of Straussians such as Jaffa and Krannawitter, there is no good reason to suppose that Lincoln was a philosopher or that he wrote his speeches to "cover his heterodox" views, as Strauss said of esoteric writers. Is it not more likely that Lincoln resembles the "accessible man," to use Schwartz' term, than the actor who knows his lines in advance or the perfect president because Lincoln was intentionally accessible in public life? As I stated previously, and the near-duel with Shields and Lincoln's eventual assassination suggest, if Lincoln was esoteric, he was a terrible model to emulate, or, esotericism failed to protect him.

Despite the use of Lincoln to promote Jaffian theories and politics, the Lincoln presented here is a private Lincoln, one for a limited number of scholars to talk about. Perhaps only fellow Straussians can truly understand such a presentation, which would

¹¹⁹ The game was not quite the same as we know it today, but Lincoln's interest in baseball, which included playing it, is well documented, see William B. Mead and Paul Dickson, *Baseball: The Presidents' Game* (Washington, D.C.: Farragut, 1993) and George B. Kirsch, *Baseball in Blue and Gray: The National Pastime During the Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

¹²⁰ Jaffa, *Crisis of the House Divided*, p. 188.

limit the scope even further. As political scientists already know from looking at the mastheads of journals and the faculty listings of universities the presence of academic Straussians remains pervasive in the discipline. Outside of the discipline, the influence of Straussians (in a much broader sense) can be occasionally seen on the international political scene, most recently in the neoconservative presence in the George W. Bush administration.¹²¹ Jaffa himself has been a part of both the academic and political groups through his academic writing and his speech writing for Barry Goldwater.¹²² However, an examination of how Straussian political thought has been translated into national politics is beyond the scope of this dissertation.¹²³

The Lincoln that is normally encountered in presentations is the one who presented for public consumption. In the next chapter I will review three different forms of representation intended for a large audience. In some sense, these popular representations are as limited as those of Jaffa and Krannawitter despite the attention given to them.

¹²¹ The actual influence of this small group of Straussian (by their own claims) neoconservatives on Bush is often overstated, as is their connection to Strauss.

¹²² Jaffa was Goldwater's speech writer during the 1964 Presidential campaign and penned the words "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice," in Goldwater's Republican nomination acceptance speech. See Eric Benson, "The Goldwater Campaign," *New York* magazine, 14 Oct. 2012, <http://nymag.com/news/politics/elections-2012/barry-goldwater-campaign-2012-10/>.

¹²³ Sean Noah Walsh has a chapter entitled "Persecution among Nations: A Manual for Perverse Government" on this topic in his *Perversion and the Art of Persecution*, pp. 137-164. His work is among the latest in a saturated field of inquiry on this question for which a bibliography would be needed rather than a footnote.

CHAPTER 2

LINCOLN FOR THE MANY: POPULAR PRESENTATIONS

2.1 Money, Monuments and Movies

Out of the many genres of popular representation of Lincoln, I will discuss only three and justify the selection of this trio. I have decided to write about the genres of money, monuments and movies. Obviously, entire books can be written (and have) on each of the genres just mentioned so my remarks here will necessarily be very limited in their scope. I have decided to further limit my selection by picking six specific representations of Lincoln to focus on: the penny and the five-dollar bill, the Lincoln Memorial and the Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park, and the feature films *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) and *Lincoln* (2012). The three genres of representations (money, monuments and movies) of Lincoln were selected mainly because they were designed for and are consumed by the public—this fact alone makes them of interest. Each genre also covers at least one presentation of Lincoln that had been popular at one time or one which continues to be popular in American culture.

In order for the content of one's presentation to reach the widest possible audience, matters cannot be overly complex. The same may be the case with popular presentations of Lincoln. Most popular presentations seem to contain none of the contradictions of Lincoln's character. It is important to consider that a reason why a presentation of Lincoln is popular might be precisely because it does nothing to challenge the popular conception of the sixteenth president. However, it is hard to believe that if public presentations of Lincoln did not contain something that was relatable to the general audience that they could gain the attention of the public. In turn, popular presentations must also be constructed with the public in mind. The examples I review in this chapter in no way are meant to represent the full scope of popular representations of Lincoln as there are a good many from television alone that were excluded due to space and relevance concerns.

2.2 The Penny

Abraham Lincoln is present on both the penny and the five-dollar bill, but this was not always the case. Lincoln was placed on these currencies of the United States around the same time period, 1909 for the penny, and 1914 for the five-dollar bill. The symbols borne by the penny are important to identify and analyze as it is encountered by so many Americans. The year 1909 was the centennial of Lincoln's birth. The obverse of the penny features a profile of Lincoln which was originally a bas-relief which a Lithuanian Jewish immigrant, Victor David Brenner, had done from a photograph of Lincoln which Mathew Brady had taken. President Theodore Roosevelt had been in Brenner's studio in the summer of 1908. When he saw the Lincoln bas-relief he decided to have Lincoln put on the penny in time for the centennial. Roosevelt was making a dramatic move. Only imagined figures representing abstract ideals and not real people were on the coins of the United States. Brenner would liven up his image of Lincoln for the penny by giving the sixteenth president a slight smile. The words "In God We Trust" are above Lincoln's head. The word "Liberty" is about collar high behind Lincoln's profile on the left side of the coin. This design has been in circulation longer than any other circulating US coin. The reverse of the penny featured from top to bottom the words *E Pluribus Unum*, One Cent, United States of America, and two wheat stalks arranged in a memorial style on either side of the words. Lincoln was considered a martyr for the Union (also symbolized by the Latin words for "out of many, one"), after all. The artist's initials were also on the reverse but they caused so much trouble from the perception of self-promotion that they were removed and moved when they returned to the coin later.¹²⁴ The penny has changed since this initial design, but what did it replace in 1909?

¹²⁴ David Margolick, "Penny Foolish", Feb. 11, 2007, *New York Times*, http://www.nytimes.com/2007/02/11/opinion/11margolick.html?pagewanted=1&_r=1.

From 1859-1909, the one cent piece's obverse depicted a female personification of Liberty in a feather bonnet with the word "liberty" on it and the words "United States" arching up the left side of the coin and "of America" down the right side. The reverse had the words "one cent" and a laurel wreath. The reverse design was altered in 1860. The laurel wreath was replaced by an oak one with a ribbon binding the wreaths branches. Three arrows are underneath the ribbon and a Union shield is seen at the top of the coin. This coin is still commonly referred to as the "Indian Head penny" although Liberty is not a Native American. Liberty was simply "playing Indian" when she replaced a flying eagle on the obverse in 1859. The shameless appropriation and use of Native American symbols through playing Indian is a long American tradition, most prominently during the Boston Tea Party and still continuing to the present in such forms as a specific group of fans of the band the Grateful Dead and Mardi Gras Indians, as Philip J. Deloria described in his 1998 *Playing Indian*.¹²⁵ The Department of the Treasury has the audacity to say that Liberty's profile on the coin is in fact an "Indian head". There is of course no image on the same page with the description of the coin.¹²⁶

It should be considered of at least symbolic importance that Lincoln, who volunteered to fight in an Indian war as a young man and had determined the fate of Sioux men accused of fighting a war in Minnesota against whites during the Civil War, replaced the Indian feather bonnet symbol on the penny. That Theodore Roosevelt was chiefly responsible for putting Lincoln on the penny is also significant. We recall that there were several Indian wars during the Civil War. The settlers who encroached on

¹²⁵ Mardi Gras Indians are African Americans who live in New Orleans and masquerade at events such as Mardi Gras and Super Sunday (the Sunday before St. Joseph's Day) in outlandish colorful heavy costumes that are hand sewn and may weigh up to 150 pounds.

¹²⁶ "Indian Head Cent", Department of the Treasury, 13 Nov. 2010, <http://www.treasury.gov/about/education/Pages/indian-head.aspx>.

Native American lands were of particular interest to Roosevelt. So were the wars which were fought as a result. Roosevelt wrote in his book on *The Winning of the West*

The most ultimately righteous of all wars is a war with savages, though it is apt to be also the most terrible and inhuman. The rude, fierce settler who drives the savage from the land lays all civilized mankind under a debt to him...it is of incalculable importance that America, Australia, and Siberia should pass out of the hands of their red, black and yellow aboriginal owners, and become the heritage of the dominant world races.¹²⁷

As someone with such a low view of Native American humanity and such a high one of Lincoln (Roosevelt was inspired by Lincoln and considered himself an heir to the Lincoln legacy), it does not seem as if Roosevelt would have encountered a moment of hesitation in taking what he perceived to be an Indian symbol off the nation's most commonly encountered denomination of currency. The penny would undergo another change for the Lincoln Sesquicentennial.

In 1959, the Lincoln Memorial replaced the wheat ears on the reverse of the Lincoln penny. If the penny you have in your hands is not too worn, the seated Lincoln sculpture can be seen inside the monument. In the words of Merrill Peterson, "the image of the Memorial had become inseparable from the image of Lincoln in American memory."¹²⁸ What better choice could have been made for the redesign of the coin than to put the Memorial on the back? Well, the nation was confronted with just such a question when the reverse of the penny was to undergo a special change for the Lincoln Bicentennial in 2009.

Not one design but four were to grace the reverse of the Lincoln penny issued in 2009. Each of the pennies was supposed to represent a certain time of Lincoln's life and

¹²⁷ Roosevelt, *The Winning of the West: Part IV: The Indian Wars, 1747-1787* (New York: Putnam, 1906), p. 56.

¹²⁸ Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford, 1994), p. 368. I should note here the image of the Memorial had already on the reverse of the five dollar bill since 1929. Therefore, the Memorial had already become popular enough within seven years of its opening to end up on a common denomination of paper currency. The Memorial replaced the Great Seal of the United States. The obvious paper currency connection to Lincoln is that he introduced the "greenback" during the Civil War.

would be released about three months apart from each other. The “Birthplace” Lincoln cent (1809-1816) featuring a log cabin on the reverse was released on Lincoln’s birthday, February 12, 2009. Three months later, the “Formative Years” (1816-1830) Lincoln penny followed. Its reverse showed a “young Abraham Lincoln taking a break from rail splitting to read a book and educate himself.” Both the “Birthplace” Lincoln and “Formative Years” Lincoln rely on the image of Lincoln as frontier man or perhaps, self-made man rising from humble beginnings. Lincoln’s “Professional Life” (1830-1861) was represented by a beardless Lincoln “standing before the Illinois State Capitol building” on the back of the penny released in August of 2009. The final coin of the series depicted the “Presidential” Lincoln (1861-1865). Its reverse featured the half-finished Capitol Dome in Washington, D.C. These latter two coins of the series focus on Lincoln in government as he is not specifically a lawyer (despite a legal career spanning nearly a quarter century) in “Professional Life.”¹²⁹ Lincoln has since gone back to representing the Union on the penny for the foreseeable future. In fact, he is required to represent the savior of the Union by law.¹³⁰ The 2010 redesigned reverse of the penny has a Union shield with the words “*E Pluribus Unum*” written across the top of it.

The use of Lincoln on the penny presents specific problems for the creator. First, the surface area one gets to work with is very small. A further limitation is that certain phrases and the year of minting have to be placed on each coin so the surface area to depict one’s preferred images or symbols is even smaller. As the penny is the most common coin, many people come across it, but it is worth so little that it is discarded carelessly. The precedent of Lincoln representing the savior of the Union on the reverse

¹²⁹ “2009 Lincoln Cents”, <http://2009lincolncents.com/2009-lincoln-cent-designs/>.

¹³⁰ See Public Law 109-145 (Presidential \$1 Coin Act of 2005), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/PLAW-109publ145/html/PLAW-109publ145.htm>. Title III, Sec. 303 of the law states, “The design on the reverse of the 1-cent coins issued after December 31, 2009, shall bear an image emblematic of President Lincoln's preservation of the United States of America as a single and united country.”

of the coin has been in place since 1909. It has only been broken once with the four designs for the Bicentennial year described above. I have only seen one of these designs in person when someone else showed me the “Formative Years” penny because he knew I was working on a Lincoln dissertation. While this person was interested enough to listen to basically the same story of the penny I have related here, I cannot say this is the case with everyone. I have at least five friends and relatives who refuse to accept pennies in their change from a transaction because they find the coins worthless. This is a definite setback for someone wishing to use this specific piece of currency to present Lincoln. The Union shield Lincoln reverse which is the current design obviously represents Lincoln as the savior of the Union, but so does the Memorial. This symbol has been appropriated in different ways since the Memorial was built, but I will discuss the original purpose of this monument.

2.3 The Five-Dollar Bill

Lincoln not only replaced an “Indian” on the penny, he also took over for a real-life Native American (the only one in fact to feature on the obverse of an American bill) on the five-dollar silver certificate.¹³¹ Tatokainyanka (Running Antelope) was on the 1899 version of the five-dollar silver certificate. Lincoln was also placed on the first five-dollar Federal Reserve Note in 1914 and has remained there ever since that time. The Lincoln Memorial was not yet complete and thus was not on the back of the bill in 1914. Instead the reverse of the bill featured a scene of Christopher Columbus sighting land on the left of the bill and the Pilgrims landing on the North American continent on the right

¹³¹ Rob Wile, “The Complete Illustrated History of the \$20 Bill”, Business Insider, 11 Sept. 2012, <http://www.businessinsider.com/complete-history-20-bill-2012-9?op=1>. Pocahontas, who has always been more myth than fact in the American imagination, made the back of a twenty-dollar note in the 19th century in the form of John Gadsby Chapman’s 1840 painting, *The Baptism of Pocahontas*, see David Standish, *The Art of Money: The History and Design of Paper Currency from Around the World* (San Francisco: Chronicle, 2000), p. 40. The painting can also be found in the rotunda of the United States Capitol building.

of the note. The Lincoln Memorial would be added to the reverse of the bill in 1929 as part of the standardized Series of 1928.¹³²

Running Antelope is seen wearing a headdress in the picture on the five-dollar certificate, but like Liberty in her headdress on the penny, something is wrong. Running Antelope was a Hunkpapa Sioux leader but was depicted wearing the headdress of a Pawnee chief. The most common reason I have seen given for this disparity is because the Sioux headdress was too tall for the space for the picture on the bill. I have read two other stories. One states that Running Antelope thought it was improper to wear the headdress and declined while the other says Running Antelope had no headdress with him and was given the Pawnee headdress which he would not wear.¹³³ In any event, the tall feathers worn by Running Antelope in Alexander Gardner's 1872 picture of the Hunkpapa leader were photoshopped, to use a modern term, and replaced by the headdress seen on the bill which came from an 1899 photograph of an employee of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing which was taken by a Scottish immigrant named Thomas W. Smillie.¹³⁴

Silver is not the only metal associated with Running Antelope. One of Lincoln's generals, William Tecumseh Sherman, negotiated a peace treaty at Fort Laramie with Running Antelope, among other chiefs, four years before the Gardner photograph. This treaty was violated when gold was discovered in the Black Hills and Sioux land was confiscated in 1877. This confiscation has led to an ongoing legal dispute between the

¹³² Allen G. Berman, *Warman's Companion: U.S. Coins & Currency*, 2nd ed. (Iola, Wis.: Krause, 2009), pp. 225-231.

¹³³ Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People* (Doubleday Canada, 2012), p. 38. F.W. Daniel says the story that Running Antelope refused the headdress "cannot be credited," see "Running Antelope—misnamed Onepapa," *Paper Money* 8 (1) [Whole No. 29, 1969], p.7.

¹³⁴ Richard E. McCabe, et al., *Prairie Ghost: Pronghorn and Human Interaction in Early America* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010), p. 89.

Sioux and the United States Government. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 contains language that could have been useful before the Dakota War of 1862 which is discussed in chapter 4. Article I of the treaty states

If bad men among the whites, or among other people subject to the authority of the United States, shall commit any wrong upon the person or property of the Indians, the United States will, upon proof made to the agent and forwarded to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs at Washington City, proceed at once to cause the offender to be arrested and punished according to the laws of the United States, and also re-imburse the injured person for the loss sustained.¹³⁵

What remedy is due to the Indians if sacred land has been taken and financial reimbursement causes offense? Since the Supreme Court decided in favor of the Sioux Nation in 1980 in *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians* and awarded \$105 million to the tribes, the money has not been touched and continues to earn interest.¹³⁶ However, the Rosebud Sioux Tribe, Crow Creek Sioux Tribe and the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community purchased Pe' Sla, which is located in the Black Hills, for \$9 million in November 2012. The parcel of land is sacred because of its relation to the Lakota creation story.¹³⁷

2.4 The Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park

Roosevelt did not just play a role in Lincoln iconography, he also laid the cornerstone for the Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historical Park in Hodgenville, Kentucky, in 1909 during centennial celebrations of the sixteenth president's birth. This monument, opened and dedicated in 1911 by President Taft, came before the Lincoln Memorial and tells a different story of the man it memorializes. The Lincoln of the Kentucky birthplace monument is supposed to call to mind the common man, rising

¹³⁵ "Treaty of Fort Laramie" (1868), <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=42>.

¹³⁶ *United States v. Sioux Nation of Indians*, 448 U.S. 371 (1980).

¹³⁷ "Historic Reacquisition of "Pe-Sla Sacred Site" Was Signed Today", 30 Nov. 2012, Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, <http://www.shakopeedakota.org/newsroom/press-releases/2012/historic-reacquisition-pe-sla-sacred-site-was-signed-today>.

from humble beginnings to greatness. This presentation also contains an explicit reference to slavery on the inscription on the monument building. “Here over the log cabin where Abraham Lincoln was born, destined to preserve the Union and free the slave, a grateful people have dedicated this memorial to unity, peace, and brotherhood among the states.”¹³⁸

Lincoln was presented as the savior of the Union during the centennial of his birth, but white America did not also present Lincoln as the Great Emancipator at this time.¹³⁹ Theodore Roosevelt wrote in *Collier's* in 1908, that Lincoln was only surpassed by Washington in greatness. Roosevelt continued on to say that Lincoln, “this man of the plain people, the rail-splitter, the country lawyer” had become the “hero and savior” of the country, “to whom, more than any other, we owe it that we are a Nation at all.”¹⁴⁰ At the dedication to the monument, Roosevelt would mention that Lincoln “freed the slave,” but his main aim was to show that Lincoln, “the homely backwoods idealist” provided a model of practicality in dealings with those whom one differed from in view.¹⁴¹

As we know, Lincoln was no Horatio Alger hero despite being born in a log cabin in what was then the “West” of the young United States. Barry Schwartz writes that the “log cabin myth exaggerates the deprivations of Lincoln’s background as it reflects popular understandings of the frontier.” Schwartz points out that based on Thomas Lincoln’s land and not his illiteracy, that Abraham Lincoln was born into a middle class

¹³⁸ “Abraham Lincoln Birthplace National Historic Site,” Abraham Lincoln Online, <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/sites/birth.htm>.

¹³⁹ See Merrill Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, pp. 175-176.

¹⁴⁰ William Abbatt, *The Lincoln Centenary in Literature: Selections from Principal Magazines of February and March 1909, Together with a few from 1907-1908* (New York: William Abbatt, 1909), p. 5.

¹⁴¹ Theodore Roosevelt, *The Roosevelt Book: Selections from the Writings of Theodore Roosevelt*, with an introduction by Robert Bridges (New York: Scribner’s, 1909), pp. 74-75. Roosevelt’s presentation was not without an air of reunion as he spoke of a developing sense of “equal pride in the valor and self-devotion, alike of the men who wore the blue and the gray...,” p. 78.

of small farmers. Schwartz also points out that “landed wealth was more concentrated on the frontier than in any other rural region of the United States.”¹⁴²

More than 100 years after Roosevelt laid the cornerstone, the birthplace monument which consists of a Beaux-Arts neoclassical memorial building and a spurious Lincoln birthplace log cabin, the site became a National Historical Park. The birthplace monument was originally built by the Lincoln Farm Association which later donated it to the federal government in 1916. Upon the transfer, the government through the National Park Service has presented the literal fabrication of a cabin which unaware visitors might believe is the *actual* cabin in which Lincoln was born. On the National Park Service’s website, one reads: “For over a century people from around the world have come to rural Central Kentucky to honor the humble beginnings of our sixteenth president, Abraham Lincoln. His early life on Kentucky’s frontier shaped his character and prepared him to lead the nation through Civil War. The country’s first memorial to Lincoln, built with donations from young and old, enshrines the symbolic birthplace cabin.”¹⁴³ The cabin is correctly referred to as “symbolic” as it is not the actual cabin Lincoln was born in. In fact, the logs which were used to construct the cabin contain logs which were purportedly those used in constructing the original log cabins which both Lincoln and Confederate president Jefferson Davis were born in.¹⁴⁴

The Jefferson Davis birthplace monument in Fairview, Kentucky, less than 100 miles East of Hodgenville, does not carry out the log cabin fiction but it also does not mention slavery. Instead, in 1927 Kentucky’s State Parks took over what is now the fifth tallest monument in the United States and the “largest poured in place concrete obelisk

¹⁴² Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory*, pp. 146-147.

¹⁴³ “The First Lincoln Memorial,” National Park Service, <http://www.nps.gov/abli/index.htm>.

