

The Social and Cultural Construction of Abraham Lincoln in U.S. Movies and on U.S. TV

asjournal.org /53-2009/social-and-cultural-construction-of-lincoln-in-movies-and-on-tv/

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Abraham Lincoln has constantly moved among and stirred Americans in the common, shifting ground of their popular, visual, and digital imagination. Nowadays, Lincoln is larger than the sum of his parts. This is due partly to his own prismatic personality, partly to his political genius, partly to the special needs of the American nation and its people. If Lincoln did not exist, someone, somehow, would have tried to construct a representative figure who came close to the mark of what the Civil War, the fight for the Union, the failure of Secession, the liberty of the slaves and the material-spiritual expansion of America meant. But Lincoln existed. Lincoln hit the target. Here was witness, cause, martyr and lodestone all packed into one.

I

Boredom is a crime, but abundance is an embarrassment. Especially when grappling with an embarrassment of riches like Abraham Lincoln. Most scholars of modern American mass media agree that “Lincoln is the most frequently portrayed American historical figure in the history of the film and television arts.”¹ He has not been omnipresent, but ever present—in plays, movies, cinematic documentaries, Civil War dramas, in TV’s holiday comedy and variety shows (even more so when February 12, Lincoln’s birthday, was a nation-wide federal holiday²), in TV news, ads, and public information programs, as a still or moving icon in the foreground, middle ground, or background in movies or on TV as a testament to the nation’s past and witness to The People’s present.

To begin to figure out the social and cultural construction of Abraham Lincoln in U.S. Movies and on U.S. TV, a number of common cultural realities about the United States need to be faced. Abraham Lincoln is a part that fits into a whole—as was and is the Civil War. Since the U.S. Civil War gave new life to a lasting, indigenous, exceptional set of elements in the body of the American nation that no other war or national crisis has done in such a lasting, coherent fashion in the United States before or since. So one needs to consider indigenous American elements with regard to their shaping influence on and exemplary expression of our lanky, lengthy subject at hand: Lincoln as a cinematic and a telegenic hero. To try and do this, the first half of this essay will survey Americans and their sense of history; photography and the presidency; the USA’s special thirst for cinematic story telling; the local (or national) hero versus the international hero; the place of the Civil War in the nation’s consciousness; the Civil War, Lincoln, and religion in the United States; the incorporation of minorities into the body politic; the country’s bestselling historical fiction; the Ken Burns documentary phenomenon (known as “the Burns brand”); Civil War reenactment; and finally monuments and monumentality in the United States. Following these eleven points the second half will deal with Heroism Studies in general, how and why in particular Lincoln’s heroism was built in movies and on TV. It is all connected.

Three opening caveats: generalization, the posthumous, and the nature of U.S. popular culture. My arguments are based on generalizations, which in turn are based on observations, facts, statistics, and what appear to me to be wholly representative works of American popular culture. I do so, as the saying goes, realizing that “all generalizations are false, including this one.” But what I seek is the cut and lay of the land, how Lincoln has effected the average American’s sense of national and personal identity.

Thus, caveat two of this American civilization issue: When examining the problem of the social and cultural

construction of Abraham Lincoln in U.S. movies and on U.S. TV, it is crucial to keep in mind that our objects under consideration are posthumous. They are cinematic, telegenic objects of national memory which followed after the Civil War and the apocalyptic assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Each object was subject to the gaze of its creator, its audience, its time and place of creation and observation. And due to Lincoln's assassination here is a case where the leader's death gelled the cause: "Tis not the Suffering but the cause that doth a Martyr make."³

To add interest to inquiry, I do not think of popular culture in its often criticized snake-oil sense of a thing which dupes fools. Hence, goes the anti-popular argument in its most recent form, most Americans have been "simulcraed" by ersatz Lincolns in the movies and on TV. Far from it. Truth is stranger than academic fiction. As John LeCarré wrote in his semi-autobiographical novel *A Perfect Spy* (New York: Knopf, 1986)—Americans are characterized by "a willingness to open themselves to strangers. A guile that was only there to protect their innocence. A fantasy that fired but never owned them. A capacity to be swayed by everything, while still remaining sovereign." Or, as noted by Anne Norton in her fine book *Republic of Signs: Liberal Theory and American Popular Culture*: "Americans are fully conscious of the fictional and the synthetic, prizing these as playful evidence of our success in the creation of a new world order."⁴

In a nutshell, one could dismiss posthumous representations and understandings in popular culture as junk, muck, plastic, putrid and poxy, as done by the Bloom-Baudrillard-Umberto Eco "simulcra" argument. But I think not. The best of popular culture is acorn knowledge. And much more: Popular culture for a vast amount of people is a seed. It is germination and first step in growth along a root of knowledge. Acorn knowledge can lead to talking about or watching the show—the subject—again. It can lead to reading its book, to researching the subject, to thinking. It is the itch of interest. For many it is the starting point that contained within itself what came thereafter, that got their momentum going that opened the door on a need to go in. That led them in—and thereby renewed the subject itself.