¹⁴⁴ Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory*, pp. 276-278.

in the world”¹⁴⁵ (351-feet tall compared to George Washington’s 555.4-foot tall obelisk monument in Washington, D.C.) to commemorate the birthplace of the only Confederate President. In 1907, a former Confederate general, Simon Bolivar Buckner, proposed a plan for a monument to be built for Jefferson Davis at his birthplace in Kentucky. The monument which was begun in 1917, and halted due to material shortages during World War I, was finished in 1924.¹⁴⁶ On a plaque near the entrance, Davis is quoted from his final public address in 1888. By the fact of having been the Confederate president, Davis was no longer allowed to be a U.S. citizen, but speaking to young men in Mississippi City, Mississippi, Davis had no regrets. “I feel no regret that I stand before you this afternoon a man without a country, for my ambition lies buried in the grave of the Confederacy. There has been consigned not only my ambition, but the dogmas upon which that Government was based.” The plaque leaves out the opening of the statement by the non-citizen Davis and begins with “The past is dead, let it bury its dead, its hopes and its aspirations; before you lies the future—a future full of golden promise; a future of expanding national glory, before which all the world shall stand amazed...”¹⁴⁷ Davis stresses reunion in this speech, which the plaque includes. This theme of reunion, devoid of references to slavery or what role former slaves would have in a reunited country without “rancor” or “bitter sectional feeling” had already been on display eight years earlier at the Lincoln Birthplace Monument and two years earlier at the most familiar Lincoln monument.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ “Jefferson Davis History,” Kentucky State Parks, <http://parks.ky.gov/parks/historicsites/jefferson-davis/history.aspx>.

¹⁴⁶ Jefferson Davis History,” Kentucky State Parks, <http://parks.ky.gov/parks/historicsites/jefferson-davis/history.aspx>.

¹⁴⁷ Jefferson Davis, *Jefferson Davis: The Essential Writings*, ed. William J. Cooper (New York: Modern Library, 2004), p. 437.

¹⁴⁸ Jefferson Davis, *Jefferson Davis*, p. 437.

2.5 The Lincoln Memorial

Memorials can take various forms but their purpose is to allow us to remember someone who is dead. The presentation in memorial form (in this case a monument) that I selected to write about is the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. This chapter is not the appropriate place to have an extended discussion about the Marian Anderson concert or the “I Have a Dream” speech that took place at the site of the memorial. The makers of the Lincoln Memorial could never have imagined such things based on its original design and purpose. There were three figures crucially involved with the creation of this monument, Daniel Chester French, Henry Bacon and Jules Guerin. French sculpted the seated Lincoln statue, Bacon was the architect and Guerin painted the interior murals.

French’s Lincoln statue is housed in a temple with a design inspired by those of ancient Greece. As it was the official position that the Southern States were simply in rebellion, the temple’s thirty-six columns represent each of the States in the Union at the time of Lincoln’s death. These States and the date they entered the Union are also represented on the frieze above the colonnade. The following words which appear about French’s seated Lincoln show that the temple will be a memorial for the Lincoln who saved the Union: “In this temple as in the hearts of the people for whom he saved the union the memory of Abraham Lincoln is enshrined forever.”

You will not find one word about slavery in that message for a reason. Royal Cortissoz, who inscribed the words in the stone, told Bacon “The Memorial must make common ground for the meeting of north and south. By emphasizing his saving the union you appeal to both sections. By saying nothing about slavery you avoid rubbing old sores.”¹⁴⁹ We also know that when the monument was dedicated in 1922 that the seating arrangements were segregated.

¹⁴⁹ Quoted in James A. Percoco, *Summers With Lincoln: Looking for the Man in the Monuments* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 187.

You will find the word slavery mentioned in Lincoln's second Inaugural Address which can be found inscribed in the North chamber wall. The South chamber wall houses the Gettysburg Address. Above both speeches are Guerin murals. One deals with emancipation and the other with reunion. These murals are probably the least influential part of the monument. The figures in both paintings are allegorical and most people do not even seem to take notice of the murals.¹⁵⁰ The positioning of the murals is very high on the interior walls of the chambers which does not help them in being noticed. Everything else about the Memorial seems to play second fiddle to Lincoln. We should remember that French's statue is the first thing you see when you climb the Memorial's steps. French's seated Lincoln is much larger than life and highly detailed. One can easily see the wrinkles on Lincoln's forehead and his vest and his well-trimmed fingernails. Despite the great care that was taken, there are drawbacks to this form of presentation.

French's Lincoln at the monument is as well done as it can possibly be for being made of marble. He entrusted the Piccirilli brothers to carve the statue faithfully. French made the right choice. The brothers were probably the most well respected marble carvers in the entire country. Another representative example of their work is the marble lions that sit outside the New York Public Library. Nevertheless, marble is not flesh. A good actor on screen portraying Lincoln is more likely to leaving a lasting impact than cold stone. Or, in the case of the film I selected, a good actor interacting with that Lincoln statue.

2.6 Capra's Lincoln

When Frank Capra's family immigrated to the United States from Sicily in 1903, he was only six years old. He wholeheartedly bought into the narrative given to immigrants the USA was the land of opportunity at a young age. This fact is not only prominent in his films it also features in his biography. His fellow director John Ford

¹⁵⁰ Percoco, *Summers With Lincoln*, p. 188.

reifies the American Dream myth in his foreword to Capra's 1973 autobiography *The Name Above the Title*. Indeed, Ford writes: "A great man, and great American, Frank Capra is an inspiration to those who believe in the American Dream." Ford continues about Capra, "in early youth he was no stranger to the work, the worry, and the long hours that went with being a poor immigrant boy in a dog-eat-dog society. If all this constituted a deprived childhood, Frank was too busy and too ambitious to notice."¹⁵¹ Capra himself outdoes Ford in the course of the book in displaying his patriotism for his adopted country. "Conquering adversities was so simple that I began to think of myself as another Horatio Alger, the success kid, my own rags-to-riches hero."¹⁵²

Years later as he is about to begin the *Mr. Smith* project, Capra is near an FDR press conference after Neville Chamberlain's "peace for our time" statement in 1938. Capra says "I was standing not more than fifteen feet from Franklin Delano Roosevelt, President of the United States of America! Foreign-born Americans can more fully appreciate the awesome aura of that title."¹⁵³ After having just graduated from the school that was to become Cal Tech with a chemical engineering degree, Capra joined the U.S. Army in 1918 during World War I and expected to go to France. He didn't. He was to stay in California and teach "ballistics mathematics to artillery officers."¹⁵⁴ While teaching in California, Capra contracted the Spanish Flu and survived. In between his medical discharge and serving the country again as a propaganda filmmaker (especially as the *Why We Fight* series director¹⁵⁵) for the U.S. Army Signal Corps during World War II,

¹⁵¹ Frank Capra, *The Name Above the Title: An Autobiography* (New York: Da Capo, 1997), xvii.

¹⁵² Capra, *The Name Above the Title*, p. 9.

¹⁵³ Capra, *The Name Above the Title*, p. 259.

¹⁵⁴ Capra, *The Name Above the Title*, p. 10.

¹⁵⁵ In the sixth installment of the *Why We Fight* series, *The Battle of China* (1944), Capra presents Sun Yat-sen as the American ally against Imperial Japan. Sun was inspired by the words of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address "government of the people, by the people, for the people" in

Capra made *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) which contains important and enduring representations of Lincoln.¹⁵⁶ Capra references Lincoln throughout his autobiography in various ways, always in reverential tones. We should not be surprised at Lincoln's influence on Capra. He grew up during Lincoln's Centennial celebration in 1909 and there was no shortage of the use of Lincoln to inspire assimilation and patriotism during this period.¹⁵⁷ The appropriation of Lincoln's image and words to inspire the American war effort in World War I (the effort which Capra readily enlisted in) was seemingly ubiquitous when we consider the amount of newspaper political cartoons, pro war posters and advertisements which sprouted up during the war. Capra would himself engage in this effort in World War II—the last American war that Lincoln would have this impact as an inspirational source as Barry Schwartz describes in his *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era*.¹⁵⁸

There are two scenes in *Mr. Smith* which anchor the entire film, both of which take place at the Lincoln Memorial. *Time* astutely observed in its review of the film: "Its real hero is not calfy Jeff Smith, but the things he believes, as embodied in the hero of U. S. democracy's first crisis, Abraham Lincoln. Its big moment is not the melodramatic windup, but when Jefferson Smith stands gawking in the Lincoln Memorial, listening to a small boy read from a tablet the question with which this film faces everyone who sees

developing his "Three People's Principles": minzu: nationalism, minquan: democracy, minsheng: people's welfare/livelihood. Capra of course knew his audience and did not have his narrator fumble over Chinese lines and instead showed the panel at the Lincoln Memorial with the key words of the Gettysburg Address lightened. The camera also showed the seated Lincoln sculpture before fading back to the Chinese context of the war and Sun Yat-sen.

¹⁵⁶ Capra (Director), *Mr. Smith Goes to Washington* (1939), Columbia.

¹⁵⁷ See Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory*, pp. 191-223.

¹⁵⁸ Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2009), 59-115.

it: ‘Whether that nation or any nation so conceived and so dedicated can long endure.’”¹⁵⁹ That is to say, *Mr. Smith* is a film about Lincoln and the ways in which he can inspire Americans. Capra said as much about the movie. Capra’s Lincoln “saved the Union with his ideals” and serves as “the fountainhead of moral courage where our own Jefferson Smith would go for a refill of inspiration after the political steam roller had flattened him.”¹⁶⁰ When Smith first arrives in Washington, D.C., he goes to the Lincoln Memorial as a wide-eyed sightseer. He doesn’t resemble someone appointed to fill out the term of a deceased US Senator at all. About the monument Capra says about his visit to it “in the most majestic shrine we have in America, sat the colossal marble figure of our greatest man—rumped, lanky, homely—his eyes daily filling the hearts of thousands of Americans with the deep, deep compassion that seemed to well out from his own great soul; eyes that seemed to say: ‘Friend, I have seen it all. It is good.’” The scene when Smith first goes to the monument is based on Capra’s own experience. There was an eight year old boy reading the words of Lincoln to his elderly grandfather when Capra was there. He was extremely moved by it. “I left the Lincoln Memorial,” Capra says “with this growing conviction about our film: The more uncertain are the people of the world, the more their hard won freedoms are scattered to the winds of chance, the more they need a ringing statement of America’s democratic ideals. The soul of our film would be anchored in Lincoln. Our Jefferson Smith would be a young Abe Lincoln, tailored to the rail-splitter’s simplicity, compassion, ideals, humor, and unswerving moral courage under pressure.”¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ “Cinema: The New Pictures: Oct. 23, 1939”, Time.com, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,772274,00.html>.

¹⁶⁰ Capra, *The Name Above the Title*, p. 259.

¹⁶¹ Capra, *The Name Above the Title*, p. 260.

In the film when Mr. Smith (James Stewart), the young Lincoln in Capra's imagination, approaches the Lincoln statue he does so reverentially and removes his hat.

The camera shows us the words which make clear the original purpose of the monument

IN THIS TEMPLE

AS IN THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE

FOR WHOM HE SAVED THE UNION

THE MEMORY OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN

IS ENSHRINED FOREVER

The camera then pans down and we see the head of the statue. Smith wanders off to the North chamber and silently reads the Second Inaugural Address. He stops when he hears a young boy reading the Gettysburg Address and goes to the South chamber following

the sound of the voice. Later in the film when Smith is thinking about abandoning

Washington and his Senate seat altogether after the corrupt Senior Senator tries to pin spurious charges on Smith, he stops at the Memorial bags in his hands. It is nighttime as opposed to the daylight when he first visited the site. He breaks down sobbing and his

cynical secretary Clarissa Saunders (Jean Arthur) finds him. Only now in the film is she sincere. The message is clear, even the most apathetic amongst us can be inspired by

Lincoln. She convinces Smith to stay and fight against the corruption in the Senate by

invoking Lincoln in the background. Saunders says that she thinks Lincoln was waiting on Smith to come and stand up to the crooks. We should not be surprised that directly

following this regaining of strength from the visit to the monument Smith is able to hold off a political machine until the corrupt Senator Joseph Paine (Claude Rains) cracks.

Even though the film might seem overly quaint today it retains an appeal. Perhaps the appeal lies in the film's depiction of the common man standing up to the corrupt political establishment and making a difference. With the help of the unpopularity of the role of

lobbyists in today's Congress, Capra has thus been able to overcome that limitation of the film genre, lasting resonance.

2.7 Spielberg's *Lincoln*

Spielberg's biographer, Joseph McBride, only includes a few details about the film *Lincoln*¹⁶², as the second edition of the book was published in 2011. What the biographer does include is a justifiable criticism of an earlier film, *Saving Private Ryan*, which uses a presentation of Lincoln which made quite an impact on President Bill Clinton, who both visited Spielberg at his California home and hosted the director at the White House during his presidency.¹⁶³ McBride writes about the film

The triteness of much of Ryan's plotting is a reflection of the basic phoniness of its premise. Miller and his men are sent to rescue Private James Ryan (Matt Damon), whose three brothers have just been killed in combat: their mother is seen collapsing in grief at her Iowa farmhouse when she hears the news. Various portrayed in the film as a mission of compassion (by General George C. Marshall, played like a waxwork by Harve Presnell, reading Abraham Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Bixby) and a PR stunt (as Miller and his men more cynically regard it), this plot device raises an artificial moral question (Is it just to risk other men's lives to save one?) that seems a distraction from the real issues of the war. This device may evoke the line from the Talmud quoted in Schindler's List—"Whoever saves one life saves the world entire"--but its deployment in Ryan cheapens the idea, especially since it has no direct precedent in the actual history of American involvement in World War II.¹⁶⁴

Spielberg's use of the letter in the film undoubtedly brought it to a larger audience than Clinton¹⁶⁵ or George H.W. Bush¹⁶⁶ did when using it in the course of their

¹⁶² Spielberg (Director and Producer), *Lincoln* (2012), DreamWorks.

¹⁶³ Joseph McBride, *Steven Spielberg: A Biography*, 2nd ed. (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press, 2011), p. 469.

¹⁶⁴ McBride, *Steven Spielberg*, p. 465.

¹⁶⁵ Clinton said at a dinner for Gray Davis in 1998, "I told him one of my favorite parts of that movie was George Marshall reading Abraham Lincoln's letter to Mrs. Bixby, which I used to read every Memorial Day, because it captures what America is all about," "Remarks at a Dinner for Lieutenant Governor Gray Davis of California, 11 Aug. 1998, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=54773>.

¹⁶⁶ Bush quoted the Bixby letter in a proclamation on Gold Star Mothers and said "The American Gold Star Mothers have likewise made an enormous sacrifice for our country, and, on this

presidential terms. The use of the letter to Mrs. Bixby no matter the medium is fraught with problems. As American historian Edward Steers, Jr. pointed out about the letter in a book on *Lincoln Legends*

Serious questions have been raised concerning Lincoln's authorship of the letter. Claims have been made most recently that Lincoln's personal secretary John Hay wrote the letter on behalf of Lincoln. The original letter has never been found, although a facsimile did appear around 1900 and was included in a collection of Lincoln's writings edited by Nicolay and Hay. This facsimile has been ruled a forgery, and no serious scholar today accepts it as the original letter. And, while Mrs. Bixby had five sons, not all five died in the war. Mrs. Bixby, a woman of questionable character, may well have been behind the claim that all five of her sons died in the war.¹⁶⁷

Is Spielberg, Clinton or Bush aware of the "questionable character" of the real-life Mrs. Bixby? The letter is authentic but lost, according to Steers, for a reason that would undoubtedly shock viewers of *Saving Private Ryan*. "The most reasonable explanation," Steers writes, "for its not still existing is that Mrs. Bixby, an ardent Confederate sympathizer who disliked Lincoln, destroyed the letter."¹⁶⁸ Michael Burlingame is of the view that Lincoln's secretary, John Hay, wrote the letter and not Lincoln. Ultimately, Burlingame concludes that if Lincoln did not pen the letter, the sixteenth president's literary ability remains undiminished.¹⁶⁹ While the letter and its recipient were real, neither of these facts change the perception that Lincoln wrote the letter and wrote it to a woman who is worthy of praise. Commentators writing about *Saving Private Ryan*

occasion, we echo President Lincoln's timeless appeal," "Proclamation 6187 - Gold Star Mother's Day 1990," 26 Sept. 1990, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=1893>.

¹⁶⁷ Steers, *Lincoln Legends: Myths, Hoaxes, and Confabulations Associated With Our Greatest President* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2007), p. 94.

¹⁶⁸ Steers, *Lincoln Legends*, p. 97.

¹⁶⁹ Michael Burlingame, "New Light on the Bixby Letter," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Vol. 16, No. 1 (Winter 1995), pp. 59-71.

mostly let the details of Mrs. Bixby's life slip by unnoticed in reviews.¹⁷⁰ Spielberg has had no such luxury with *Lincoln*.

Several fact-checking articles have appeared to critique aspects of Spielberg's *Lincoln* but none have dealt with Spielberg's presentation of Lincoln in the big picture sense of the Lincoln (Daniel Day-Lewis) on the silver screen as Sean Wilentz has at *The New Republic*.¹⁷¹ While it is important to point out for accuracy's sake, as historian James McPherson does, that Lincoln would not have cursed as Lewis does while playing Lincoln, there are larger issues with the film.¹⁷² More importantly, Joshua Zeitz, criticizes the way Lincoln's advisors are depicted in the film. In addition, Zeitz correctly calls Thaddeus Stevens' character "one-dimensional." The fault is not with Tommy Lee Jones, who gives a spirited performance as Stevens, but with Kushner's writing. The foregoing details constitute drawbacks to the movie, but more damning is the fact that some viewers will take the film for literal history unknowingly due to the nature of the biopic genre. They should not do so. Zeitz is not the first to point out that Goodwin and thus Spielberg misrepresents Lincoln's "political genius" in putting together his cabinet.¹⁷³

Of the four rivals Lincoln appointed in 1860, only Seward is left by the second term and is presented in the film neither as a close friend nor as a foe who tried to usurp

¹⁷⁰ Harold Holzer was an exception to the rule, see his "as Bad as She Could Be," *American Heritage*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Feb./March, 2006), <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/%E2%80%9Cbad-she-could-be%E2%80%9D>.

¹⁷¹ Wilentz, "Lincoln in Hollywood, from Griffith to Spielberg," *The New Republic*, 21 Dec. 2012, <http://www.tnr.com/article/books-and-arts/magazine/111242/the-lost-cause-and-the-won-cause>.

¹⁷² Paul Bond, "'Lincoln' Cussing: What the F@*&! Is Up With This S#@?!," 5 Dec. 2012, *The Hollywood Reporter*, <http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/steven-spielbergs-lincoln-what-f-397899>. McPherson, who was a consultant on the movie, emailed screenwriter Tony Kushner with objections about the profanity in the script. Doris Kearns Goodwin, who wrote the book the film was based on, did not raise objections and further, even encouraged Kushner to use an anecdote about an Ethan Allen joke purportedly told by Lincoln which uses the word 'shit' in the punchline.

¹⁷³ Matthew Pinkser, "The myth of 'Rivals,'" 18 Nov. 2008, *Los Angeles Times*, <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/nov/18/opinion/oe-pinsker18>.

control of the Fort Sumter situation in 1861.¹⁷⁴ The first Secretary of War Simon Cameron was a corrupt failure. Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase was a sore loser and constantly angling to replace Lincoln, something which Goodwin details. Attorney General Edward Bates resigned out of frustration, unable to influence policy and tired of infighting amongst cabinet members. Lincoln Zeitz states “Spielberg changed the names of many Democratic opponents of the 13th Amendment. That fact alone is problematic, but one of the pseudonyms assigned to a proslavery congressman, if I heard it right, is ‘Washburn.’ There were actually four Washburn brothers who served in Congress before, during and after the war, and they all opposed slavery. Their mother would be very upset.”¹⁷⁵

To return to Wilentz, his article covers Lincoln’s presence in films from D.W. Griffith’s *Birth of a Nation* (1915) to Spielberg’s *Lincoln*. He argues that the “Lost Cause” which had been dominating the Hollywood battle of the Civil War, should now be on the way out. Spielberg’s film, Wilentz writes

ought to remove, once and for all, the lingering stain of the Lost Cause mythology, at least in respectable cinema. It ought to render ridiculous depictions of the Civil War as anything other than a struggle over American slavery and its future. It ought to bring some sense of honor back to the profession of politics, with all of its deception, deal-making, and machination. And it ought to serve as a second Lincoln Memorial, the one in which the hero is not chiseled out of stone.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Goodwin covers Seward’s role in Fort Sumter and the larger situation of whether or not to surrender the fort in *Team of Rivals*, pp. 298-341. Good and brief summaries of Seward taking it upon himself to contract the Confederate commissioners secretly and his proposal for Lincoln to restore the Union by enticing the South back with the spoils of war against Spain, France or both can be found in James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, pp. 268-271 and William E. Gienapp, *Abraham Lincoln and Civil War America*, pp. 79-82. Both are aware but seem unconvinced of Norman B. Ferris’ revisionist work on the Lincoln-Seward relationship, the best example of which regarding Fort Sumter is “Lincoln and Seward in Civil War Diplomacy: Their Relationship at the Outset Reexamined,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Winter 1991), pp. 21-42.

¹⁷⁵ Joshua Zeitz, “Fact-Checking ‘Lincoln’: Lincoln’s Mostly Realistic; His Advisers Aren’t,” 12 Nov. 2012, *The Atlantic*, <http://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2012/11/fact-checking-lincoln-lincolns-mostly-realistic-his-advisers-arent/265073/>.

¹⁷⁶ Wilentz, “Lincoln in Hollywood, from Griffith to Spielberg.”

I am somewhat cautious regarding the statement about the Lost Cause. *Lincoln* overdoes it on Lincoln's storytelling, gets enough minor details wrong to render it questionable to bring into classrooms below the collegiate level and does not hit hard enough on the subject matter of the 13th Amendment: slavery. By not depicting scenes of slavery or the Confederate's government clinging to the institution as times grew desperate how can the movie combat such a phenomenon as the existence of a Confederate Memorial Day in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Texas (Confederate Heroes Day)?

On that subject of slavery, James McPherson only had room in an interview about the movie to mention the fact that Frederick Douglass is completely left out of the film despite his relationship with Lincoln.¹⁷⁷ That relationship which is missing from the film definitely deserves more than a simple reference. Wilentz disagrees and says "some" leftist historians "complained that *Lincoln* slights blacks by including only passive black characters, and by ignoring all that the runaway slaves and free black abolitionists did to achieve emancipation and abolition. Taking nothing away from Frederick Douglass, the accusation is as unfair as it is literal-minded."¹⁷⁸ As Wilentz does not identify who the "leftists" were, but I assume he would include his friend and fellow historian Eric Foner in the group. Foner wrote a letter to the editor of the *New York Times* about columnist David Brooks' piece on the film. In his letter Foner brings up not only runaway slaves but also the lack of feminist leaders in the movie. Foner writes, "The 13th Amendment originated not with Lincoln but with a petition campaign early in 1864 organized by the Women's National Loyal League, an organization of abolitionist feminists headed by

¹⁷⁷ Rebecca Keegan, "Is 'Lincoln' the Real Deal?," 28 Nov. 2012, *Los Angeles Times*, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/nov/28/entertainment/la-et-mn-1128-lincoln-history-20121128>.

¹⁷⁸ Wilentz, "Lincoln in Hollywood, from Griffith to Spielberg."

Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton.”¹⁷⁹ The 1864 petition specifically urged a constitutional amendment while an earlier 1863 petition did not.¹⁸⁰ I do not feel that one has to be branded a “leftist” to point out that *Lincoln* is missing elements.

So, why is Frederick Douglass missing in action in *Lincoln*? Was the limit of a feature film’s length the issue? The issue of length might answer the question about Douglass. However, running time is no excuse to not show any of the brutality of slavery in some way in a film about the end of the legal institution. In this sense, Quentin Tarantino’s *Django Unchained* (2012) can be seen as a necessary complement to *Lincoln*. *Django Unchained* pays homage to the spaghetti western and is one of Tarantino’s revenge films, and yet, it can augment Spielberg’s film. *Django Unchained* depicts the capriciousness of slave holders through the superbly acted character of Calvin Candie (Leonardo DiCaprio) and the horrors of slavery in the South which are missing from *Lincoln*.

2.8 Spielberg’s *Lincoln* and the Erasure of Slavery

Spielberg’s *Lincoln*, which was based on Doris Kearns Goodwin’s massive *Team of Rivals*, could have been subtitled: “The Passage of the 13th Amendment.”¹⁸¹ Spielberg’s screenwriter Tony Kushner admitted the film was about more than just Lincoln when speaking to Harvard students after a private screening of the film. “It’s as much about the House of Representatives as it is about Lincoln.” Kushner also conceded that focusing only merely the final four months of Lincoln’s life meant that Frederick Douglass was going to be left out of the film. Indeed, much of the 550-page original

¹⁷⁹ Foner, “Lincoln’s Use of Politics for Noble Ends,” 26 Nov. 2012, *New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/27/opinion/lincolns-use-of-politics-for-noble-ends.html>.

¹⁸⁰ Michael Vorenberg, *Final Freedom: The Civil War, the Abolition of Slavery, and the Thirteenth Amendment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 38-40.

¹⁸¹ Spielberg purchased the movie rights to the book, which turned out to be 916 pages in length, before it was written, see Michael Fleming, “Lincoln logs in at DreamWorks,” 11 Jan. 2005, *Variety.com*, <http://www.variety.com/article/VR1117916168.html?categoryid=1238&cs=1>.

script didn't make the cut. As Kushner kept paring down the script he said "it became clear that the story we were telling was about a bunch of white guys, people who had no direct experience of slavery—and we didn't want to do a sort of God's-eye view of showing the audience what these people didn't know."¹⁸²

What Spielberg's Lincoln and the characters in the Congress do know plenty about is party politics and backroom dealing. The storytelling Lincoln, which is used to great effect in the film, is generally known by audiences who are more or less familiar with Lincoln. This other Lincoln who plays politics is not one most people are used to seeing. Columnist DeWayne Wickham, writing in 2008 about the corruption scandal surrounding former Illinois Governor Rod Blagojevich, titled his piece "Even Lincoln Involved Himself in Political Horse-Trading." Wickham describes Lincoln, through surrogates, trading Republican nomination votes in 1860 at the Chicago Republican Convention for Cabinet positions in response to a statement by U.S. Attorney Patrick Fitzgerald. Fitzgerald had said Blagojevich's actions were enough to "make Lincoln roll over in his grave."¹⁸³ While Blagojevich was after personal enrichment and Lincoln was after political gain, Wickham is right to suggest that even educated persons do not seem to know enough about Lincoln the politician.

The nomination politics Lincoln plays cannot be included in the film due to where the narrative begins, but Spielberg was able to portray Lincoln's willingness to engage in what the public seems to feel is unscrupulous behavior in showing the passage of the 13th Amendment in the House of Representatives.¹⁸⁴ Unlike the 1860 nomination

¹⁸² Kushner quoted in "Tony Kushner Talks 'Lincoln,'" 30 Nov. 2012, Harvard Magazine, <http://harvardmagazine.com/2012/11/tony-kushner-talks-lincoln>.

¹⁸³ Wickham, "Even Lincoln Involved Himself in Political Horse-Trading," 18 Dec. 2008, Muskogee Phoenix.com, <http://muskogee phoenix.com/columns/x2129015911/Even-Lincoln-involved-himself-in-political-horse-trading>.

¹⁸⁴ Goodwin discusses the 1860 Republican Convention in *Team of Rivals* in detail, see pp. 237-256.

process, Spielberg shows Lincoln actively meeting with his surrogates. However ahistorical such a meeting may be, the scene in the film of Lincoln dropping in on his secretive aides who encouraged reluctant members of the House of Representatives to see it their way helps to drive home the point that Lincoln could get his hands dirty and did from time to time. Spielberg could not show everything from Goodwin's book but his presentation of this unfamiliar (to the general public) Lincoln is what could make the film have a lasting impact. Perhaps the *Los Angeles Times* film critic Kenneth Turan put it best when he said of the film, "One of the surprises and the pleasures of "Lincoln" is its portrait of the president as a man gifted at reconciling irreconcilable points of view, someone who wouldn't hesitate to play both ends against the middle and even stretch the truth in the service of the greater good."¹⁸⁵

Spielberg himself was the one who suggested that Kushner chop the script down from what amounted to enough pages to make an HBO miniseries like *John Adams* to *Lincoln*'s current feature length. Spielberg said about the final decision and the vision for the film,

what we determined we needed to do was not to make a movie about a monument named Lincoln. We needed to make a movie about a man named Lincoln . . . and in this case we focused it down to the last four months of his life where he had to make a monumental decision to finish the war and then attempt to abolish slavery through a constitutional amendment, the 13th Amendment. Or, whether he needed to get enough votes to get this amendment through the House of Representatives before the war ended."¹⁸⁶

Between Kushner and Spielberg's comments, we have a good idea of what the intention of the film was, that is to say, to show how Lincoln and the 38th Congress got the 13th Amendment passed.

¹⁸⁵ Turan, "Steven Spielberg's 'Lincoln' a Towering Achievement," 8 Nov. 2012, *Los Angeles Times*, <http://articles.latimes.com/2012/nov/08/entertainment/la-et-mn-lincoln-review-20121109>.

¹⁸⁶ Spielberg's comments were made during a Yahoo! Movies question and answer session following a screening of the film at the AMC Loews Lincoln Square 13 in New York City on 10 Oct. 2012. The session can be viewed at <http://movies.yahoo.com/lincoln-live/>.

Is it fair to criticize the stated intention of *Lincoln* by saying it falls short by erasing scenes of slavery, let alone the influence from African American leaders, from view during the film? Spielberg said himself that “Students and teachers are the first wave of the people who I’m interested in hearing responses from about history.” Spielberg also realized that his film might be used by teachers and cautioned against a narrow telling of history about Lincoln through his movie. “I don’t agree with that. I think that a movie can only be an adjunct, a movie can only be a supplement to books, to different points of view, to scholars, historians and your own teachers.”¹⁸⁷ Spielberg had previously used abolitionist characters in a key way in the plot of *Amistad* (1997)¹⁸⁸, so it seems strange that he would leave them out of *Lincoln*. Goodwin, for her part, did not excluded abolitionists from her book.

Douglass’ absence from the film brings to mind his comment that African Americans in relation to Lincoln “are at best only his step-children.”¹⁸⁹ Goodwin’s presentation in *Team of Rivals* may leave readers with a much different feeling. Douglass, in the same speech as the “step-children” statement, gives Goodwin her first words of the introduction to the book *Team of Rivals*. However, Douglass’ very important speech is seemingly used to set up the justification of writing another book about Lincoln. The point of the speech seems to be missed entirely. Goodwin cites Douglass in the following manner: “there is little necessity on this occasion to speak at length and critically of this great and good man, and of his high mission in the world.

¹⁸⁷ “Lincoln Live Q&A - October 10,” Yahoo! Movies, 10 Oct. 2012, <http://movies.yahoo.com/lincoln-live/>.

¹⁸⁸ *Amistad* was based on the true story of an uprising of slaves on the slave ship *La Amistad* in 1839. The ship was guided to the United States near Long Island, New York from the waters off of Cuba. The slaves were interned while a trial would determine their fate. The slaves were eventually emancipated and returned to Africa in 1842.

¹⁸⁹ Douglass, “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln,” 14 April 1876, in *Frederick Douglass: Selected Speeches and Writings*, p. 618.

That ground has been fully occupied . . . The whole field of fact and fancy has been gleaned and garnered. Any man can say things that are true of Abraham Lincoln, but no man can say anything that is new of Abraham Lincoln.”¹⁹⁰

The “Oration,” as per usual for Douglass, was chocked full of rhetoric. Douglass, just as much as Goodwin, had every intention of saying something new about Lincoln. Douglass invoked the memory of Lincoln to pass judgment on the nation for the abandonment of Reconstruction. Douglass’ “little necessity” to “speak at length” is at odds with what he says at the beginning of the speech about gathering “at the national center to perform something like a national act.”¹⁹¹ Douglass also belies the “little necessity” of a lengthy speech by having his run for 4,777 words, plenty of which are certainly critical of Lincoln. James Oakes called it “Douglass’s longest and most considered evaluation of Lincoln.”¹⁹² Michael Burlingame states in the same vein that

We need to read Douglass’s 1865 speeches on Lincoln to understand his assessment of the President in 1876. Then we can see his apparent cynicism about Lincoln’s racial priorities primarily as a reflection on the disheartening civil rights outlook as the Reconstruction period drew to a close. Then we can appreciate more fully Douglass’s quotation in that speech of the martyred president’s Second Inaugural Address, in particular of the passage which dealt with God’s reason for allowing the war to go on so long and to be so bloody. By this time, Douglass would have known about a private memorandum Lincoln wrote in 1862, while struggling with the difficult and costly progress of the Civil War.¹⁹³

While Goodwin notes some of the criticisms of Lincoln by Douglass over the course of his career in the book and gives the meetings between Lincoln and Douglass some space in her book, neither the “Oration” nor Douglass’ 1865 speeches (in which he said coping

¹⁹⁰ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, p. xv.

¹⁹¹ Douglass, “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln,” p. 616.

¹⁹² James Oakes, *The Radical and The Republican*, p. 275.

¹⁹³ Burlingame, “Finding Ever More to Say on Lincoln,” May 2010, Ashbrook University, <http://ashbrook.org/publications/onprin-spring10-burlingame/>.

with the death of Lincoln that he was “emphatically the black man’s president”¹⁹⁴) are given proper recognition.

Eleven years after the death of Lincoln, Douglass was not speaking from a point which was too close to the president’s death to “assess the fascination that this plain and complex, shrewd and transparent, tender and iron-willed leader would hold for generations of Americans,” as Goodwin writes.¹⁹⁵ Douglass says in the “Oration” that Lincoln’s “memory will be precious forever” and likewise, the anniversary of Lincoln’s death “will ever remain a memorable day in the annals of this republic.”¹⁹⁶ In contrast to Goodwin’s words about Lincoln’s lasting “fascination” for Americans, Douglass said in 1876:

He was a mystery to no man who saw him and heard him. Though high in position, the humblest could approach him and feel at home in his presence. Though deep, he was transparent; though strong, he was gentle; though decided and pronounced in his convictions, he was tolerant towards those who differed from him, and patient under reproaches. Even those who only knew him through his public utterance obtained a tolerably clear idea of his character and personality. The image of the man went out with his words, and those who read them knew him.¹⁹⁷

Without a careful discussion of the “Oration,” from which Goodwin does not quote either the criticism or the praise of Lincoln, it is more understandable that Spielberg and Kushner found Douglass expendable.¹⁹⁸ Douglass’ last appearance in Goodwin’s book is at the White House after the Second Inaugural where he tells the president who was eager to hear his opinion on the speech, “Mr. Lincoln, that was a sacred effort.”¹⁹⁹

¹⁹⁴ See Draft speech, June 5, 1865, Frederick Douglass Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁹⁵ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, p. xv.

¹⁹⁶ Douglass, “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln,” pp. 623-624.

¹⁹⁷ Douglass, “Oration in Memory of Abraham Lincoln,” p. 621.

¹⁹⁸ A nuanced evaluation of the “Oration” and Douglass’ late relationship with Lincoln can be found in Henningsen, *Der Mythos Amerika*, pp. 39-41.

¹⁹⁹ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, p. 700.

Spielberg does not need Douglass to voice these words for in his ending Spielberg has us see the performance of the Second Inaugural Address and then Edwin Stanton saying that Lincoln now belongs to the ages. The message is clear. Lincoln is still the Great Emancipator for Spielberg and nothing will be done to suggest otherwise during Lincoln's apotheosis.

2.9 Comparing Money, Monuments, Movies

Having discussed each of the forms of representation separately I wanted to take a look at them collectively to compare and contrast them. The Lincoln Memorial was on the reverse of the penny from 1959-2008, the Lincoln Memorial itself has stood since 1922 and the Lincoln Memorial played an important part in Capra's film. The same representation in these three forms is very different. Despite the high detailing on the reverse of the penny, one cannot see everything in the Memorial on it. It is at most a reminder of the Memorial that easily fades when the coin is worn due to use. As with the coin, wear and tear over eighty-eight years has also altered the monument. Human traffic and pollution alike have taken their toll on the marble of the Lincoln Memorial. In this sense, Capra's film best prevents the sands of time from ravaging the representation of Lincoln in the French statue. The Lincoln statue we see on screen is seventeen years old and will not change—granted we only see very little of the monument itself in the film.

By way of contrast to Capra, Spielberg intended to make a movie about the man and not the figurative monument. Lincoln replaced Native American symbolism on both the penny and the five-dollar bill, but only in the paper form did he replace an actual Native American. The Birthplace Monument houses a symbolic log cabin but mentions slavery while the designers of the Memorial took care to not mention the institution. While there is synergy in the representations of the penny, the Memorial and *Mr. Smith, Lincoln*, the Birthplace Monument and the five-dollar bill have been brought in with

discord in mind as not all of the symbols in these forms match up. In each case, one's perception of the representation is very specific to the form.

A penny or a five-dollar bill can be held up close and even put under a microscope to look at the details on the currency. One is not able to do something similar with the Lincoln Memorial, the Birthplace Monument or with *Mr. Smith* or *Lincoln*. You can carry a penny or a fiver with you easily, a DVD of the Lincoln films is also easy to transport. The Lincoln Memorial or Birthplace Monument itself is impossible to transport on one's person. This may affect one's perception of the representation of Lincoln. A single piece of currency or a DVD takes little effort to acquire and look at. These events are very simple to repeat. A trip to Washington, D.C. or Hodgenville, Kentucky is more intensive. Once you get to D.C. to see the Lincoln Memorial or Kentucky to view the Birthplace Monument, you have to climb the more than fifty steps before you can approach the statue or the log cabin. The effort expended to experience these monuments may increase the intensity with which one tries to engage it, or it might not.

It is easy enough to read Lincoln's "Second Inaugural Address" or the "Gettysburg Address," but only in Washington, D.C. at the Lincoln Memorial can you read them and view the Guerin murals at the same time. *Mr. Smith* and *Lincoln* allow you to see and hear snippets of those speeches while the penny and the five-dollar bill give you neither of those experiences. While the log cabin at the Birthplace Memorial is not genuine, one gets a better idea of what Lincoln's early home might have been like by seeing it. Both the penny and the Lincoln Memorial were designed to depict Lincoln as the savior of the Union, while *Mr. Smith* wants us to see a Lincoln who inspires the common man to be reminded that the United States is a "government of the people, for the people, by the people." While the Birthplace Monument was dedicated to reunion, it could potentially also represent Lincoln as the savior of the Union or the Great

Emancipator. *Lincoln* gives us both the savior of the Union and the Great Emancipator in its title character. However, I think that the most intriguing thing these forms share is the immigrant connection.

2.10 Lincoln and the Immigrants

A common thread across all three genres is that some of our most popular and lasting representations of Lincoln were made with significant contributions from immigrants. A caveat with the Lincoln Memorial is that it was not designed by immigrants, but French trusted no one else but the Piccirilli brothers with the job of carving the seated Lincoln. In *Lincoln*, while Spielberg is an American, his cinematographer is the Polish immigrant Janusz Kamiński and the roles of Lincoln and General Grant are portrayed by foreign born actors, Daniel Day-Lewis and Jared Harris, respectively. It is interesting that immigrants came to play the part of representing Lincoln to their adopted nation and for that nation. In a strict sense from what we know about human migration, everyone who came to North America is an immigrant, but once the United States was established newcomers did not have an easy time assimilating—they still do not. The fault is not always their own. One of the ironies of immigrants embracing Lincoln is that one of the things he represents is forever closed to them. Foreigners cannot become the President of the United States, even after naturalization. Perhaps, as Capra suggested, immigrants have a better understanding of what that office represents because of that fact.

Capra's statement is something to think about in our current political climate and the recent passage of Arizona's contentious anti-illegal immigration law which came up during the Miss USA pageant in 2010.²⁰⁰ Conservative commentator Debbie Schlusel felt that Miss Oklahoma, Morgan Elizabeth Woolard, should have won 2010's Miss USA pageant. Woolard was asked about the Arizona law during the contest. She answered,

²⁰⁰ Senate Bill 1070, <http://www.azleg.gov/legtext/49leg/2r/bills/sb1070s.pdf>.

“I’m a huge believer in States’ rights. I think that’s what’s so wonderful about America. So I think it’s perfectly fine for Arizona to create that law.”²⁰¹

Schlusssel vented her anger on the contest winner, Rima Fakhri, a Lebanese immigrant (likely the first immigrant winner).²⁰² Some of the members of Hezbollah also have the family name Fakhri, according to Schlusssel. Schlusssel does not merely state this fact, she flat out suggests Fakhri was concealing her true nature (a caption of a double image of Fakhri and the Hezbollah flag on the blog reads Miss Hezbollah is Now Miss USA) as she is “close relatives” with “top officials” in Hezbollah. Schlusssel provided no evidence of the claim that Fakhri has family in Hezbollah. After Fakhri’s win, Schlusssel wrote, “even Barack Obama will exploit this as propaganda for Islam.” Schlusssel stated about the pageant itself, “I don’t just wonder if this contest was rigged. I have a feeling it is. Clearly, there is affirmative action for Muslim women in beauty pageants and other such ‘contests.’”²⁰³ And what did the supposed radical Rima Fakhri herself say when asked how she felt about winning? “Ask me after I’ve had a pizza.”²⁰⁴ Hanin Ghaddar sought out to refute Schlusssel’s claim by speaking with Fakhri’s extended family in

²⁰¹ “Miss USA Contestant Asked About SB 1070”, May 16, 2010, *Arizona Daily Star*, http://azstarnet.com/entertainment/article_2d57c31a-6156-11df-a6d5-001cc4c03286.html.

²⁰² The contest officials stated that “pageant records were not detailed enough to show whether Ms. Fakhri was the first Arab-American, Muslim or immigrant to win the Miss USA title,” see Derrick Henry, “In Miss USA, a Novel Twist,” 17 May 2010, *New York Times*, <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/05/17/in-miss-usa-contest-a-novel-twist/>.

²⁰³ Donald Trump, Dhimmi: Miss Hezbollah Rima Fakhri Wins Miss USA; Rigged for Muslim? Miss Oklahoma’s Immigration Answer”, Debbie Schlusssel.com, <http://www.debbieschlusssel.com/22000/donald-trump-dhimmi-miss-hezbollah-wins-miss-usa-was-contest-rigged-for-muslima-hezbollah-supporter-miss-oklahomas-great-arizona-immigration-answer/>.

²⁰⁴ “Miss Michigan crowned as Miss USA,” 17 May 2010, Today, <http://www.today.com/id/37179168/site/todayshow/ns/today-style/t/miss-michigan-crowned-miss-usa/>.

Lebanon. Not just among Fakhri's family but in general in Lebanon, the Schlusser's Hezbollah claim was "viewed as slander," Ghaddar wrote.²⁰⁵

We can remember that Lincoln too saw this kind of unhinged commentary in his day. While he did include jokes about Irish immigrants in his repertoire, Lincoln nevertheless had strong feelings about their being treated equally in the United States. At the height of the popularity of the American Party (aka, "Know-Nothing" Party) which feared the results of German and Irish immigration into the country, Lincoln wrote to his friend Joshua Speed.

I am not a Know-Nothing. That is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of negroes, be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me to be pretty rapid. As a nation, we began by declaring that '*all men are created equal*.' We now practically read it '*all men are created equal, except negroes*.' When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read '*all men are created equal, except negroes, and foreigners, and catholics*.' When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty---to Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, and without the base alloy of hypocrisy.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵ Hanin Ghaddar, "The Not-So-Radical Roots of Miss USA," 21 May 2010, *Foreign Policy*, http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/05/21/the_not_so_radical_roots_of_miss_usa.