II

First, compared to a modern European's sense of historical awareness, one finds the average American relatively ignorant of history and geography. This pattern is established early in a young American's life. The 1987 survey "What Do Our 17-Year Olds Know? A Report on the First National Assessment of History and Literature" by Diane Ravitch and Chester Finn found that only one-third of American High School students could place the Civil War within the correct half-century.⁵ Statistics of this kind embarrassingly abound.

Hence the number of ways in which Abraham Lincoln can be construed in U.S. popular culture are remarkably flexible. Although generally revered as a secular saint in political culture and factually well known among the narrow academic or intellectual strata of Americans, there is no need and comparatively little demand for the pliant, popular Lincoln and the factual, historical Lincoln to be identical. Thus comes the freedom with which the factual, historical Lincoln has been enhanced or altered by changes in the USA's own historical-political context.

In popular reception Lincoln lasts as a legacy of the American past reconstructed by and for the present. One example of this pliability, as noted by Carl Sandburg, is how by the 1930s Lincoln was portrayed as a champion of labor, unions, and the working man—while, in historical fact, he opposed labor activities.⁶ A mass-mediated example is the very wide variety of actors who have played Abraham Lincoln cinematically, telegenically, or by voice-over in U.S. movies and documentaries or on TV shows. Among other actors this includes: stentorian-voiced Walter Huston, Raymond Massey (the stiff Canadian actor who probably portrayed Lincoln in movies, on TV, and in voice-overs more times than anyone else), Dennis Weaver, Royal Dano (a forgotten gem), Joseph Henabery, F. Murray Abraham (Lincoln as an ordinary murky ghoul), Gregory Peck (Lincoln as Peck), Sam Waterson (Lincoln as mushy, *Law & Order* good guy, D. A. Jack

McCoy), Charles Edward Bull, George Billings, John Anderson, Henry Fonda (who said off-screen: “I ain’t really Henry Fonda. Nobody could have that much integrity.”)⁷, Lee Bergere (on a *Star Trek* episode), crusty Hal Holbrooke, blowsy Jason Robards (a genial Eugene O’Neil drunk), John Carradine, and sleepy Kris Kristofferson.⁸

This representational variety has been bittersweet. Similar to John F. Kennedy in this respect, many areas or generational cultures have been explicitly iconoclastic about President Abraham Lincoln. This acidic vein in the Lincoln story has both weakened and strengthened it. For example, still unpublished, but available in archival depositories, is the truly sympathetic, masterful, and Hamlet-like portrayal of that otherwise totally odious figure John Booth by U.S. comedy actor Jack Lemmon. This was in the 1956, live, TV production *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*.⁹ It is an excellent example of a popular presentation where villain matches hero, not unlike Shakespeare’s Gloucester and Lear or Iago and Othello.

Regarding this acidic vein, as far as respected or disrespected U.S. icons go, much more continuity has been demanded for inanimate objects in America such as the Declaration of Independence, the USS Constitution (known as “Old Ironsides”), or the United States flag (known as “Stars and Stripes” or “Old Glory”), and the Confederate flag (known as the “Rebel,” “Southern Cross,” or “Dixie” flag).

The Stars and Stripes are such a revered symbol of American civil religion that in 1905 a revised U.S. trademark law made it illegal to use the flag to promote a commercial mark or label, although Uncle Sam, the Bald Eagle, and famous faces such as George and Martha Washington, Paul Revere, Abraham Lincoln, Benjamin Franklin, Jefferson Davis and Stonewall Jackson were considered permissible.¹⁰ In 1989, Congress passed the Flag Protection Act which made it a crime to desecrate the flag. It is unimaginable that Congress would have gone to this length after the pathetic TV production *Tad* (1995), which cast country singer Kris Kristofferson as Lincoln in a clearly glued-on beard and in an awfully aw-shucks performance.¹¹ But be that as it may, soon after the Flag Protection Act was passed, the Supreme Court invalidated the federal law as a violation of First Amendment rights of free speech.¹² For a human being, however, and specially a U.S. politician, “when a man assumes a public trust,” as Thomas Jefferson once wrote, “he should consider himself as public property”—and may be freely used or abused as such.¹³ And so was Lincoln.