²⁰⁶ "To Joshua F. Speed," 24 Aug. 1855, CW Vol. II, p. 323.

CHAPTER 3
LINCOLN AND RACIAL REVISION

3.1 Lincoln on Race and Slavery

This topic of Lincoln's views on race and slavery engages the issue of historical revisionism. This chapter will focus on revision as it regards Lincoln on race and slavery. There certainly needs to be revisionist history as James McPherson reminded us in his 2003 President's column of the newsmagazine of the American Historical Association.

[R]evision is the lifeblood of historical scholarship. History is a continuing dialogue between the present and the past. Interpretations of the past are subject to change in response to new evidence, new questions asked of the evidence, new perspectives gained by the passage of time. There is no single, eternal, and immutable 'truth' about past events and their meaning. The unending quest of historians for understanding the past—that is, 'revisionism'—is what makes history vital and meaningful. Without revisionism, we might be stuck with the images of Reconstruction after the American Civil War that were conveyed by D. W. Griffith's *Birth of a Nation* and Claude Bowers's *The Tragic Era*.²⁰⁷

Revisionism has caused presentations of Lincoln to change over time. While Lincoln as the Savior of the Union remains a prominent presentation with detractors of it from certain schools of thought, it is Lincoln as emancipator, great, reluctant or otherwise, that is of particular interest regarding revision.

Lincoln was not as bad or good as the simplistic readings of him have suggested. It is not difficult to selectively quote Lincoln to get a certain result depending on which Lincoln you wish to portray. What is needed is an honest picture of Lincoln on race and slavery which shows him to be inconsistent, a "flip-flopper", to use the parlance of our times. The middle ground is the space to occupy in trying to create such a picture for either extreme either keeps a halo above Lincoln or sends him down to the depths. Ultimately, Lincoln deserves some credit for overcoming the views of the majority of the Northern white population during the Civil War. I do not think one can honestly say that military considerations alone drove him toward emancipation. In June of 1864, Lincoln

²⁰⁷ McPherson, "Revisionist Historians", *Perspectives*, Sept. 2003, <http://www.historians.org/perspectives/issues/2003/0309/0309pre1.cfm>.

was notified of his renomination for election. He was worried about the possibility of defeat that fall as well he should have been. No sitting U.S. President had won reelection since Andrew Jackson. Despite this fact Lincoln informed the committee (then under the National Union banner) which had renominated him that he approved their platform position of an Amendment banning slavery.²⁰⁸ This underutilized document is important in determining a proper context in which to judge Lincoln; that is, in his own time.

Context is the *sine qua non* for understanding Lincoln's speeches, programs, and writings. Unfortunately, the intervening years between Lincoln's life and our time have not been kind to the 19th century context in which Lincoln lived. Most contemporary Americans have a very tenuous grasp on the history of their country. People of my generation (I am 28 years old) have grown up being told over and over that Abraham Lincoln was the "Great Emancipator." The presentation is treated as a much of a fact as that Lincoln wore a stovepipe hat. This framing of Lincoln's legacy was not always the case. I cannot imagine that had Lincoln lived that he could have become known as the Great Emancipator outside of the African American community and even in this community that image would have been obscured. Even when given proper context of the politics of his time and Lincoln's role as an emancipator, contemporary Americans are likely to struggle to understand that Lincoln was not a radical.

Almost 150 years after the end of the Civil War, slavery still exists, albeit with no state sanction in any country anywhere in the world. The language about the peculiar institution in our time is euphemistic. This illicit trade in human beings is often called human trafficking, and not slavery. Kevin Bales and Ron Soodalter write about modern slavery that "it is thought to be the third most profitable criminal enterprise of our time, following only drugs and guns." An estimated twenty-seven million people are currently

²⁰⁸ "Reply to Committee Notifying Lincoln of His Renomination", 9 June 1864, CW Vol. VII, pp. 380-383.

enslaved.²⁰⁹ However, that number represents the smallest ratio of enslaved humans at any point in history. Slavery is not a major issue or even a minor issue in any election in the United States of America today. Bales is among the leading authorities on modern slavery and notes that the average price of a slave worldwide is \$90.²¹⁰ Bales also started a non-governmental organization called Free the Slaves which is a sister organization of the oldest human rights organization, Anti-Slavery International, which was founded in the United Kingdom in 1839.

Bales is not like the abolitionists of old. No one in the United States threatens his life for publishing materials advocating emancipation, nor is he seen as someone whose views threaten the peace of the American republic. As most Americans are not familiar with the current state of slavery, how could we possibly expect them to understand 19th century slavery in the United States?

If Bales had been alive in the 19th century and had been an abolitionist he might have met the fate of Elijah P. Lovejoy, an abolitionist newspaper editor who was murdered in Alton, Illinois, in 1837 by a pro-slavery mob. This event, which included attempted arson, the destruction of Lovejoy's printing press, and the tossing of the broken pieces of the press into the Mississippi River, was so well known that Lincoln did not have to mention Lovejoy by name in an 1838 speech on "The Perpetuation of Our Political Institutions."²¹¹

Lincoln denounced "mob law" and "the mobocratic spirit" in that address.²¹² In defending the right of men such as Lovejoy to print abolitionist newspapers or making

²⁰⁹ Bales and Soodalter, *The Slave Next Door: Human Trafficking and Slavery in America Today* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2009), p. 3.

²¹⁰ Bales, et al, *Modern Slavery: The Secret World of 27 Million People* (Oxford, UK: Oneworld, 2009), p. 29.

²¹¹ Lincoln, "Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois," pp. 108-115.

²¹² Lincoln, "Address Before the Young Men's Lyceum of Springfield, Illinois," pp. 110-113.

the oft quoted statement (made some twenty years later) “I have always hated slavery, I think as much as any abolitionist,”²¹³ one would expect at the very least agreement between Lincoln and abolitionists. This putative concord was not the case. Abolitionist rhetoric or positions were politically untenable for Lincoln in Illinois for the entirety of his career. The year of Lovejoy’s murder, Lincoln was a Whig Congressman in the Illinois Statehouse. A full eight months before Lovejoy’s death Lincoln signed off on a protest in that legislature against pro-slavery resolutions passed by the Illinois Congress. Lincoln, joined by only one other representative, wanted to among other things amend a resolution which stated “we highly disapprove of the formation of abolition societies, and of the doctrines promulgated by them.” Lincoln instead wanted the resolution to read “the institution of slavery is founded on both injustice and bad policy; but that the promulgation of abolition doctrines tends rather to increase than to abate its evils.”²¹⁴ Why would Lincoln as a twenty-eight year old Congressman make such a protest and such a seemingly minor change (we cannot overlook the opposition to slavery in it however) if he “always hated slavery”? What about the nature of Illinois’ politics and demography made it impossible for Lincoln to get elected while supporting abolitionism?²¹⁵

Illinois owed much of its early population from immigration from slave States. Lincoln himself was born in the slave state of Kentucky. Although slavery as well as involuntary servitude was ostensibly banned in Illinois Territory by the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, it continued after Illinois became a State in 1818. Almost all of the

²¹³ Lincoln, “Speech at Chicago, Illinois,” 10 July 1858, CW, Vol. II, p. 492.

²¹⁴ Lincoln, “Protest in Illinois Legislature on Slavery,” 3 March 1837, CW, Vol. I, pp. 74-75.

²¹⁵ Amy S. Greenberg in her book *A Wicked War: Polk, Clay, Lincoln and the 1846 U.S. Invasion of Mexico* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012) says that “Like virtually every other politician in Illinois in the 1840s, Abraham Lincoln appealed to racial prejudice in order to advance his political beliefs,” p. 185.

legal records concerning indentured servants in Illinois date from the eighteen years before the State came into existence. Having reviewed these contracts, Paul D. Escott states “it is clear that black people were being indentured in anticipation of the change from a territory that retained slavery to a state in which bondage would be legal.”²¹⁶ Lincoln would have encountered some of these legal “slaves” including those of the father of his brother-in-law. “From his experience in Illinois,” Escott concludes, “Lincoln also knew well that prejudice against African Americans had remained strong. Early state laws prohibited black men from voting, serving in the militia, or assembling in groups, and immigration to the state was discouraged.”²¹⁷ This is the background against which Lincoln’s statements in the 1858 Senate canvass with Stephen A. Douglas ought to be measured.

Lincoln during that campaign said in a speech in Chicago “let us discard all this quibbling about this man and the other man---this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position---discarding our standard that we have left us. Let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal.”²¹⁸ At Charleston, Illinois, during the fourth debate with Douglas, Lincoln was greeted with applause when he rose to speak. I have left in the editorial notes about the crowd noise so the context of Lincoln’s use of language about black equality is understood properly.

While I was at the hotel to-day an elderly gentleman called upon me to know whether I was really in favor of producing a perfect equality between the negroes and white people. [Great laughter.] While I had not proposed to myself on this occasion to say much on that subject, yet as the question was asked me I thought

²¹⁶ Escott, *What Shall We Do With the Negro?: Lincoln, White Racism, and Civil War America* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2009), p. 104.

²¹⁷ Escott, *What Shall We Do With the Negro?*, pp. 105-106.

²¹⁸ Lincoln, “Speech at Chicago, Illinois,” p. 501.

I would occupy perhaps five minutes in saying something in regard to it. I will say then that I am not, nor ever have been in favor of bringing about in any way the social and political equality of the white and black races, [applause]---that I am not nor ever have been in favor of making voters or jurors of negroes, nor of qualifying them to hold office, nor to intermarry with white people; and I will say in addition to this that there is a physical difference between the white and black races which I believe will for ever forbid the two races living together on terms of social and political equality. And inasmuch as they cannot so live, while they do remain together there must be the position of superior and inferior, and I as much as any other man am in favor of having the superior position assigned to the white race. I say upon this occasion I do not perceive that because the white man is to have the superior position the negro should be denied everything. I do not understand that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave I must necessarily want her for a wife. [Cheers and laughter.] My understanding is that I can just let her alone. I am now in my fiftieth year, and I certainly never have had a black woman for either a slave or a wife. So it seems to me quite possible for us to get along without making either slaves or wives of negroes.²¹⁹

Is it not obvious that Lincoln is utilizing his well-documented sense of humor here in order to win over the crowd? From a presentist viewpoint, Lincoln's words about equality seem hypocritical when compared to the speech in Chicago. Lincoln never says what that "physical difference" is that would keep blacks and whites apart. Far from advocating that blacks should get the vote or serve on juries, Lincoln had disparagingly accused Martin Van Buren of supporting black suffrage in 1836 and 1840.²²⁰ All of the things Lincoln says he is not in favor for were impossible in the Illinois in which he lived anyway. We should not let the fact that Lincoln slipped in the words "it seems to me quite possible for us to get along without making either slaves or wives of negroes" at the end of that thought. While Lincoln is closing off his joke in this sentence, he has put his anti-slavery sentiment in as well—that was a constant theme throughout the debates no matter what type of language he couched it in. Was this a sign that Lincoln was in the process of developing a more mature view of race and moving away from the occasional bout of petty race-baiting he engaged in when he first entered politics?

²¹⁹ Lincoln, "Fourth Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Charleston, Illinois," pp. 145-146.

²²⁰ Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life*, Vol. 1 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), pp. 108-110, 154-155.

The Lincoln of the debates with Douglas was not yet the Great Emancipator but what he said at the time was always going to be there to bubble under the surface of the image and threaten it. The image of Lincoln as Great Emancipator began to show serious cracks in the 1960s, although W.E.B. Du Bois had thoughtfully pointed out the contradictory nature of Lincoln's record in a July 1922 issue of *The Crisis*.

Abraham Lincoln was a Southern poor white, of illegitimate birth, poorly educated and unusually ugly, awkward, ill-dressed. He liked smutty stories and was a politician down to his toes. Aristocrats—Jeff Davis, Seward and their ilk—despised him, and indeed he had little outwardly that compelled respect. But in that curious human way he was big inside. He had reserves and depths and when habit and convention were torn away there was something left to Lincoln—nothing to most of his contemners. There was some—thing left, so that at the crisis he was big enough to be inconsistent—cruel, merciful; peace-loving, a fighter; despising Negroes and letting them fight and vote; protecting slavery and freeing slaves. He was a man—a big, inconsistent, brave man.²²¹

Du Bois was presenting Lincoln a man with limitations, though one who did not resign himself to them. His readership did not appreciate the nuanced view and by September he was forced to defend his presentation which wasn't meant to cast aside Lincoln. Du Bois said in his September editorial that a view of "the Great as flawless" may appeal to some who "dream their heroes true; they want their heroes all heroic with no feet of clay; and they are astonished, angered, hurt if some one speaks the grim, forgotten truth."²²² The flaws are what made Lincoln, "perhaps the greatest figure of the 19th century," in Du Bois' estimation also "the most human and loveable."²²³ While Du Bois' Lincoln was still great even after the "forgotten truth" was brought back into the narrative, no one has pounced on the flaws of Lincoln and race as Lerone Bennett, Jr. began to do in the 1960s.

²²¹ Du Bois, "The World and Us," *The Crisis*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (July 1922), p. 103.

²²² Du Bois, "Again Lincoln," *The Crisis*, Vol. 24, No. 5, (Sept. 1922), p. 199.

²²³ Du Bois, "Again Lincoln," p. 200.

3.2 Was Lincoln ‘Forced Into Glory?’

Was Lincoln “forced into glory” as Bennett, put it in his book *Forced Into Glory: Abraham Lincoln’s White American Dream* (2000)?²²⁴ The first accusation, and Bennett’s polemic is full of them, is that Lincoln was not only not the great emancipator, but also that “Lincoln did *not* emancipate the slaves, greatly or otherwise. As for the Emancipation Proclamation, it was not a real emancipation proclamation at all, and did not liberate African American slaves.”²²⁵ According to Bennett, Lincoln was simply using this proclamation as cover for his real plan, the “ethnic cleansing” of the United States. Bennett does not mean simply a cleansing of Native Americans, which would be more familiar to American readers, but also of African Americans. Bennett does mention Lincoln’s handing of the Sioux uprising in Minnesota in 1862 in the book as well (I discuss this event in Chapter 4). Bennett suggests by citing George Sinkler’s *The Racial Attitudes of American Presidents from Abraham Lincoln to Theodore Roosevelt* (1971) that Lincoln had a deep-seated psychological hatred of Indians because Lincoln’s grandfather was killed by an Indian. Lincoln also gets no credit for the 265 commutations he granted. It was the Secretary of War Gideon Welles who forced Lincoln to review all of the court cases and reduce the number of death sentences, according to Bennett. It seemed to be of little matter to Bennett who did not consult the only book on Lincoln’s Indian policy, David Nichols’ *Lincoln and the Indians*, that two days after hearing of the events in Minnesota Lincoln wrote a letter to prevent any action without his assent. In Nichols’ words, “The president moved quickly to prevent any wanton slaughter”²²⁶—hardly the posturing of a man being controlled by Gideon Welles, as

²²⁴ Bennett first asked and answered affirmatively if Lincoln had been a white supremacist in 1968. See, his “Was Abe Lincoln a White Supremacist?”, *Ebony*, (Feb. 1968), pp. 35-42.

²²⁵ Bennett, Jr., *Forced Into Glory* (Chicago: Johnson, 2007), 6, original emphasis.

²²⁶ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, p. 96.

Bennett claims. Bennett also characterizes Lincoln as “White man’s man who volunteered three times for the war to ethnically cleanse Illinois of Indians.” The main targets who stood in the way of Lincoln’s “lily-White democracy” were African Americans.²²⁷

Bennett wants us to believe that Lincoln favored the colonization of African Americans his entire life in order to make the United States a white man’s country. He even says that Lincoln supported forced colonization and that Lincoln adopted this idea from his political hero Henry Clay.²²⁸ “If Lincoln had his way,” says Bennett, “there would be no blacks in America. None. Harlem would be a white way, the South sides would be pale sides and there would be a deafening silence and holes the size of the Grand Canyon where Bojangles and Louis and Duke and Martin Luther King and Michael Jordan and Toni Morrisson would be.”²²⁹ Bennett will not accept the fact that Lincoln’s actions as President never endorsed a wholehearted commitment to colonization. He surprisingly does not even cite misleadingly the one source that would seem to support his idea that Lincoln never gave up on colonization, Benjamin Butler’s *Reminiscences*. That book contains Butler’s account of a discussion with Lincoln in April of 1865 where Lincoln inquires about colonization as a solution to the problem of having blacks in the country which would prevent reunion of North and South. This colonization scheme would include the African Americans who fought for the Union. Butler says he informed Lincoln the next day that he came to the conclusion that it would be impossible

²²⁷ Bennett, Jr., *Forced Into Glory*, p. 86, 130.

²²⁸ Gideon Welles recorded in his diary that during a Sept. 26, 1862, meeting of the cabinet on the topic of colonization that Lincoln “objected unequivocally to compulsion” which had been suggested by Montgomery Blair and Edward Bates, see Welles, September 26, 1862, *The Diary of Gideon Welles: Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson*, Vol. 1 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911), p. 152.

²²⁹ Bennett, Jr. *Forced Into Glory*, p. 215.

to colonize all of the blacks with the available number of ships in the USA.²³⁰ This conversation appears improbable because it supposedly occurred the day of Lincoln's last public address, April 11, 1865. This is of course the speech that John Wilkes Booth interpreted as Lincoln advocating citizenship for African Americans. Booth then proceeded with a plan to assassinate Lincoln which he carried out a few days later. The fact of the assassination further complicates Butler's story. There is no conclusive evidence that Butler ever saw Lincoln alive again to deliver his assessment of colonization.

Long ago Mark E. Neely, Jr. referred to Butler's account as "completely spurious," pointing to the general's ego and errors regarding his location in his narrative.²³¹ Phillip W. Magness and Sebastian N. Page have recently reconsidered Butler's colonization meeting with Lincoln and have arrived at a different judgment than Neely. Butler cannot be so easily dismissed and neither can Lincoln's feelings about colonization. In their thoroughly researched *Colonization After Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement*, Magness and Page recover Caribbean colonization schemes that occurred after the issuing of the final Emancipation Proclamation which have received little attention due to the shoddy record keeping of the time.²³² Magness and Page convincingly argue that "The upshot of the evidence is that colonization remained on the table well beyond the Emancipation Proclamation, and its persistence until the end of Lincoln's presidency ought not to be readily dismissed."²³³ They also note that a serious

²³⁰ Butler, *Autobiography and Personal Reminiscences of Major General Benjamin F. Butler* (Boston: A. M. Thayer, 1892), 903-904.

²³¹ Neely, "Abraham Lincoln and Black Colonization: Benjamin Butler's Spurious Testimony," *Civil War History* 25 (1979), pp. 77-83.

²³² Magness and Page, *Colonization After Emancipation: Lincoln and the Movement for Black Resettlement* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2011).

²³³ Magness and Page, *Colonization After Emancipation*, p. 125.

evaluation of Lincoln's attitude toward colonization, "particularly at the end of his life," involve the "necessary task of distilling Lincoln the man from Lincoln the legend."²³⁴ It goes without saying that the Lincoln struggling with what to do with freedmen which Magness and Page describe is different than Lincoln in Bennett's presentation about colonization.

To round out my brief review of Bennett's revisionist presentation of Lincoln, he says of Lincoln, "It appears from the admittedly incomplete record that Lincoln used the N-word at least as often as the Mark Fuhrmans of today. He might have even used it even more, for unlike Mark Fuhrman, who tried to hide his hand on official occasions, Lincoln used the word openly on public platforms and in the Illinois State House and the White House."²³⁵ Fuhrman is the disgraced former Los Angeles Police Department detective (and now convicted felon for perjury) from the highly publicized O.J. Simpson murder case. One of the examples of the use of the N-word by Lincoln is the Ottawa debate with Douglas. Bennett fails to notice that Lincoln in characterizing Douglas' statements about Lincoln from a speech is lampooning Douglas who let the word fly with ease. If it were hard to tell that Lincoln was being humorous, the notes in the text of laughter from the crowd should have done the trick.²³⁶ The single place that the N-word appears the most in the Lincoln *Collected Works* is a speech given at Hartford, Connecticut in 1860. Two different newspapers' versions are reproduced in sequence. The *Hartford Courant*, the nation's longest continually running newspaper which at one time published ads for slave auctions, used the N-word, the *Hartford Evening Press* does not.²³⁷ In any event, Lincoln was reminding people of the words of Douglas from a

²³⁴ Magness and Page, *Colonization After Emancipation*, p. 125.

²³⁵ Bennett, Jr., *Forced Into Glory*, p. 96.

²³⁶ See Lincoln, "First Debate with Stephen A. Douglas at Ottawa, Illinois," pp. 20, 27.

²³⁷ See Lincoln, "Speech at Hartford, Connecticut," 5 March 1860, CW, Vol. IV, pp. 2-13.

speech at Memphis, namely that Douglas was “for the negro against the crocodile, but for the white man against the negro.”²³⁸ Lincoln used this statement to criticize Douglas over and over and the documentary evidence seems overwhelming that Lincoln used the word “negro” when he did so. Recalling from Chapter 1 that Lincoln might have authored the “Sees-Her” letter, there is not a single instance in the *Collected Works* where the N-word appears in a Lincoln speech or letter while he is President. Does this show growth or just more tact from a mature Lincoln? We may never fully know the answer.

In stark contrast to Bennett, Princeton professor Cornel West provides a single passage full of nuance and understanding which makes us wonder how these two men could have been writing about the same man at all. In *Democracy Matters*, West states

The greatness of Abraham Lincoln was his courage to confront publicly the night side of American democracy through deep Socratic questioning, unfailing prophetic love of justice, and excruciating tragicomic hope for ‘a more perfect union,’ even in the midst of the white supremacist hurricane that nearly wiped the American democratic experiment off the map. Despite his distance from fervid abolitionists, his authoritarian lifting of habeas corpus during the Civil War, and his reluctance to embrace multiracial democracy, Lincoln exemplifies the integrity of democratic energy. He knew that democratic experiments require not only truth telling but also pragmatic wisdom. Lincoln was morally opposed to slavery, yet the decision to free the slaves (though those in the Confederate South only) was nonetheless a herculean battle for him. That battle in itself is emblematic of the horrible intertwining of democracy, race, and empire at the core of the nation. He knew all too well that the fragility of the support of the Union cause among key border states and that freeing the slaves would likely throw them over to the Confederacy, and so his love of the American democratic experiment caught him in a horrible irony that required him to condone the most antidemocratic of American practices.²³⁹

It was when Lincoln understood the necessity of using African Americans as soldiers to win the war, West notes, that Lincoln was able to write an Emancipation Proclamation and express his support of suffrage for educated or African Americans Union veterans in Louisiana. West also finds the Second Inaugural to be the most searching statement on

²³⁸ Lincoln, “Notes for Speeches at Columbus and Cincinnati, Ohio”, 16, 17 Sept. 1859, CW, Vol. III, pp. 431-432.

²³⁹ West, *Democracy Matters* (New York: Penguin, 2004), p. 49.

the ramifications of the United States' imperial and racist nature. Namely, West refers to the passage of the speech that begins “fondly do we hope, fervently do we pray that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away” and ends with “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”²⁴⁰ On West's view, the nation had forgotten about Lincoln's words in the Second Inaugural and dove headlong into imperialist wars in the West against Native Americans and allowed racism to win the peace in the South after Reconstruction.²⁴¹

Whereas West grasps the context in which Lincoln worked as President, Bennett wants us to believe that were Lincoln not such an ardent white supremacist he could have picked up his pen whenever he wanted to and freed all the slaves—as if signing a piece of paper would have freed any slaves from Southern slave holders claiming to be out of the Union and defying its authority.²⁴² While West saw Lincoln's endorsement of some black suffrage in Louisiana as a move toward an egalitarian society, Bennett bafflingly saw this statement as revealing the “real Lincoln” who “defended his plan for a lily-White reconstruction.”²⁴³

I think we can agree with Bennett that Lincoln was no great emancipator, but saying he had no role in emancipation or that he had a role but was completely led in that direction by other people and events of the day is disingenuous. Allen C. Guelzo said of Lincoln that he “was neither a perfect egalitarian, nor a perfect emancipator.” While Lincoln could “have done more in the cause of emancipation and civil equality; he

²⁴⁰ Lincoln, “Second Inaugural Address,” 4 March 1865, CW, Vol. VIII, p. 333.

²⁴¹ West, *Democracy Matters*, pp. 50-52.

²⁴² It is worth noting that internally the Confederacy out of desperation was considering trying to head off events and initiate their own emancipation, albeit one with severely curtailed freedom for African Americans, see Bruce Levine, *Confederate Emancipation: Southern Plans to Free and Arm Slaves during the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).

²⁴³ Bennett, Jr., *Forced Into Glory*, p. 618.

also might have very easily done a good deal less, or by doing more, very easily given the enemies of emancipation and equality just the stick they needed to beat emancipation out of sight for another political generation.”²⁴⁴ Trying to find the balance between too little and too much may have well caused Lincoln to utilize what James Oakes called “strategic racism.” In writing about Lincoln’s use of “strategic racism,”²⁴⁵ Oakes has provided one of the most straightforward and thought provoking statements one can find on the issue in his *The Radical and the Republican*.

Maybe there was no other way. Maybe strategic racism was necessary to get slavery, and only slavery, and only slavery onto the table. By massaging the racial prejudices of northern voters Lincoln allowed them—or enough of them—to overcome their resistance to his strong antislavery message. In the end, strategic racism helped put a Republican majority in Congress and a man who hated slavery in the White house. We don’t have to like what Lincoln did, but it worked, whether we like it or not.²⁴⁶

Returning to Lincoln’s last public address in 1865, where Bennett sees only fault that Lincoln was not more inclusive of African American rights, is it possible what Manfred Henningsen called “Die Lincoln-Amnesie” [the forgetting of Lincoln] after his death?²⁴⁷

3.3 Was Lincoln Forgotten?

For Henningsen, the forgetting begins right away with Andrew Johnson.

Henningsen sees the meaning of what Lincoln had tried to accomplish drained by the will of whites to reunite on terms that were going to have as little to do with African Americans as possible. The Civil War itself could no longer be used “as a moral weapon

²⁴⁴ Guelzo, “Lincoln, Race and Slavery: A Biographical Overview,” *Magazine of History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Oct. 2007), p. 15.

²⁴⁵ Oakes does not define the term, but refers to Lincoln telling “darky” jokes to lampoon his Democratic opponents, especially Stephen A. Douglas, see *The Radical and the Republican*, pp. 119-120. Oakes also suggests that Lincoln thought of questions on racial equality were “a distraction” to the major issue of the morality of slavery. That is to say Lincoln would concede inequality to resume the attack on the institution of slavery, see p.125. The entire section on “strategic racism” is found on pp. 119-131.

²⁴⁶ Oakes, *The Radical and the Republican* (New York: Norton, 2007), p. 130.

²⁴⁷ Henningsen, *Der Mythos Amerika*, pp. 53-64.

against the lynch justice of the South” by the time Woodrow Wilson spoke at the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Gettysburg in 1913.²⁴⁸ The white South, of which Wilson was a member, had come to dominate the defining of the meaning narrative of the war as historian David Blight describes in *Race and Reunion*.²⁴⁹ And, in effect this effort by Southerners and Wilson had crippled any “intellectual attempt to understand the phenomenon of slavery.”²⁵⁰ What was it that Lincoln said that had been forgotten?

In Lincoln’s last public speech, April 11, 1865, he said about the 12,000 voters in Louisiana who “assumed to be the rightful political power of the State” and who had approved of the 13th Amendment to the US Constitution, that “if we reject, and spurn them, we do our utmost to disorganize and disperse them. We in effect say to the white men ‘You are worthless, or worse--we will neither help you, nor be helped by you.’ To the blacks we say ‘This cup of liberty which these, your old masters, hold to your lips, we will dash from you, and leave you to the chances of gathering the spilled and scattered contents in some vague and undefined when, where, and how.’” What Lincoln said about Louisiana was to “apply generally to the other states.”²⁵¹

We should also remember that Lincoln approved General Sherman’s Special Field Orders No. 15 which had confiscated 30 miles of land broken into 40 acre parcels along the Atlantic Coast set aside for freedmen and their families. Andrew Johnson, who repealed this order, did not perceive a contradiction in giving the rebellious Southern planters back the land Sherman had confiscated and using the Cherokee decision (meaning those Cherokees who saw Stand Watie and not John Ross as the Principal Chief of the Cherokees) to join the Confederacy as a justification to declare their treaties

²⁴⁸ Henningsen, *Der Mythos Amerika*, p. 54.

²⁴⁹ Blight, *Race and Reunion: The Civil War in American Memory* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2001).

²⁵⁰ Henningsen, *Der Mythos Amerika*, p. 54.

²⁵¹ Lincoln, “Last Public Address,” 11 April 1865, CW, Vol. VIII, pp. 403-404.

void and force new treaties upon them which in effect confiscated Cherokee land. This action by Johnson, which affected the whole tribe, was taken despite the similarity of the Cherokees' decision with Confederate conventions which decided on proclaiming secession: slave owners controlled the Cherokee convention and obviously did not speak for the entire population. After Johnson was almost removed from office for trying to impede the actions of the Radical Republicans during Reconstruction, weariness started to set in amongst the Northern population and Reconstruction began to fall apart and became subject to violent counterrevolutions in the South which aimed to "redeem" the States which formed the Confederacy. Thereafter, the negligence on the part of the Federal Government to resist Black Codes, segregation, Jim Crow, lynching and "re-enslavement"²⁵² is astounding.

The forgetting of words and deeds such as those cited above from Lincoln in the crucial period following the war made it easier for whites to focus on their reunion and leave African Americans "to the chances of gathering the spilled and scattered contents" of the "cup of liberty" to an extent which still haunts the black community. Andrew Delbanco is certainly correct to suggest that "it is tempting to wonder what Lincoln would say about the whole cluster of questions that still attaches to the issues of race and class in contemporary America, where the 'artificial weights' seem to grow heavier and the task of clearing the paths more complex and daunting."²⁵³ An issue which cannot be overlooked in observing the false starts for black freedom is the Confederates' internal debate over emancipation. Military necessity as well as the slaves' actions during the war convinced Confederate Generals Patrick R. Cleburne and Robert E. Lee along with

²⁵² Douglas A. Blackmon, *Slavery by Another Name: The Re-Enslavement of Black Americans from the Civil War to World War II* (New York: Anchor, 2008).

²⁵³ Andrew Delbanco, "Lincoln's Sacramental Language," in *Our Lincoln: New Perspectives on Lincoln and His World*, ed. Eric Foner (New York: Norton, 2008).

Secretary of State Judah P. Benjamin and President Jefferson Davis to propose a very foreshortened freedom for slaves mustered into the Confederate army.

What is most surprising about these plans which were not tried in practice until the end of the Civil War was how closely the Confederate scheme for black freedom resembled the actual state of the freedmen because of the failure of Reconstruction. In his book on *Confederate Emancipation*, Bruce Levine describes the thinking of Judah P. Benjamin, Patrick Cleburne, Robert E. Lee and Jefferson Davis by saying they

hoped to have their cake and eat it too. They hoped to win black cooperation with an offer of freedom. But the freedom they expected to actually grant would be severely circumscribed. The former slaves would cease to be the property of individual masters. They would gain the legal rights to marry, to learn to read, to attend church, to own property, and to sign contracts. But they would receive no land at the point of emancipation. To survive, therefore, they would have to return to the white landowners and work for them.”²⁵⁴

To keep African Americans stuck in the South to work, the Confederate government would empower the States to pass laws to regulate labor conditions. Black political rights would not include suffrage or office holding to ensure such labor laws cementing white supremacy could not be overturned. In light of these Confederate desires it is hard to see what was really different from what the South actually received after Reconstruction. It is by reviewing Confederate thinking about the nature of the emancipation of their slaves, contested as it was, against the history of black freedom after the Civil War that the forgetting of Lincoln on emancipation during Reconstruction really stands out and we can observe the presence of the “artificial weights” Lincoln said the government was obligated to remove “from all shoulders.”²⁵⁵

Revision regarding Lincoln on race and slavery is far from over. The need to address the subject while the nation prepared to commemorate Lincoln’s Bicentennial found its way into a special issue of the Organization of American Historians’ *Magazine*

²⁵⁴ Levine, *Confederate Emancipation*, p. 154.

²⁵⁵ Lincoln, “Message to Congress in Special Session,” p. 438.

of History in 2007. Articles ranged from discussing Lincoln's personal familiarity with slavery during his life to "changing perspectives" on Lincoln's views on race and slavery to a reconsideration of Lincoln's support of colonization for African Americans.²⁵⁶ As I wrote at the outset of the chapter, revisionist history should not be met with a jaundiced eye. As revision regards Lincoln, race and slavery, it can help us to understand Lincoln better and spur us to probe the implications of what happened after his death.

Whether *we* like it or not, there is another area of revision that needs to be done on Lincoln. The revision is not of a current presentation of Lincoln but of one that is generally elided in works on the sixteenth president. Lincoln and the Indians is not a subject that is often covered. However, an increase in presentations of Lincoln's Indian policy could influence how we see Lincoln and the country generally. For future revisions of Lincoln's views on race, his Indian policy must be brought to bear. It is to one such presentation to which we now turn.

²⁵⁶ "Lincoln, Race and Slavery," *Magazine of History*, Vol. 21, No. 4 (Oct. 2007).

CHAPTER 4
LINCOLN AND THE ELIDED INDIANS

4.1 Lincoln, the Conquest of the West and the Removal of Indians

“Geronimo, E.K.I.A. (enemy killed in action)”²⁵⁷. These were words not spoken in the presidency of Abraham Lincoln, nor in the presidency of Theodore Roosevelt (during which Geronimo actually died from illness, not violence), but instead during the presidency of Barack Obama. “Geronimo,” in this case, was a code name for Osama Bin Laden.

I was in bed watching TV and occasionally checking my Twitter account on May 1, 2011, when I started seeing tweets about the rumored killing of Bin Laden. This was occurring about a half an hour before anything appeared on TV related to the raid. This is the way the world works now. If you follow the right people on Twitter, you find out information from the mundane to the momentous, instantaneously. The bit about Geronimo did not come out until much later. When it did, the response paled in emotional comparison to the release triggered by the news of the death of Bin Laden. As I observed the outpouring of expressions about Bin Laden’s demise, I saw a range of reaction. In particular what stood out was the contrast of people who wouldn’t harm a fly crying out in exultant joy with the revulsion of others (some ex-military) over the exuberance of those celebrating the violent death of a human being.

When it came to the mention of the use of Geronimo as a code name for Bin Laden, or the operation which led to his death, or both (there was some initial confusion about this matter), the message was delivered with no analysis. It was just stated as a

²⁵⁷ The whole message was reportedly, “For God and country—Geronimo, Geronimo, Geronimo.” And following a pause, “Geronimo, E.K.I.A.,” see Nicholas Schmidle, *The New Yorker*, “Getting Bin Laden,” http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2011/08/08/110808fa_fact_schmidle?currentPage=all. Investigative journalist Richard Minter, relying on an intelligence source, says radio traffic during the raid went “by the book” and rejects Schmidle’s story as a narrative created by the White House. “In reality, no one said: For God and country,” see *Leading From Behind: The Reluctant President and the Advisors Who Decide for Him* (New York: St. Martin’s, 2012), p. 152. I would be remiss not to mention the fact that the helicopters (Black Hawks and Chinooks) which carried the Navy SEALs also bear Indian imagery.

matter of fact.²⁵⁸ I thought about Richard Drinnon's *Facing West: The Metaphysics of Indian-Hating & Empire-Building* (1980)²⁵⁹. Was the use of the codename seemingly predetermined by the initial and eternal (?) conflict between European settlers and Native American nations that colors all American relations with non-European nations posited by Drinnon? To put it another way, should we have been surprised at all by the use of Geronimo's name? He is, after all, one of the most famous Indians and one who fought against the United States government for an extended period of time, slipping away from the grasp of the government time and again before his eventual surrender. There is also a legendary Geronimo which obscures our view of him. The truth may be that he was somewhere between "thug" and "freedom fighter" instead of one or the other.²⁶⁰ The fact that Native Americans have fought on behalf of the United States and their colonial forbearers in virtually every conflict entered into has no impact on the negative use of Native American imagery. That the U.S. government called on the so-called "Shadow Wolves," elite Native American trackers drawn from several nations, to help try to track Bin Laden in 2007, apparently had no influence on the use of the Geronimo name.²⁶¹ In addition, the term "Indian Country" as signifying a hostile place still crops up in military descriptions of engagements in the Middle East.²⁶²

²⁵⁸ Even Schmidle's article, which contains so much detail about the operation, passes over this incident where Obama meets the SEALs without comment: "The raiding team then presented the President with an American flag that had been on board the rescue Chinook. Measuring three feet by five, the flag had been stretched, ironed, and framed. The SEALs and the pilots had signed it on the back; an inscription on the front read, 'From the Joint Task Force Operation Neptune's Spear, 01 May 2011: 'For God and country. Geronimo.' "

²⁵⁹ Drinnon, *Facing West* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980).

²⁶⁰ In his revisionist work, *Geronimo* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), Robert M. Utley says "the legendary Geronimo promises to live on in the American mind because it gives comfort to a public, both white and Indian, that has for almost half a century been full of remorse over the fate of the victims of American expansion," p. 4. Utley's Geronimo is neither freedom fighter nor a "thug."

²⁶¹ "Native American trackers to hunt Bin Laden", *The Australian*, March 12, 2007 <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/defence/native-american-trackers-to-hunt-bin-laden/story-e6frg8yo-111113137848>. The Shadow Wolves are an official part of the

The questioning of the use of the name Geronimo would not take long to surface. There was understandable outrage among the Native American community. Harlyn Geronimo, Geronimo's great-grandson and a Vietnam veteran, provided testimony to the U.S. Senate Commission on Indian Affairs during a May 5 hearing on racist stereotypes of Native Americans. He wanted an explanation of why his great-grandfather's memory was invoked for the operation, an apology for the use of his ancestor's name and the removal of the name from all government records of the operation. Geronimo said during his testimony:

Obviously to equate Geronimo with Osama Bin Laden is an unpardonable slander of Native America and its most famous leader in history. And to call the operation to kill or capture Osama Bin Laden by the name Geronimo is such a subversion of history that it also defames a great human spirit and Native American leader. For Geronimo himself was the focus of precisely such an operation by the U.S. military, an operation that assured Geronimo a lasting place in American and human history.

The Encyclopedia Britannica (1967, Volume 10, page 362) has described the real Operation Geronimo in the following words:

During this last campaign, which lasted 18 months, no fewer than 5,000 troops and 500 Indian auxiliaries had been employed in the apprehension of a band of Apaches comprising only 35 men, 8 boys and 101 women, who operated in two countries without bases of supply. Army and civilian losses totaled 95; Mexican losses were heavy, but unknown; Geronimo's losses were 13 killed, but none from direct U.S. Army action.

Geronimo was not killed and was not captured. After the Chiricahua Band of Apaches were taken from reservations in Arizona Territory and New Mexico to Ft. Marion, Florida, Geronimo and his warriors saw no chance of reuniting with their people except by surrender with the promise that they would be reunited with their tribe.

General Miles promised: 'There is plenty of timber, water, and grass in the land to which I will send you. You will live with your tribe and with your family. If you

Department of Homeland security that have been used to track drug smugglers along the Mexican border in Arizona on the Tohono O'odham nation's reservation.

²⁶² For discussions of the "Indian Country" metaphor in military parlance as well as seeing Indian fighting symbolism in current engagements (among other topics) see Stephen W. Silliman, "The 'Old West' in the Middle East: U.S. Military Metaphors in Real and Imagined Indian country", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 110, No. 2 (June 2008), pp. 237-247 and Matthew L.M. Fletcher and Peter S. Vicaire, "Indian Wars: Old and New," 15 *Journal of Gender, Race & Justice*, 201 (2012), pp. 201-230.

agree to this treaty you shall see your family within five days.’ None of the promises were kept.

Nearly half the Chiricahua band, the band of Cochise, died in Florida and later in Alabama within several years before being moved to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma. Geronimo was held a prisoner of war for the remaining 23 years of his life, though he was a major attraction at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis in 1904 and was second only to President Elect Theodore Roosevelt in the applause received along the Inaugural Parade route of 1905.²⁶³

Clearly, there were vast differences between the operations which led to the surrender of Geronimo and the killing of Bin Laden. Getting those facts straight was not the main concern of Harlyn Geronimo. He was insulted that his ancestor was associated with the infamous terrorist who was presented by the United States as the face of global terrorism. Six famous Indian leaders (Geronimo) on ponies in full headdress according to Jesse Rhodes, “exhibited their willingness to adapt to the changes imposed on their people as well as their resoluteness to maintain a sense of self and keep their cultural traditions alive.”²⁶⁴

However, there was another motivation for including these leaders in the event. Part of the burden of the expansion of American power was civilizing the conquered. This element was represented in the inaugural parade by the presence of “350 cadets from the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania.”²⁶⁵ The direct link between the Carlisle school and the chiefs was that American Horse had children enrolled at the school. Apache children held captive after Geronimo’s surrender were also forcibly taken

²⁶³ Harlan Geronimo testimony text can be found in Elahe Izadi’s article on DCentric, “Geronimo’s Great-Grandson On Bin Laden Code Name,” <http://dcentric.wamu.org/2011/05/geronimos-great-grandson-on-bin-laden-code-name/>.

²⁶⁴ Jesse Rhodes, *Smithsonian Magazine*, “Indians on the Inaugural March”, January 14, 2009, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/specialsections/heritage/Indians-on-the-Inaugural-March.html>.

²⁶⁵ Rhodes, “Indians on the Inaugural March.”

to Carlisle and Hampton “as they arrive at a suitable age”²⁶⁶. Captain Richard Henry Pratt, founder of Carlisle, and his motto of “Kill the Indian, save the man” was being powerfully displayed for the nation to see.

Long before any association was made with Bin Laden, and, only four years after he appeared in the presidential parade of Theodore Roosevelt, Geronimo died from pneumonia while still in U.S. custody as a prisoner of war at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Here is how he was remembered soon after his death in the *New York Times*.

As the leader of the warring Apaches of the Southwestern territories in pioneer days, Geronimo gained a reputation for cruelty and cunning never surpassed by that of any other American Indian chief. For more than twenty years he and his men were the terror of the country, always leaving a trail of bloodshed and devastation. The old chief was captured many times, but always got away again, until his final capture, in 1886.²⁶⁷

While the obituary of the *Times* cast Geronimo and his father as men whose only occupation was war, it also relied on the memoirs of General Nelson A. Miles (the well-known Indian fighter who Geronimo surrendered to) to do the heavy lifting. Miles described the mood after the Geronimo surrendered in this way: “Every one at Washington had now become convinced that there was no good in the old chief, and he was, in fact, one of the lowest and most cruel of the savages of the American continent.” Yet, Miles had a great respect for the Apache leader who thought him to be “one of the brightest, most resolute, determined-looking men that I have ever encountered.”²⁶⁸ Miles even compared the gaze of Geronimo favorably with General Sherman. At least in the North, Sherman is a hero for his admittedly harsh methods (which Lincoln did not discourage) that helped to break the Confederacy down and forced Robert E. Lee to surrender at Appomattox Courthouse.