To return to Lincoln and historical factuality, there are many reasons for Americans’ relatively ignorant sense of history and geography. One seductive triadic argument made by the noted Americanist scholar Rob Kroes is spatial, temporal, and psychological. That is, compared to European culture, U.S. culture is fundamentally horizontal, a place of “all things being equal” (as opposed to European verticality and accepted or imposed hierarchies). America’s relative absence of the historical past is an active presence in everyday life, and Americans typically lack the European sense “of organic cohesion.” Visually, psychologically, and spiritually, Americans feel no need to experience their civilization as a factual, temporal whole.¹⁴

On a less theoretical level, it is fair to argue for the importance of profound self-interest and sentimentality for Americans’ acquiring a knowledge of history and geography. In the recent Burns-Novick TV documentary *The War* (2007), the film makers recorded many typical examples of ordinary Americans who had no idea before December 7, 1941 where Pearl Harbor was on a map, or who or what was going on in Europe or in the Pacific area at the time. But with personal involvement, with the war and *The War*—with true stories and personal anecdotes of family, friends, and neighbors who fought, died, were wounded or disappeared abroad—the U.S. viewing public was forced to learn world geography and to know history first-hand.

In a similar way, the Burns brothers tremendously successful documentary *The Civil War* (1989) made American “viewers feel as if they were actually living through the war instead of just watching a program about it on television.”¹⁵ One finds that the Civil War and its participants became known when the Civil War

and its participants were telegenically resurrected. The Civil War was refreshed and new forms of profound personal involvement created which led to further investigations—chosen by or forced upon Americans.¹⁶ The Burns' brand of documentary is relentlessly sentimental. In *The Civil War* their style is governed by feeling, emotional idealism, and sentiment—very contemporary American, yet equally Victorian-Age American. This brand style is opposed to, for example, the French-Swiss documentary style which can be passionate, emotional, sorrowful, but generally not sentimental—rather realistic, emphasizing intelligent discontent, moral reform, sardonic actuality. Compare the all-American Burns brand of documentary in *The War* or *The Civil War* to, for example, the masterful twentieth-century European documentary *The Sorrow and the Pity* (*Le chagrin et la pitié*, 1969) about World War Two.¹⁷

Another aspect of the meaning and experience of history in the United States—specially visible in U.S. radio narrators of the twentieth century such as well-known sportscaster Bill Stern (1907–1971), the revered newscaster Paul Harvey (1918–2009), and Robert LeRoy Ripley's (born 1918) "Believe It or Not" series—has been the often easy blend of folklore and legend with news and history in American culture. This is also known as the old journalism adage that "the truth never stands in the way of a good story."

Abraham Lincoln himself often used and invited this kind of narrative encasement. He constantly buffered his personal communications with jokes and anecdotes. Lincoln recognized that an essence of history was not only bald fact but equally embroidered wisdom—like the story he often referred to of a litigant in an Illinois court room accused of murdering his parents, who begged for the jury's mercy on the grounds that he was an orphan. Lincoln turned his humorous story-telling upon himself, easily mingling fact and fiction to get a point across. Hence, popular history in this American sense has not only been about accurate record keeping but about targeting human truths, friendly kin to folklore and legend. This adds to the cinematic and telegenic historical narrative the pungent, folk-wisdom spice that facts are not always what they appear to be. Second, Lincoln was the USA's first widely photographed president and a distinctly memorable subject for visual effect and understanding who then became a natural subject for moving pictures. In contrast, the equally iconic George Washington was seen and known as a bust, a sculpture, a painting. Washington's image lacked the reality and intimacy of a photograph. Implicit here amid realism is a social factor of class, enhanced by the relation of culture and technology.

Washington was on a pedestal, but Lincoln sat next to you on a bus; one was kingly, the other was common.

George Washington was born with a silver spoon in his mouth. He was already up there at his Mount Vernon plantation estate overlooking the Potomac River. Abraham Lincoln was born with the low taste of log cabin cinders on his tongue. Lincoln worked his way up. Washington reconfirmed his own level. When Americans visualized Washington and Lincoln together, it balanced out that often unspoken U.S. taboo of social class. The circle was whole; Washington expressed upper class, Lincoln expressed lower class. (One can see this on the classic, apotheosis, calling-card etching of the 1860s, as superior Washington welcomes lower Lincoln into heaven.) In some good casting choices this common element came out in the actors chosen to play Lincoln in the movies or on TV. As Lincoln actor F. Murray Abraham said of himself: "Even though I won the Oscar, I can still take the subway in New York, and nobody recognizes me. Some actors might find that disconcerting, but I find it refreshing."¹⁸