²⁶⁶ Grover Cleveland, Fourth Annual Message (first term), Dec. 3, 1888, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29529> (Aug. 10, 2011).

²⁶⁷ “Old Apache Chief Geronimo is Dead,” *New York Times*, Feb. 18, 1909, p. 7.

²⁶⁸ “Old Apache Chief Geronimo is Dead,” p. 7.

Sherman was not at that particular surrender, but a Native American was. When Lee realized that Ely S. Parker (who drafted the final terms of Confederate surrender at Appomattox as adjutant to General Grant) was a member of the Seneca nation, he said “I am glad to see one real American here.” Parker shook Lee’s hand and told him “We are all Americans.”²⁶⁹ Parker would later become the first Native American to hold the office of Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1869-1871).

Perhaps Parker’s statement at the surrender of the Confederacy was an aspiration because it was not a statement of fact. Before the war began, Parker had desired to become a lawyer and had begun reading law for three years at a law firm to prepare to take the bar exam in New York. Yet, Parker never had a chance to become a lawyer. “He had but one great disability, and neither learning nor capacity could avail against it. He was an Indian, a native of the soil. Therefore he could not be admitted to the bar for he was not a citizen of the country. There was no way by which he could become one. He was a man without a country, a victim of legal injustice and popular prejudice.”²⁷⁰ The man without a country instead became a civil engineer. He gained admission to college with the help of anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan.²⁷¹ Parker’s marriage to a white socialite did nothing to make him an American in the eyes of the law. The fact of his birth to Seneca parents meant he could not become a citizen. The Seneca chief known as Donehogawa (born Hasanoanda) and the U.S. military veteran and civil engineer known as Ely Parker were the same man, but only the Indian mattered to 19th century America. Parker died in 1895. Native Americans did not gain citizenship until the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, some 56 years after the passage of the 14th Amendment.

²⁶⁹ Arthur Caswell Parker, *The Life of General Ely S. Parker: Last Grand Sachem of the Iroquois and General Grant’s Military Secretary* (Buffalo: Buffalo Historical Society, 1919), p. 133.

²⁷⁰ Parker, *The Life of General Ely S. Parker*: p. 79.

²⁷¹ William H. Armstrong, *Warrior in Two Camps: Ely S. Parker, Union General and Seneca Chief* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989), p. 21.

In searching Abraham Lincoln's *Collected Works*, I found no reference to Ely Parker other than a note that mentions Parker in an annotation not written by Lincoln on an 1863 note to Montgomery C. Meigs.²⁷² In the public papers of the U.S. presidents, I found a single reference to Parker in a 1991 George H.W. Bush "Proclamation of National American Indian Heritage Month."²⁷³ I found no such recognition before Bush Sr. in 1991 when he noted Parker's service in the army and as the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Bush also said that "generations of Native Americans have quietly strengthened and enriched the United States."²⁷⁴ Were the contributions of Native Americans actually so quietly offered or was the recognition of the contributions the part that was silent? There was no official recognition by a state until 1916 and no official recognition by the federal government until 1983.²⁷⁵ As I've been trying to suggest, the will to ignore the Native American or fall back into the adversarial or paternalistic view toward them has remained strong enough to wash out the contributions of Native Americans, who are still others after all these years.²⁷⁶ Turning now to Lincoln himself and his Indian relations during his presidency, we will see a different man than we are used to.

²⁷² "To Montgomery C. Meigs," 26 March 1863, CW, Vol. VI, p. 150.

²⁷³ George H.W. Bush, "Proclamation of National American Indian Heritage Month", Oct. 31, 1991, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=20164>. Geronimo was also mentioned with familiar Indians: Pocahontas, Sacajawea and Hiwatha. President Obama changed the name to "National Native American Heritage Month" in 2009.

²⁷⁴ Bush, "Proclamation of National American Indian Heritage Month," <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=20164>.

²⁷⁵ See Charles Seymour Whitman, "American Indian Day," 13 May 1916, *Public Papers of Charles Seymour Whitman, Governor* (Albany: J.B. Lyon, 1919), p. 7; Ronald Reagan, "Proclamation 5049 - American Indian Day, 1983" 14 April 1983, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41185>.

²⁷⁶ The process of gaining federal recognition as a tribe forces the tribes to play a racialized "blood politics" to borrow Circe Sturm's phrase in *Blood Politics: Race, Culture, and Identity in the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002). The process of having to prove that one's tribe is really Indian going by the Bureau of Indian Affairs' checklist has been detailed recently in Mark Edwin Miller, *Forgotten Tribes: Unrecognized Indians and the Federal Acknowledgment Process* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004); Renée Ann Cramer, *Cash, Color and Colonialism: The Politics of Tribal*

4.2 Lincoln's Forgetting and Forgetting About Lincoln

Despite all of the hagiography written about our sixteenth president, Lincoln was a man of his times and a partisan politician.²⁷⁷ He did have a complex nature that allowed him to rise above common opinion on some issues—Indian relations not among those. As with every president before him, Lincoln had three tools in Indian relations: killing, removal and treaties. He utilized all three, all of which were predicated on the idea that the Indian was inferior. By the time Lincoln became president, the idea that the Indian was a “dying race” was still yearned for by whites who had made the theme “a staple of American literature” since the 1780s.²⁷⁸ Lincoln did not exactly push back against that idea despite ample evidence to the contrary. Indeed, his Indian policy and his Western policy were intertwined and both carried a haunting implication for the Native American nations: an attempt would be made to phase them out of American life.

Most simply, the patronage system was the handing out of government jobs by the winning political party to people in the party who helped in creating the victories in elections. New York Senator William L. Marcy said in an 1832 speech, in which he defended Andrew Jackson's political appointment of Martin Van Buren as a minister to England, that New Yorkers “boldly *preach* what they *practice*. When they are contending for *victory*, they avow their intention of enjoying the fruits of it. If they are defeated, they

Acknowledgment (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2005); David Beck, *Seeking Recognition: The Termination and Restoration of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians, 1855-1984* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Brian Klopotek, *Recognition Odysseys: Indigeneity, Race and Federal Tribal Recognition Policy in Three Louisiana Indian Communities* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).

²⁷⁷ A list of such books would not include Amy S. Greenberg's *A Wicked War* and Michael Burlingame's *Lincoln: A Life*, both of which successfully present the partisan nature of Lincoln's politics in his early career.

²⁷⁸ Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Vintage, 1979), p. 88. The “dying race” idea might have had its root in British colonial times, see Laura M. Stevens, “Like Snow Against the Sun: The Christian Origins of the Vanishing Indian,” in *The Poor Indians: British Missionaries, Native Americans, and Colonial Sensibility* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), pp. 160-194.

expect to retire from office. They see nothing wrong in the rule that to the VICTOR belongs the spoils of the ENEMY.”²⁷⁹ We do not often think of Abraham Lincoln as a willing participant in such a system.²⁸⁰ Did not Lincoln himself say in 1861 that the Civil War was “essentially a People’s contest” and that the Union’s purpose in the war was to defend “that form, and that substance of government, whose leading object is, to elevate the condition of men---to lift artificial weights from all shoulders---to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all---to afford all, an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life”?²⁸¹ Doris Kearns Goodwin’s book *Team of Rivals* (2006) was much discussed for the purposes of drawing a connection between Obama’s cabinet appointments and those of Lincoln. The fact that Lincoln put his main competitors (to call them rivals is a bit disingenuous because, as Timothy S. Good reminds us in his recent book *Lincoln for President* (2009), Lincoln was not a rival to any Republican candidate in 1860 in any sense except for his superior characteristics of not making enemies and not holding grudges), Edward Bates, Salmon P. Chase, and William H. Seward, for the Republican nomination in 1860 in his cabinet seems to belie the notion that Lincoln rewarded supporters with jobs.

However, when looking at Lincoln’s correspondence or his day to day activities, we can see that he expended much energy in carrying out politics as usual under the patronage system. In actuality, Lincoln during his first term was likely the worst practitioner of the spoils system of any President up to that point in American history. The turnover in jobs from the previous administration was nearly absolute. In carrying out such sweeping changes, he handed out jobs to friend and foe alike with the intent of

²⁷⁹ See “The Spoils of Victory,” *Niles’ National Register*, Vol. 43, Sept. 1832-March 1833 (Baltimore: Franklin Press), p. 8, original emphasis.

²⁸⁰ The portrayal of Lincoln in Spielberg’s *Lincoln* (2012) has the potential to aid the ushering out of the notion that Lincoln was above partisan politics and backroom dealing to get what he wanted accomplished.

²⁸¹ Lincoln, “Message to Congress in Special Session,” p. 438.

keeping as many people faithful to the Union as possible. Having both Congressmen and commoners in his debt surely helped Lincoln secure a second nomination in 1864. Still, Lincoln's skillful use of the patronage did not apply as far as the so-called Indian System (then Office of Indian Affairs, now Bureau of Indian Affairs) was concerned.

In all of Lincoln scholarship, only David Nichols (*Lincoln and the Indians*) has written a monograph on Lincoln's Indian policy. Even well-educated Americans are therefore in the dark about the Isanti Sioux uprising in Minnesota in 1862 which led to Lincoln signing the death warrants on what remains the largest public execution in US history. This fact is likely jarring to most Americans and the cause of it is not only the silence on the event and its implications in popular histories of Lincoln. In general, because of the massive attention that has been paid to the Civil War in the East, the events of the West during the same time period have been under-examined. In his updated take on the Dakota War and the events that followed, Scott W. Berg says

The conventional narrative of United States-Indian conflict paints the Civil War as a time of suspension, an interim during which the manpower and industrial wealth of the Union had to finish subjugating the rebellious South before the federal government could return its attention to the tribes of the West. But violence between whites and a number of Indian nations was very much a part of the historical fabric of the early 1860s. By the time of the Confederate surrender at Appomattox and Lincoln's assassination in 1865, Indian wars in the Southwest had seen the Long Walk of the Navajo and the murder of the friendly Cheyennes at Sand Creek, as well as the opening of extended campaigns against the Paiutes, Shoshoni, Arapaho, Apaches, and other tribes.²⁸²

Before any of those campaigns which Berg mentions could occur, the Dakota War erupted. The failure in handling Indian affairs in Minnesota which escalated into a war against the Isanti Sioux in 1862 to the extended series of wars with all of the Sioux only ending in 1890, stand at opposite ends of a continuum of aggression in 19th century Indian relations. While never describing Indians as a "dying race," who were dying of

²⁸² Berg, *38 Nooses: Lincoln, Little Crow, and the Beginning of the Frontier's End* (New York: Pantheon, 2012), p. xiii.

natural causes based on their “contact with a superior race,”²⁸³ as did Senator James Doolittle, chairman of the Senate Indian Committee, Lincoln’s Western policy (The Homestead Act, mineral development and the Transcontinental Railroad) can be said to have “carried with it the implicit doom of the Indians.”²⁸⁴ Despite Doolittle’s surety, Indians did not die out and remained in the United States in limbo between sovereignty and citizenship.

Lincoln’s interactions with Native Americans were scarce before he became president.²⁸⁵ Although he had enlisted in the Black Hawk War (1832), he experienced no combat. Lincoln did seem to share the common prejudices and feelings about the Indians as “savages” standing in the way of Westward expansion and with it, civilization—this view continued unto his death. As a younger man Lincoln had also campaigned for Whig presidential candidates who had been Indian fighters: William Henry Harrison (Tecumseh’s War: Battle of Tippecanoe) and Zachary Taylor (Black Hawk War; Second Seminole War).

To stick with the topic of patronage, it will suffice to say that Lincoln initially perceived the offices of the Indian System in the same manner as any of the other political offices he had at his discretion to allocate. Through his handlers at the Chicago convention in 1860, Lincoln offered to exchange the positions of the Secretary of the Interior and the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for Indiana’s 26 nomination votes (both Doris Kearns Goodwin and Timothy S. Good skirt the Indian issue by stating such offers were unessential to Lincoln’s nomination). The men who filled these positions, Caleb B. Smith and William P. Dole, respectively, were professional politicians with no experience in Indian affairs. Some of the men Lincoln appointed to be Indian agents had never even

²⁸³ U.S., Congress, Senate, *Congressional Globe*, Debate on the Indian Appropriation Bill, 38th Cong. 2d sess., 13 January 1865, pt. 1:154.

²⁸⁴ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 195.

²⁸⁵ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, pp. 2-3.

met an Indian. Getting a job as a superintendent or agent in the Indian system could be extremely lucrative as agents sometimes engaged in wholesale theft of Indian annuities—Simon Cameron, whom Lincoln appointed Secretary of War despite pointed opposition, was possibly among these unscrupulous agents as a federal commissioner. He allegedly defrauded the Winnebago (Ho-Chunk) Indians of \$66,000 in 1838.²⁸⁶ Cameron resigned in less than a year because of more corruption allegations (not Indian related). Caleb Smith and William Dole, however, lasted longer. In November 1862, Smith resigned to protest of Lincoln's policies (including emancipation) and because of his poor health. During his time as Secretary of the Interior, Smith wholeheartedly endorsed expansionism. In 1862, he stated "The rapid progress of civilization upon this continent will not permit the lands which are required for cultivation to be surrendered to savage tribes for hunting grounds."²⁸⁷ Smith's replacement, John Palmer Usher, joined Dole, currency comptroller Hugh McCulloch, and Lincoln secretary John Nicolay in buying land in Kansas in 1864 which was to be held in trust for the Sac and Fox Indians. The Indian system was also a pathway to upward mobility by the time Lincoln took office. Simon Pomeroy had used the system to enrich himself and become a US Senator from Kansas (1861-1873). The first two governors of Minnesota, Henry Sibley and Alexander Ramsey (later Secretary of War for Rutherford B. Hayes), had also risen through the system. Both of these Minnesota men would play a role, Sibley as colonel of the state militia and Ramsey as Governor of Minnesota, in the Sioux Uprising of 1862 (precipitated by the cheating of the Isanti Sioux out of annuities since 1851).

Lincoln was not ignorant of the extreme corruption of the Indian system in Minnesota but he was left to deal with the fallout: 400 to 800 Minnesota civilians were dead, along with 70 to 100 Sioux, and 77 US Army soldiers. The root cause of the war

²⁸⁶ David Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1995), p. 266.

²⁸⁷ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 192.

appeared to be that the Isanti nation, which had been the victims of a wholesale rip-off in their 1851 treaty with the U.S. government, had been cheated out of their annuities from corrupt Indian agents ever since. Lincoln had a role in this process. In rewarding friends through the patronage, he handed out agency jobs in the Indian system to men who had never even met an Indian. The spark of the war occurred when starving Indians trying to engage in trade for food were rebuffed by Indian agent Andrew Myrick who said about them “So far as I am concerned, if they are hungry let them eat grass or their own dung.”²⁸⁸ After the general fighting began, Myrick was found dead on August 18, 1862, with grass stuffed in his mouth.

In the aftermath of the fighting, three hundred and three Sioux had been tried, in some cases in trials averaging 10-15 minutes in length, convicted of murder or rape, and sentenced to death. After initially trying to pass off the decision on executions to local authorities before his attorney general informed him it was not possible, Lincoln personally reviewed the sentences and commuted all of the sentences but 38—which still makes Lincoln responsible for the largest mass execution in U.S. history.²⁸⁹ Lincoln then removed all of the Sioux from Minnesota and their reservations were abolished. If General John Pope, the man Lincoln reassigned from the East to prevent him from bickering with General McClellan, had his way there would have been no Indians to remove. Pope told Henry Sibley, a Colonel under his command: “It is my purpose utterly to exterminate the Sioux if I have the power to do so and even it requires a campaign lasting the whole of next year . . . they are to be treated as maniacs or wild beasts, and by no means as people with whom treaties or compromises can be made.”²⁹⁰

²⁸⁸ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, p. 77.

²⁸⁹ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, pp. 99-112.

²⁹⁰ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, p. 87.

The Ho-Chunk were also expelled from Minnesota in 1863 even though they had nothing to do with the uprising. Lincoln agreed to have the Indians in Minnesota along with refugee Indian nations in Kansas removed to reservations. There were refugees in Kansas because of Lincoln's abandonment of Indian Territory (now Oklahoma) at the beginning of the war. Slave owning Indian nations (Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw and Seminole) in Indian Territory were convinced by the Confederacy that Lincoln meant to take their slaves. Their leadership decided to join the Confederates where they would not only be able to keep their slaves but also send delegates to the Confederate Congress. As not all of the Indians wanted to side with either the Union or the Confederacy (which annexed the territory in May 1861), a flood of refugees ended up in Kansas. Pressure from the government of the State of Kansas forced Lincoln to reverse course and try to win Indian Territory back from the Confederacy.

He even went as far as to authorize an expedition which would use Indians receiving the same pay and equipment as U.S. soldiers. At that date in late 1861, this would have obviously been a landmark decision and a boon to future relations had the operation actually been carried out. It would not be until late June 1862 before any attempt to take back Indian Territory would be launched. Lincoln had changed his mind about the expedition several times. Instead of a viable fighting force that could help with the general war effort as originally planned, the expedition was only now going to be a kind of security detail to protect the refugees as they returned from Kansas. Problems in the East for the Confederates forced them to concentrate there and leave Indian Territory. The Indian soldiers who participated in the expedition were not given their provisions or their equal pay as they were promised. White troops refused to fight

alongside the Indians and the Indians returned to Kansas with even more refugees from Indian Territory in tow.²⁹¹

During the war Lincoln was as determined to develop the West to show the world and more importantly Americans themselves that the nation was still vigorous. As that plan (settlement, mineral development and the transcontinental railroad) moved forward it ran into the problem that Indians were already on the lands the plan required. The year after the Sioux uprising, Lincoln met a group of chiefs at the White House and pushed for assimilation from them. First he spoke to them of the “great difference” between whites and Indians. “The pale-faced people are numerous and prosperous because they cultivate the earth, produce bread, and depend on the products of the earth rather than wild game for subsistence. This is the chief reason of the difference but there is another. Although we are now engaged in a great war between one another, we are not as a race, so much disposed to fight and kill one another as our red brethren.”²⁹² Lincoln informed the chiefs that the only way he saw that Indians could become as numerous as the “pale-faces” was to take to farming as the whites did. That the land of the reservations that Indians were being removed to was agriculturally inferior to the lands they had previously lived on did not temper this statement.²⁹³ The pursuit of taming the West through settlement, connecting it to the East with a railroad and stripping it of its minerals led to conflicts with Indians who lived on the land.

Lincoln’s approach to Indian relations does not end on a hopeful note as one can spin out of his unfinished business in connection with his plans for freed slaves at the

²⁹¹ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, pp. 25-53. Chiefs were promised “an additional compensation” and families were to receive the pay of Indians who died or were killed while in service, see Annie Heloise Abel, *The Slaveholding Indians: The American Indian as Slaveholder and Secessionist*, Vol. 1 (Cleveland: Arthur Clark, 1915), p. 271, fn. 548.

²⁹² Lincoln, “Speech to Indians,” 27 March 1863, CW, Vol. VI, p. 151-152.

²⁹³ Lincoln, “Speech to Indians,” p. 152.

end of the Civil War. Lincoln did not allow mass murder of Indians in Minnesota following the uprising, but we have to remember that removal caused far more deaths than occurred at the gallows when the thirty-eight Sioux were hung. Settlers pushing into land in the West created tension, as did the discovery of gold. In 1864, the Sand Creek massacre occurred when concentration policy in Colorado turned to the outright advocacy of the murder of Indians. Lincoln was too busy worrying about reelection to pay close attention to the warning signs. He would not live to read the Senate report based on the Sand Creek massacre which saw the dismemberment of mostly women and children. His view of Native American humanity differed from those who carried out the massacre in that he did not hate Indians. Yet, it was that view of the Indian as savage that was inescapable for Lincoln. They were not equals. They had no civilization. That Indians had helped bring an American civilization into being and helped to sustain it was not in Lincoln's consciousness. The Indians were unfortunately in the way of civilization. The wounds of the nation to be bound up that Lincoln spoke of did not include those injuries inflicted on Indians. The Indians who did end up fighting for the Union did not see their situation improve after the Civil War was over. As Nichols aptly put it, "They continued to be deprived of life, land, and their just roles in the histories of Lincoln's presidency."²⁹⁴

While Lincoln could not remove himself from a stance of superiority toward Indians that had resulted in mass suffering in the first ninety years of the United States, we can focus in on his role while he was in office. Lincoln was not powerless to do something to positively influence the relationship of the U.S. government and the Native American nations. The actions that he did take led down the path which symbolically closed the American frontier at Wounded Knee. If Drinnon and subsequent writers arguing along the same lines are correct, the frontier never closed but was transplanted.

²⁹⁴ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, p. 211.

They would hold that until there is a break in American consciousness from this frontier mentality, the representation of the Indian as “savage” will continue to pop up as well as get the United States into misadventures abroad. Will remembering that Lincoln was not above thinking of Indians as inferior and in the way of “progress” help us make that break? Whether or not we agree with the idea that the frontier mentality still drives at least some of American foreign policy, the fact that the symbols still appear demands some consideration. As regards Lincoln, the point here is not to drag his name through the mud, but to humanize him, to place him in a fuller context than we are usually given.

CHAPTER 5
IMAGINARY LINCOLN

5.1 What if Lincoln Had Lived?

The thought of “what if” is a powerful one.²⁹⁵ As a search query on Google the phrase returns more than seven billion results and hundreds of millions of results when adding the name Lincoln to it. There’s a clear interest in alternative pasts regarding Abraham Lincoln. However, I will focus here only on the more persistent and popular form of the inquiry, which is to say, the question of “what if Lincoln had lived?”

This question about what kind of an alternative past and thus also what alternative future would have existed for Lincoln is certainly not new. In a 1916 editorial, the *New York Times* wrote, about Lincoln “The great life which was crowned in Ford’s Theatre would have had as its last chapter, a desperate, passionate factional quarrel, and at this day, instead of a unanimous recognition of ‘the first American,’ there would be historical controversy and literary battling for and against him.”²⁹⁶ While presentations of Lincoln as the “first American” have long since been retired, many scenarios, including Lincoln being shot and surviving to resuming the presidency as I will discuss below, have already been imagined. This question is of course different than asking what would Lincoln do now if he were alive, which has also been formulated many times. My answer to a query about Lincoln surviving could be potentially enormous. I will not play the part of novelist à la futurist and former Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives Newt Gingrich and write out a trilogy of alternative history novels (*Gettysburg: A Novel*

²⁹⁵ This question has also spawned a series of “What if?” counterfactual history essay collections edited by American military historian Robert Cowley. The books are *What If? The World’s Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 1999), *What If? 2: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 2001) and *What Ifs? Of American History: Eminent Historians Imagine What Might Have Been* (New York: G.P. Putnam, 2003). Each of the volumes contains at least one essay on Lincoln or events from the Civil War. Cf. *What Might Have Been: Imaginary History from Twelve Leading Historians*, ed. Andrew Roberts (London: Wiedenfeld & Nicolson, 2004), which contains an essay by Amanda Foreman on the *Trent* Affair turning into war, pp. 92-104.

²⁹⁶ “If Lincoln Had Lived,” *New York Times*, Jan. 9, 1916.

of the Civil War; Grant Comes East; Never Call Retreat: Lee and Grant: The Final Victory)—the North still wins the war in Gingrich and his co-author William R.

Forstchen's retelling, by the way. As interesting as the subject is, I will be much briefer than that, but still keeping to a narrative form at times.

When dealing with counterfactual scenarios I keep in mind the following words by American political scientist Richard Ned Lebow

Counterfactual arguments, like any historical argument, are only as compelling as the logic and 'evidence' offered by the researcher to substantiate the links between the hypothesized antecedent and its expected consequences. Every good counterfactual thus rests on multiple factials, just as every factual rests on counterfactual assumptions—and these assumptions too often go unexamined. Any sharp distinction between factials and counterfactuals rests on questionable ontological claims. Many of the scholars who dismiss counterfactual arguments do so because they do not believe they are based on facts.²⁹⁷

Therefore in describing a past where Lincoln lived to serve out his second term and beyond as the ex-president in order to describe an alternative future resulting from that counterfactual, I have examined Lincoln's policies at the end of his life as well as the actions of his successor Andrew Johnson. Events from Lincoln's late life and Johnson's presidency also played an important role in determining an alternative past. The influence of these things will not necessarily be stated explicitly. Obviously, if the things which occur in my scenario happened, this dissertation would have turned out much differently. Before I begin with my own "imaginary" Lincoln, I will review an example that is informative of what happens when we don't carry the imagination far enough: the narrative isn't fundamentally altered.

In Yale law professor Stephen L. Carter's recent imagining, we see an example of Lincoln being shot by John Wilkes Booth and surviving to resume his presidential duties. "He had been shot on Good Friday. On Easter Sunday, he rose." Lincoln also suffers the misfortune of being impeached in 1867 in Carter's telling. Carter describes the "miracle"

²⁹⁷ Richard Ned Lebow, "What's So Different About a Counterfactual?", *World Politics*, Vol. 52, No. 4 (July 2000), p. 556.

of Lincoln's survival and return to the helm of the ship of state in remarkable time, "by the middle of the week" after he was shot, to be more precise.²⁹⁸

However, Lincoln would return to power without Vice-President Andrew Johnson, who was killed on the night of Booth's failed assassination attempt. Lincoln would also be without his Secretary of State William Seward, who had been attacked by Lewis Powell on April 14 and was out of commission due to his injuries, "lingering for years, but as a disfigured invalid who refused to go to the office or receive callers."²⁹⁹ While in the novel, few people besides Lincoln were allowed to visit Seward, the historical Secretary of State received callers and even made a speech in favor of President Andrew Johnson's Reconstruction policies from the steps of his house in October, 1865.³⁰⁰ While Seward couldn't save Johnson from impeachment in 1868, Carter's Seward, if healthy, might have spared Lincoln from impeachment with "his peculiar ability to pour balm on troubled political waters."³⁰¹

Lincoln is ultimately assassinated in the book when a second attempt before he can be removed from office is successful. Sitting on the bed beside Lincoln, now dead, Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton assures us the impeachment will be forgotten.

'Had Lincoln lived, he would have been removed, and history would have counted him as yet another in the line of unsuccessful Presidents who have occupied the Mansion since Mr. Jackson's day. But now he will be celebrated. In centuries to come, America will sing his praises. The man who ended slavery.' A sour look, the words curdling, 'The man who saved the Union.' He gestured vaguely toward the window. 'One day, a monument to the great Lincoln will stand out there, beside Washington's.'³⁰²

²⁹⁸ Stephen L. Carter, *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), p. 5.

²⁹⁹ Carter, *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 511.

³⁰⁰ William H. Seward, *The Works of William H. Seward, Vol. 5*, ed. George E. Baker, 5 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1884), pp. 516-529.

³⁰¹ Carter, *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln*, p.45.

³⁰² Carter, *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 501.

It is a little too neat for Carter to arrange things in this manner. Are we to imagine that his Lincoln, who had been facing impeachment for charges³⁰³ far more serious than those faced by President Clinton in real life, would be thought of generally as he is today in approximately the same light as savior of the Union and the Great Emancipator? The answer is yes according to the heroine of the novel, Abigail Canner, a brilliant and enterprising 21-year old African American woman, who is a law clerk for the firm which represented Lincoln during the impeachment trial. Canner says fatalistically that “very little” would have been different if Lincoln had died in 1865 rather than in 1867. “History,” she says, being “larger than any one bullet” would have still allowed the country to “roll on toward empire.”³⁰⁴ By allowing Lincoln to be assassinated, Carter’s Stanton gets to say his line about Lincoln belonging to the ages³⁰⁵ just as he does in Spielberg’s *Lincoln*. In both cases, the creativity of the work is stifled from failing to challenge how Lincoln is viewed. Despite the scandal of an impeachment in Carter’s book and the cursing and political horse-trading in Spielberg’s *Lincoln*, Lincoln the man comes out the same way he went in: “America’s greatest President.”³⁰⁶

The predominant presentation of Lincoln has not always been as the Great Emancipator as he is for Carter and Spielberg. Barry Schwartz notes that “Current portrayals of Lincoln, as we now know, contradict in several ways the Lincoln of the earlier twentieth century. Not only do historians place greater emphasis on emancipation and slavery; they also write for a highly receptive audience that exaggerates their

³⁰³ The charges in the book are related to the suspension of habeas corpus, censoring newspapers, jailing critics, inadequately providing for the protection of the freedmen and a plan by Lincoln to “overthrow the authority of the Congress.”

³⁰⁴ Carter, *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 506.

³⁰⁵ Carter, *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 501.

³⁰⁶ Carter, *The Impeachment of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 509.

exaggerations.”³⁰⁷ Moreover, historians and their readers “seem to have forgotten the traditional Lincoln—Ida Tarbell’s and Carl Sandberg’s Lincoln—the common, self-reliant man who raised himself by his own bootstraps.”³⁰⁸ Schwartz states that consumption shapes the work that is produced. If that is the case, is it market forces or a break from tradition which has eliminated presentations of Lincoln as the common man? Schwartz says that “a compassionate-centered frame of memory” has taken over and led to a postmodern rendering of memory. Regret and guilt drive this type of collective memory and with this in mind, the disadvantages of being African American in American society makes for a ready connection to Lincoln as Great Emancipator, Schwartz says.³⁰⁹ Whether or not one agrees with Schwartz, the challenge then was to think of a past which would allow Lincoln to come out differently than any of the five Lincoln images (Savior of the Union, the Great Emancipator, Man of the People, First American and Self-Made Man) of American memory listed by Merrill D. Peterson in his *Lincoln in American Memory* (1994).

The first and most important part of creating an alternative past where Lincoln lives that is different from what has come before is making sure that he is not assassinated by Booth or anyone else. If Lincoln is able to become a martyr for either the cause of the Union or of freeing the slaves or both, the images of him as a savior or the Great Emancipator are almost ready-made for the narrative. Therefore Booth, who actually did shoot and kill Lincoln must be taken care of for a new narrative to possibly

³⁰⁷ Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era*, p. 142.

³⁰⁸ Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era*, p. 142.

³⁰⁹ Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era*, p. 143-144.

take shape. One way to remove the obstacle is to understand that an illness picked up in Washington could have thwarted Booth before he carried out his plan with a derringer.³¹⁰

During the Civil War, the city of Washington, D.C. was not the most sanitary place to reside in. The bodies of dead and wounded soldiers were brought into the nation's capital which itself had been turned into a virtual army field hospital during the course of the war.³¹¹ Washington, which was a small city before the war, found its fresh water resources put under so much stress that a new aqueduct had to be constructed in 1862. The city was severely lacking in paved roads and indoor plumbing.³¹² The city was packed with excess life and nearly unlivable during the summer months as it underwent a tremendous amount of population growth between 1860 and 1870.³¹³ Lincoln himself retreated to a cottage in the Soldiers' Home located in Northeast Washington on one of the highest points in the city during the summer to escape the heat, not to mention the mosquitos.³¹⁴ In February 1862, Lincoln's son Willie Lincoln died from typhoid fever likely contracted from unsanitary drinking water. The Lincolns got their water at the

³¹⁰ In the same vein, a plot involving germ warfare to check the Union's progress in winning the war could have killed Booth if things went awry. A Dr. Luke P. Blackburn of Kentucky who was in Canada during the Civil War suggested using infecting clothes to spread yellow fever in the North, see, Edward Steers, *Blood on the Moon: The Assassination of Abraham Lincoln* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), pp., 46-51; cf. Michael W. Kauffman, *American Brutus: John Wilkes Booth and the Lincoln Conspiracies* (New York: Random House, 2004), p. 138.

³¹¹ Dr. J.W. Bulkely, "The War Hospitals," in *Washington During War Time: A Series of Papers Showing the Military, Political and Social Phases During 1861 to 1865*, ed. Marcus Benjamin (Washington D.C.: Grand Army of the Republic, 1902), pp. 147-163.

³¹² See Wilhelmus Bogart Bryan, "Washington on the Eve of the Civil War," in *Washington During War Time*, pp. 3-13.

³¹³ Richard F. Selcer puts this figure of population growth at 75.4 percent for the decade in *Civil War America, 1850 to 1875* (New York: Infobase, 2006), p. xviii.

³¹⁴ See Matthew Pinkser, *Lincoln's Sanctuary: Abraham Lincoln and the Soldiers' Home* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

White House from the Potomac River, “along the banks of which tens of thousands of troops without proper latrines were stationed.”³¹⁵

As one of the nation’s most popular stage actors, John Wilkes Booth travelled extensively. The nation’s capital was one of the many destinations for Booth during his performance career. President Lincoln personally saw Booth act in *Richard III* and *Hamlet*, among other plays. Lincoln was reportedly so impressed with Booth’s starring performance in a play entitled *The Marble Heart* at Ford’s Theatre in 1863 that he requested an interview with Booth which was rebuffed by the actor.³¹⁶ Booth’s travels included a ten day trip to Montreal, a hotbed of secret Confederate activity, before Lincoln’s re-election in 1864. Booth was in Washington again in time to witness Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address in 1865. He was in the crowd watching the speech as a guest of his fiancée Lucy Hale, the daughter of the abolitionist Senator from Maine, John P. Hale. Booth had been plotting to kidnap Lincoln and exchange him for Confederate prisoners of war by this time.

When the day of Lincoln’s Inauguration came, Booth was feeling under the weather after having gotten caught out in the driving rains and muddy roads going to and from meetings about the kidnapping plot at Mary Surratt’s boarding house. Booth’s immune system was already stressed from his usual travels and now this fever was piling on. His temperature felt ever increasing as he listened to Lincoln’s 700-word speech. Booth coughed more than a few times during the duration and wiped sweat from his brow. Three of his co-conspirators were with him in the crowd that overcast muggy

³¹⁵ Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, p. 419. Drew Gilpin Faust writes that “nearly three-quarters of Union soldiers suffered from serious bowel complaints in every year of the war; by 1865 the sick rate for diarrhea and dysentery was 995 per thousand. Contamination of water supply from camp latrines was a key cause of these illnesses, as it was of typhoid,” *This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008), p. 4.

³¹⁶ See footnote no. 271, pp. 325-326 in *Inside Lincoln’s White House: The Complete Civil War Diary of John Hay*, eds. Michael Burlingame and John R.T. Ettlinger (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999).

morning. As Lincoln had risen to speak on March 4, 1865, brilliant rays of light illuminated the speaker's platform as the sun broke through the clouds. As Lincoln began to give his address the clouds blocked the sun again. Booth had an epiphany at that moment. Early the next week, his head pounding from a headache, Booth wheezed to his friend and fellow actor Samuel Knapp Chester, "what an excellent chance I had, if I had wished to kill the President on Inauguration Day; I was on the stand as close to him nearly as I am to you."³¹⁷ Booth's mind had switched from kidnapping Lincoln and holding him for the prisoner exchange ransom to murder. His fever was getting worse and then next day he found himself bedridden. Booth did not know it yet but he was succumbing to typhoid as Lincoln's son had three years earlier.

Booth wiped his bloody nose and feebly scrawled a note to Mary Surratt to assemble the conspirators at his residence the morning of March 9. Surratt was busy later that day when the note reached her. It would take her another two days to round up the men involved with the plot. Booth had intended to tell the group of the change in plans. When the conspirators assembled around Booth's bed on March 11 they found him to be delirious and unable to communicate anything other than what they took to be mad ramblings. Booth would be dead within three days. Without a ringleader, the group fell into disarray. Booth's funeral was a highly public affair. Weeping lady admirers of the young handsome actor brought wreaths to his coffin and wore mourning attire. Lincoln, a lover of the theater, sent a short letter to Booth's family in Maryland paying his respects, oblivious of Booth's thoughts of assassination or his longstanding dislike of the President. Before the conspirators could think of regrouping, Union forces decisively defeated the Army of Northern Virginia at the Battle of Five Forks on April 1. Petersburg,

³¹⁷ *The Trial of the Assassins and Conspirators at Washington City, D.C., May and June, 1865, For the Murder of President Abraham Lincoln* (Philadelphia: T.B. Peterson, 1865), p. 47.

Virginia and the Confederate capital of Richmond would have to be evacuated. Lincoln triumphantly entered both cities just two days later.

In Richmond, Lincoln is met by a throng of freed blacks. One freedman stoops and fawns over him. Lincoln looks down at the man and motions lifting his arm up.

“Don’t kneel to me. That is not right. You must kneel to God only, and thank Him for the liberty you will enjoy hereafter.”³¹⁸

Lincoln is little interested in having captured the Confederate capital. General Grant is told to doggedly pursue Robert E. Lee and force him to surrender. The same thing goes for all the other commanders in the field hunting down remaining rebel units. This was in its essence a rebellion for Lincoln and eliminating the armies in the field were the key to ending it.

Before departing Grant asked “Mr. President, what about Jefferson Davis?”

Lincoln smiled. “General, I shall tell you the story of an Irishman who had taken Father Matthew’s pledge. Soon thereafter, becoming very thirsty, he slipped into a saloon and applied for a lemonade, and whilst it was being mixed he whispered to the bartender, ‘Av ye could drap a bit o’ the brandy in it, all unbeknownst to myself, I’d make no fuss about it.’”³¹⁹

“I see. You don’t want him. And, what of the rank and file?” Grant wondered.

Lincoln responded, “the loss of their slaves is going to be a bitter enough pill for the Southerners to swallow. I will make no changes to my blanket pardon policy. All the

³¹⁸ The quote is from James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford, 1988), p. 847.

³¹⁹ Carl Schurz, *Abraham Lincoln: The Gettysburg Speech and Other Papers by Abraham Lincoln, Together with Testimonies by Emerson, Whittier, Holmes, and Lowell* (Cleveland: Chautauqua, 1891), p. 29.

Confederate soldiers lower than the rank of Colonel will be given pardons and have their property restored, except for slaves in exchange for a loyalty oath.”³²⁰

As for the Reconstruction itself, Lincoln was willing to give ground to the Congress and the Ten Percent Plan was scrapped. The approval of the Thirteenth Amendment by the former Confederate states before they could return on an equal footing with the other States was a firm commitment. Near the end of the war, Lincoln had approved of the Special Field Orders No. 15 of General Sherman which had confiscated 30 miles of land broken into 40 acre parcels along the Atlantic Coast set aside for freedmen. This confiscation became permanent after the war. The Freedmen’s Bureau was to find the land of the Confederacy’s leadership above the rank of Colonel and redistribute it to freedmen who went the proper application process. With land and the enforcement of the 13th, 14th and 15th Amendments, the freedmen began to thrive in the South and serve in its governments at all levels.

Abraham Lincoln followed the example of George Washington. He did not seek to run for office for a third term and left the Presidency in 1869. He had seen the country through its most difficult trial. As Lincoln slumped down inside the train car leaving Washington, D.C. headed for Springfield, the well-wishers pushing themselves up next to the car to get a last glimpse of the sixteenth president became an unrecognizable shouting mass. Lincoln had taken his spectacles off and rubbed the bridge of his nose with his thumb and forefinger with his eyes closed. His thoughts wandered and he saw himself on the rear platform in Springfield. It was February of 1861. It was the day before his birthday as a matter of fact.

Lincoln looked out at crowd of nearly a thousand spectators that morning. Departing Springfield was a mixed blessing Lincoln remembered thinking as he gathered himself to speak. The address would be short as the President-elect had many emotions

³²⁰ See for example, Lincoln’s “Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction”, 8 Dec. 1863, CW, Vol. VII, pp. 53-56.

about leaving his home and many thoughts about the duties he was about to assume. Lincoln thought about the States already claiming to have left the Union: South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and . . . Texas. Losing Georgia meant losing his old friend Alexander Stephens. Stephens will be taking the oath of office as the Vice-President of the so-called Confederate States of America Lincoln pondered. It's really a shame. I would have offered that man a spot in the cabinet. And Texas . . . after Polk started that damned aggressive war on Mexican soil and we paid the Texans' debts, this is how they choose to repay us? Just then Lincoln found himself ready to speak. The train jerked into motion and brought him back to reality. The vision from the platform was gone and Lincoln opened his eyes. He smiled thinking of the words he used to describe the difficulty he faced in 1861.

"I now leave, not knowing when, or whether ever, I may return, with a task before me greater than that which rested upon Washington. Without the assistance of that Divine Being, who ever attended him, I cannot succeed. With that assistance I cannot fail."³²¹

Lincoln had not failed; the rebellion which he had wished would not turn violent had been suppressed and the Union preserved and the slaves freed. He knew now he had underestimated the Southerners' desire to fight. Lincoln could take pride in being able to follow Washington's example and return home after serving two consecutive terms. He had lived to see Springfield once more. Lincoln was also looking forward to telling Billy Herndon that he was rejoining the law firm, albeit, a little later than he had originally expected. Herndon had come upon some hard times through some bad investments and had to take on a new partner to keep the law office open. However, the "shingle" outside

³²¹ Lincoln, "Farewell Address at Springfield, Illinois", 11 Feb. 1861, CW, Vol. IV, p. 190.

still read Lincoln and Herndon, as Lincoln had asked of Billy when he left Springfield.³²² Lincoln was not actually going to resume his law practice right away. Mary had begged him to go to California and Europe and now the opportunity had presented itself. Their boy Tad Lincoln was now sixteen years old and would accompany his parents on the trips. Their other living son Robert would not be making the trip to Europe as his wife Mary had become pregnant and was due to give birth before that excursion would end. Lincoln did not have much time left either, but he was unaware of this fact.

About a year after the Lincolns returned from Europe, Tad Lincoln died of tuberculosis. His father would slowly succumb to an illness which has not positively been identified. The illness was perhaps what is now known as a rare genetic disorder.³²³ Mary Lincoln had kept her husband out of the public eye as he wasted away. Abraham Lincoln died on November 19, 1871, the date which he had given his Gettysburg Address eight years earlier. It remains a speech held in high esteem and one that draws comparisons with Pericles' "Funeral Oration." It seemed as if the entire nation descended on Illinois to pay their respects to Lincoln. The mourners would use the most extensive railroad system the world had ever seen to get to Illinois and Lincoln's casket. This system of course included the new but already heavily used transcontinental railroad. Southern blacks enjoyed a brief respite from the usual segregation system which was in place in the North during this time. The Northerners knew that African Americans knew that they were not welcome and each group attempted to be somewhat affable toward the other for about a week. Lincoln had never liked the segregation regime in the North that solidified after the War for Southern Emancipation but the process through which it happened was part of what allowed Reconstruction and developing the West to move forward.

³²² Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and The War Years* (Orlando: Mariner, 2002), p. 194.

³²³ See John G. Sotos, *The Physical Lincoln Complete* (Mt. Vernon, VA: Mt. Vernon, 2008).

5.2 Lincoln Faces West

From time to time Lincoln's friend Frederick Douglass would call on Lincoln at the White House. Douglass would complain about how the Northern blacks were subject to increasing mistreatment following the war and tried to convince the President to do something about it. Lincoln would remind him that because of the enforcement of the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments by the Federal government (in the South at least), whites fled the South in places where large concentrations of African Americans dominated local politics. Whites had tried to fight the changes with violence but it was much easier to leave the South which the war had literally devastated for the land the government was practically giving away in the West. There were also wide swaths of rural areas in the North where whites fed up with the changes in South could move to. Similarly, blacks who felt unsafe or uncomfortable in the North were moving to the South. Lincoln said there was not much that could be done about the situation. Without having everyday contact with blacks on equal footing whites were prone to believing the most ridiculous stereotypes about them. Each new group of immigrants did not assimilate into the society easily either, Lincoln would point out, "and those are white folks." Lincoln always promised to do what he could to make the Northern situation better but he could not push too hard. Too much was at stake. The Reconstruction process had been relatively swift but the price was not to have the radical changes in the South applied to the North as well. Lincoln still needed political support for Western development and the political appointments he was making in the West.

Although he still enjoyed a broad scope of power Lincoln could not operate as freely as during the war years. He could not cross the people's representatives or the laws Northern people voted for. How could he? Was it not Lincoln who stood at Gettysburg with the rotting corpses of his countrymen around him telling not only the country but

the world, "It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us -- that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion -- that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain -- that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom -- and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."³²⁴

The last words were always going to limit power as long as it resided in the hearts of the people. Northerners were fine with the "new birth of freedom", as long as it remained in the South. The representatives they elected reflected this fact. The soaring words "government of the people, by the people, for the people" would be thrown in Lincoln's face if he pushed too hard.

"No, Douglass," Lincoln counseled, "we shall have to let the courts throw out these laws and in the meantime oppose them with what moral force we can."

It turned out to be not wise counsel.

In 1873, two years after Lincoln died, a challenge to a law which made its way to the Supreme Court came not from African Americans at all, but from Chicago butchers. After a large land purchase by a group of nine railroad companies, the Union Stock Yard in Chicago opened in 1865. This group lobbied the State of Illinois Legislature to pass laws that would make The Yards the only place to slaughter animals in the city of Chicago, ostensibly for public health reasons. A group of smaller stockyard owners sued and the case made its way to Washington, D.C. on appeal. Lincoln had appointed most of the members of the court. The Chief Justice was Salmon Chase, one of Lincoln's rivals whom he had first placed in the cabinet as Secretary of the Treasury and then in the Supreme Court. The unkindest cut in the Court's decision came not from Chase but from another Lincoln appointee, Samuel Freeman Miller. He wrote the majority opinion in a

³²⁴ Lincoln, "Address Delivered at the Dedication of Cemetery at Gettysburg," p. 23.

five-to-four decision in what became known as the *Slaughterhouse Cases*. Miller, although he had long been in favor of emancipation, supported Lincoln's campaigns for the Presidency, and upheld Lincoln's civil rights abuses during the war, had a narrow reading of the 14th Amendment. The crucial part of Miller's reading for African Americans in the North was that the Amendment was mostly designed to protect the freedmen in the South and should not be applied liberally. Miller also interpreted the birthright citizenship clause in an odd fashion. He thought that two types of citizenship were identified, citizenship in the United States and in the particular State where one resided. To Miller the words in the Amendment "No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States" only applied to United States citizenship. Therefore, the 14th Amendment rights of the butchers had not been violated by Illinois State law. The effect in the North, where the black population and representation was not large enough to prevent it, was the passing of laws enacting stronger codes of segregation. Joining with the dwindling number of Radical Republicans, African American lawmakers from the South were able to help pass The Civil Rights Act in 1875. Miller joined an eight-to-one majority in 1883 striking this law down as unconstitutional. Northern blacks had sued in five different cases where private businesses (hotels, railroads, theatres) had denied them entry to "white only" facilities. The Supreme Court's reading of the Civil War Amendments, and especially the 14th Amendment, in what became known as the *Civil Rights Cases* was, in the words of Justice Bradley who wrote the opinion,

running the slavery argument into the ground to make it apply to every act of discrimination which a person may see fit to make as to the guests he will entertain, or as to the people he will take into his coach or cab or car, or admit to his concert or theatre, or deal with in other matters of intercourse or business. Innkeepers and public carriers, by the laws of all the States, so far as we are aware, are bound, to the extent of their facilities, to furnish proper accommodation to all unobjectionable persons who in good faith apply for them. If the laws themselves make any unjust discrimination amenable to the

prohibitions of the Fourteenth Amendment, Congress has full power to afford a remedy under that amendment and in accordance with it.³²⁵

The meaning here was that private discrimination was not punishable. Northerners took this decision and ran with it—so too did Westerners.

While the West was theoretically opened to African Americans by Lincoln's policies, few freedmen could afford to move there and their future seemed brighter in the South anyway. As a result, especially after the court cases reviewed above, sundown towns became the norm across the rural North and West, as well as in the suburbs of their large cities. These towns excluded not only blacks, but also Native Americans, Chinese and Mexican Americans. Unintended consequences perhaps, but nevertheless the negative impacts are still with us today. So how did Abraham Lincoln become known as "The Founding Father of the West" as we know him as so well today?

Lincoln was instrumental in the West's development. His role in the emancipation of the slaves has taken a back seat to the efforts of the Union soldiers themselves (most importantly the 200,000 African American soldiers), the Congress for making emancipation permanent through the 13th Amendment and also the self-liberated slaves who ran away from their masters. Lincoln was right after all when he said July 4, 1861

This is essentially a People's contest. On the side of the Union, it is a struggle for maintaining in the world, that form, and substance of government, whose leading object is, to elevate the condition of men---to lift artificial weights from all shoulders---to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all---to afford all, an unfettered start, and a fair chance, in the race of life. Yielding to partial, and temporary departures, from necessity, this is the leading object of the government for whose existence we contend.³²⁶

That people's contest is, as we well know is called, "The War for Southern Emancipation." The nation's destiny, Lincoln demanded, lies in the West. He would not wait until war was over to try to prove that.

³²⁵ *Civil Rights Cases*, 109 U.S. 3 (1883) at p. 25.

³²⁶ Lincoln, "Message to Congress in Special Session," p. 438.

The large land-grant colleges which were originally designed to promote agricultural and mechanical arts derive from a law passed during the Lincoln administration. The Department of Agriculture itself was started during the Lincoln years. The first transcontinental railroad was pushed forward by Lincoln. One of his last Presidential acts in February 1869 was to drive a 14-ounce ceremonial golden spike in Promontory Summit, Utah, where the track built by the Union Pacific and Central Pacific met. Lincoln had a flair for publicity and had Mathew Brady photograph the event. It is from these Brady pictures that the familiar Lincoln Memorial was sculpted. Anyone who has been to Washington, D.C. has seen that larger than life marble Lincoln standing upon the track, a slight smile upon his face, holding the ceremonial spike maul in hand. Behind him is a mural of the people who stood around Lincoln that day. A locomotive with people hanging off of it to try to see the event is also visible.

The mural was adapted from the popular painting done by Thomas Hill, *The Last Spike* (1881). Hill's painting included Chinese laborers and an Indian looking forward away from the action. The Chinese laborers were not only a general reminder of the contributions of these immigrants to Westward expansion, they specific and direct roles in the ceremony by preparing the track for the final ties and laying the final rails of the Central Pacific Railroad.³²⁷ But what of the Indians? They were described at the time as part of the "well-known characters of the Plains" but also as former "sovereigns of the mid-continent."³²⁸ What else but ingenuity and progress had written the Indians out of the story of America?

³²⁷ Thomas Hill provides a faithful account of the people appearing in his painting in the pamphlet *The Last Spike: A painting by Thomas Hill illustrating the last scene in the building of the overland railroad* (San Francisco: E. Bosqui, 1881), pp. 33-36. That Chinese workers laid the final rails of the Central Pacific was no accident, according to Hill. He says, "To give the incident greater significance arrangements had been made to have the last rails of the Union Pacific laid by Europeans, and of the Central Pacific by Asiatics, the foremen in both cases being Americans," p. 25.

³²⁸ Hill, *The Last Spike*, pp. 34, 5.

At the beginning of work on the railroad in California in 1863, then Governor Leland Stanford spoke of the “blessings” the new railroad would bring and how it would “shed luster upon the enterprise, the energies, and the wisdom of our people.” Stanford continued by praising the “pioneers” who had found California “wild and unexplored.” The “beautiful river” near the dedication site that January day had once “floated upon its bosom only the light canoe and reed raft of the untutored native” but had been since transformed by the “stimulus of American energy” into a bustling aquatic thoroughfare carrying both treasure and “travelers urging that prosperity to its furthest limits.”³²⁹ Stanford spoke of the Indians as if they had disappeared from the scene while only six months prior he wrote General George Wright asking him to “forward to the scene of Indian depredations in Butte County one company of infantry to assist the citizens in effectually putting an end to Indian outrages.” Further Stanford asked for weapons so that citizens could “protect themselves against these repeated Indian outrages.”³³⁰ Less than a month after Stanford bristled about “outrages” in a state which allowed the forcible “apprenticeship” of Indian minors and indenturing out “vagrant” Indians who could not afford bail to the highest bidder at public auction³³¹, Lincoln wrote the first

³²⁹ George Thomas Clark, *Leland Stanford, War Governor of California, Railroad Builder, and Founder of Stanford University* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1931), pp. 186-187.

³³⁰ Clark, p. 121.

³³¹ Both of these actions were permissible under Sections 3 and 20, respectively, of the 1850 *California Act for the Government and Protection of Indians*. Abuses of Section 3 occurred even after its repeal in 1863, see *Up and Down in California in 1860-1864: The Journal of William H. Brewer*, ed. Francis P. Farquhar (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), p. 493. Brewer says “It is a good American doctrine that a man not entirely white has few rights or privileges that a pure white is bound to respect, and as abuse and wrong has thus far failed to civilize and raise the Indian, it is, indeed a serious problem. The Indian wars now going on, and those which have been for the last three years in the counties of Klamath, Humboldt, and Mendocino, have most of their origin in this. It has for years been a regular business to steal Indian children and bring them down to the civilized parts of the state, even to San Francisco, and sell them--not as slaves, but as servants to be kept as long as possible. Mendocino County has been the scene of many of these stealings, and it is said that some of the kidnappers would often get the consent of the parents by shooting them to prevent opposition.” The entire 1850 *Act* would not be repealed until 1937.

draft of what became his Emancipation Proclamation.³³² As we saw in Chapter 4, Lincoln had his own “outrages” to deal with in Minnesota in 1862. Neither Stanford nor Frederick Low and Henry Haight who followed him as California governor petitioned Lincoln about the state of Indian affairs and slavery by another name and industry continued apace in the Golden State. Progress would continue now that the war had been won. On April 14, 1865, Schuyler Colfax met Lincoln before he went to see the popular comedic play, *Our American Cousin*, at Ford’s Theatre.

Lincoln told Colfax, who was about to depart for California

Mr. Colfax, I want you to take a message from me to the miners who you visit. I have very large ideas of the mineral wealth of our Nation. I believe it practically inexhaustible. It abounds all over the western country, from the Rocky Mountains to the Pacific and its development has scarcely commenced. During the war, when we were adding a couple millions of dollars every day to our national debt, I did not care about encouraging the increase in the volume of our precious metals. We had the country to save first. But now that the rebellion is overthrown and we know pretty nearly the amount of our national debt, the more gold and silver we mine, makes the payment of that debt so much the easier. Now, I am going to encourage that in every possible way.³³³

Lincoln’s role was not merely an advisory one when it came to the West, he would clearly seek to shape it in his second term.

Lincoln oversaw the admission of the Western States of Nevada, Nebraska, and Colorado. The Western territories of Arizona, Idaho, Montana and Wyoming were organized during the Lincoln Presidency. Wyoming Territory was organized in 1868 and the name is derived from an Native American word meaning “large plains.” After Lincoln’s presidency there was a push to change the name of the territory to something more suitable than a reminder of the Indians that Lincoln’s policies rid the West of. Washington Territory became Washington State in 1889. With the hurdle of the “Father

³³² Lincoln, “Emancipation Proclamation, First Draft,” 22 July 1862, CW, Vol. V, pp. 336-338.

³³³ Edward Winslow Martin, *The Life and Public Services of Schuyler Colfax: Together with his most important speeches* (New York: United States Publishing, 1868), pp. 187-188.

of Our Country” having a State named for him cleared, Lincoln, “The Founding Father of the West,” was given one in 1890 when Wyoming Territory became the State of Lincoln.

That was a symbolic change to be sure. What actions of Lincoln did people reflect on which led to the State of Lincoln being rubbed out of its original Indian symbolism? Or did they reflect at all? One of the founding violences of the United States of America that is well known but hardly critically analyzed by the nation itself is the killing and removal of Native Americans. Lincoln was in some ways no different than his predecessors in unquestioning the superiority of white “civilization” to that of the hundreds of Indian nations. He thrice volunteered in the Black Hawk War in Illinois when he a young man. Lincoln did not refer to the Indians as a “dying race” who were dying of natural causes based on their “contact with a superior race,”³³⁴ as did Senator James Doolittle, chairman of the Senate Indian Committee. Nevertheless, Lincoln’s Western policy can be said to have “carried with it the implicit doom of the Indians.”³³⁵ During the war Lincoln was as determined to develop the West to show the world that the nation was still vigorous. As that plan (settlement, mineral development and the transcontinental railroad) moved forward it ran into the friction that Indians were already on the lands the plan required. Indian massacres and wars broke out simultaneous to the War for Southern Emancipation. The United States decided to stop making Indian treaties altogether in 1868 mere months after they signed the treaty of Fort Laramie to end Red Cloud’s War.

General George Armstrong Custer, fresh off a massacre at Washita River took his cavalry unit north to the Black Hills. In 1869 Custer found gold, or the “yellow metal that

³³⁴ U.S., Congress, Senate, *Congressional Globe*, Debate on the Indian Appropriation Bill, 38th Cong. 2d sess., 13 January 1865, pt. 1:154.

³³⁵ Nichols, *Lincoln and the Indians*, 195.

makes the Wasichus crazy,” as Black Elk would say later.³³⁶ Technically by the terms of the Laramie Treaty, Custer was not supposed to be on Sioux land looking for anything. But, reports that there was gold to be found led him to go looking anyway. As the Congress had declared that United States was not making any more treaties with Indians, how likely was the government to honor the old ones?³³⁷ The answer came in the form of the United States under Lincoln’s successor, Ulysses S. Grant, seizing the Black Hills after a gold rush followed Custer’s discovery. Grant said of the reason why the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 was no longer being honored, “The answer is simple: The first immigrants to the Black Hills were removed by troops, but rumors of rich discoveries of gold took into that region increased numbers. Gold has actually been found in paying quantity, and an effort to remove the miners would only result in the desertion of the bulk of the troops that might be sent there to remove them.” Grant considered the matter settled by relying on the fiction that “a treaty ceding the Black Hills” had been made.³³⁸ The U.S. government still owns the Black Hills which were obtained in violation of a treaty. Lincoln did not exactly intend this to happen when he pushed for Western development but “progress” could not be reined in.

³³⁶ John G. Neihardt, *Black Elk Speaks: Being the Life of a Holy Man of the Oglala Sioux* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 62.

³³⁷ The Congress actually declared that the government was not to enter into new treaties with tribes in 1871 after being persuaded by “powerful arguments” that the tribes had “lost the attributes of sovereignty,” see Francis Paul Prucha, *American Indian Treaties: The History of a Political Anomaly* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), p. 17.

³³⁸ Grant, “Eighth Annual Message,” 5 Dec. 1876, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29517>. As treaties were no longer being made after 1871, Congress turned an agreement between 10 Sioux leaders and the government into the 1877 Act, 19 Stat. 254. This agreement was in violation of the 1868 treaty which specified in Article XII that “No treaty for the cession of any portion or part of the reservation herein described which may be held in common, shall be of any validity or force as against the said Indians unless executed and signed by at least three-fourths of all the adult male Indians occupying or interested in the same, and no cession by the tribe shall be understood or construed in such manner as to deprive, without his consent, any individual member of the tribe of his rights to any tract of land selected by him as provided in Article VI of this treaty,” see “Treaty of Fort Laramie” (1868), <http://www.ourdocuments.gov/doc.php?flash=true&doc=42>.

The reservation system lived on after both Lincoln and Grant so too did the difficult process to become recognized by the federal government for those tribes whom the white man had missed in his counting. Lincoln had once told Native American leaders that they needed to farm like the white man to become prosperous but bid them adieu for reservations that would not yield crops.³³⁹ It had seemed to be a miracle that Native Americans survived the closing of the frontier at all. But, the seeming miracle was based on nothing more than a wish that the first inhabitants the settlers encountered would vanish, and this wish had been with the settlers since they arrived on the eastern shores.

If the foregoing discussion contained the facts of history, my dissertation and the nation itself clearly would be much different. As I have mapped out, Lincoln would be known as “the maker of the West” in America, as its “founding father”. The dissertation would have to look at this role for Lincoln. I would talk about how the circumstances of the Civil War allowed it to become the War for Southern Emancipation and how the Reconstruction process would have the bargain attached for the North to keep the freedmen out in exchange for being able to develop the West freely. Last but not least, the dissertation would examine how Lincoln’s desire to develop the West meant misery and destruction for the Indian nations in the way of the advance of “civilization.” In the end, my study of one of the greatest Presidents in U.S. history would revolve around the “freedom bargain” gained by the War for Southern Emancipation that allowed for continued rapid westward expansion at the cost of truncated freedom for the freedmen the destruction of Native American sovereignty.

³³⁹ Lincoln, “Speech to Indians,” 27 March 1863, p. 151-152.

Epilogue

Nothing seems to be able to check the steady flow of presentations of Lincoln across mediums. We keep finding “ever more to say on Lincoln,” to borrow Michael Burlingame’s phrase.³⁴⁰ This process of finding more to say about the sixteenth president of the United States has taken me through several years of living with Lincoln in text, in film, on YouTube and strange images of a zombie sixteenth president. This dissertation is the result of that research although it does not contain all of what I discovered. The reason why some of what I came across (a lot actually) was left out is telling about the nature of presentations themselves.

It is impossible to include everything there is to say about Lincoln and then say no more with the constant flood of new material. What I left out about Lincoln was a matter of relevance to the presentations I chose to include in the dissertation. Many times that I felt that I had said enough about a particular topic and then came back with new paragraphs and notes moments or days later. At a certain point, one has to stop and put a stamp on a Lincoln project or it will never conclude. For this reason, attempting comprehensive projects on Lincoln are difficult. Even attempting to create ones that are more comprehensive than the best of what’s around is hard because of the great scope of the material, as Tony Kushner and Steven Spielberg found out while making the film *Lincoln*.³⁴¹

I chose five presentations in this dissertation: private, public, revisionist, elided and imaginary. Through them I had hoped to achieve something that would move presentations of Lincoln in the direction of being comprehensive. In the private presentation I examined Jaffian thought on Lincoln. I believe Jaffa and Krannawitter

³⁴⁰ Burlingame, “Finding Ever More to Say on Lincoln,” May 2010, Ashbrook University, <http://ashbrook.org/publications/onprin-spring10-burlingame/>.

³⁴¹ See “Tony Kushner Talks ‘Lincoln,’” 30 Nov. 2012, Harvard Magazine, <http://harvardmagazine.com/2012/11/tony-kushner-talks-lincoln>; “Lincoln Live Q&A - October 10,” Yahoo! Movies, 10 Oct. 2012, <http://movies.yahoo.com/lincoln-live/>.

want Lincoln to be too perfect, too philosophical to make their presentation more widespread. Perhaps they do not want a Lincoln that is not theirs, but I do not see a reason to read Lincoln esoterically as they do. In the public Lincoln, I reviewed the symbols found on two common denominations of American currency, two Lincoln monuments and two films that contain presentations of Lincoln. All of these representations, though interesting, have limitations based on the forms used to create them. What Spielberg said about his films can be applied all representations of this type, He said “whenever you make a film about an historically significant character that that film becomes one of the few tools about teaching that character. I don’t agree with that. I think that a movie can only be an adjunct, a movie can only be a supplement to books, to different points of view, to scholars, historians and your own teachers.”³⁴² Perhaps the best way to move forward is through revisionist, elided and imaginary representations of Lincoln.

In looking at revisionist presentations of Lincoln, I specifically chose the revision that has taken place regarding Lincoln as Great Emancipator. Despite the revision that has taken place, the image remains. I think it is time to come up with a new image for Lincoln regarding emancipation, one that does not shy away from his struggles with the issue. As a corollary, the elided presentation of Lincoln involves Lincoln’s Indian policy which shows a different side of Lincoln. There was no “new birth of freedom” for the Native American nations. Their wounds, opened so long ago, were not to be bound up. As much as we can commend Lincoln for evolving his views on African Americans, his views on Native Americans did not seem to change. When this is taken into consideration, do we not have to revise Lincoln’s views on race in general?

Finally, in the imaginary presentation of Lincoln, I aimed to devise a presentation that would not fall under the categories we have heretofore seen of Lincoln. Lincoln in

³⁴² “Lincoln Live Q&A - October 10,” Yahoo! Movies, 10 Oct. 2012, <http://movies.yahoo.com/lincoln-live/>.

the West is still a developing area of Lincolnia despite his birth on the frontier and his role in westward expansion and development. Historian Richard W. Etulain's introduction to *Lincoln Looks West* is as good a starting point as any for those looking to begin to explore this topic.³⁴³ I agree with Etulain that "among Lincoln's many designations, he deserves to be known as a man of the West."³⁴⁴

Lincoln was a complex man who is not easy to describe today. We should resist presentations that make him simple or all-knowing. If understanding something about Lincoln is going to help us understand something about the United States, then presentations of Lincoln must reflect his struggle and his complexity. He must not become good or bad, all one thing or all the other. If my presentation of Lincoln has successfully landed on a middle ground, I can then be satisfied.

³⁴³ Richard W. Etulain, "Abraham Lincoln and the Trans-Mississippi West: An Introductory Overview," in *Lincoln Looks West: From the Mississippi to the Pacific* (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 2010), pp. 1-67.

³⁴⁴ Etulain, *Lincoln Looks West*, p. 58

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