Regarding Lincoln and photography, prior to our digitalized, PhotoShop age, photography was thought to be a window on truth. In November 1862, the *New York Times* declared that photographer Mathew Brady "deserves honorable mention as having been the first to make photography the Clio of the war."¹⁹ Added to the truth of the perceived, photoactive Lincoln was the accumulated record of his extraordinarily dramatic photographed context in ongoing photographic essays. Since April 15, 1865, Americans have experienced over a hundred and fifty years of photographic testimony which have lavishly illustrated for them the "myths, memories, and questions that gathered around our most beloved—and most enigmatic—president," as the front cover blurb-flap praises and hawks the Kunhardt family's 2008 Alfred E. Knopf photographic album

Looking for Lincoln: The Making of an American Icon.²⁰ And if “photography is truth,” as French director Jean-Luc Godard has said, then “cinema is truth twenty-four times a second.” Movies extended what photos began.

Regarding this second point, what no one has seemed to notice is not only that Abraham Lincoln was photographed more than any other President or American political leader of his era, but that this happened just at the moment when the business of photojournalism came of age. Through the subsequent, ongoing discovery of additional personal photographs (now numbering more than one hundred and four²¹) Lincoln was and remains more physically visible than any other living figure of the Civil War—which itself was the central, defining event of American civilization.

Abraham Lincoln became the flag of its disposition, its meaning and sacrifice. His body was eventful. Abraham Lincoln was not an abstract document like the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution or The Federalist Papers. He was as essential and clear as the Gettysburg Address. He entertained ideas and action. He enacted the evolution of profound social policy blended with his own slow-burning charisma. Moreover, and again, for Jacksonian, prebellum, democratic Americans (and thereafter), Lincoln was accessible. George Washington, his only real contender in the United States, was aloof, aristocratic, the king-like “father of his country.” Washington evolved out of the most ancient mould of the hero. He was “ever consciously resolved to be greatest among men” and exulted in his victories, his elitism. Washington was a man for whom modesty would have been mean-spirited.²²

Abraham Lincoln was an avuncular, brotherly, man-of-the-people and salt-of-the-earth figure. And does not his very face show this? The “left side is immature, plain—and physically not impressive,” wrote sculptor Gutzon Birglum (1867–1941), while Lincoln’s right side “guards his plan—watches the world, and shows no more of his light than his wisdom deems wise.”²³ And, incidentally, Lincoln pictured forth, served and embodied news photography on the ground. He offered pictures that tell a story, the wink of visible complicity and the generosity of popular experience. Modern technology and culture in the United States found their first political match in this eminently photogenic subject.

Plus, third point, we are looking here at the story-telling power of movies and TV in America and Americans’ own thirst for this homeopathic anodyne of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The USA is to entertainment media as Saudi Arabia is to oil, South Africa to diamonds and gold, or France to wine. This is a pillar of the nation’s wealth and identity. The productive wealth of the U.S. entertainment industry is characteristic of the culture, and like a slab of minerals it has been distinctly veined with stories of Abraham Lincoln.

As former president of the Motion Picture Association of America Jack Valenti once said, American movies are important as “a reflector and not an innovator” in the culture. And as Hollywood producer Sam Siegel added: “The best motion pictures are those which reach you as an entertainment and by the time you leave have provoked thoughts.”²⁴ U.S. movies and TV have constantly reformed and updated Americans about this important national figure. And they have probably been more effective and long-lasting than the same-old sing-along lesson of many a boring classroom.

But curiously—unlike, say, the figure of the cowboy, the teenage rebel, the doughboy, and the GI, or the blond, faux-naive, femme fatale—Lincoln has not been a wine which traveled well. As the noted French Americanist scholar Bernard Vincent wrote in the *New York Times* in 2009 about the interest shown to Abraham Lincoln in France: “Whereas more than 16,000 books have been published on Abraham Lincoln (most of them in the U.S.), only four have appeared in France: three in the 1950s, one in the 1960s; and only one American biography (by Stephen Oates) had the honor of a translation here (1984).”²⁵

Is Abraham Lincoln a global monument? Is the common American claim that the nation’s sixteenth president

became a universal icon (“His name is an inspiration, and a holy one, to all lovers of liberty the world over . . .;” “the name of Lincoln is worshipped throughout the world . . .;” “Abraham Lincoln was perhaps the greatest figure of the nineteenth century;” people everywhere achieve “a sense of immortality by contemplating Lincoln’s legacy”) true or is it wishful thinking?²⁶ The New York author and journalist Christopher Morley (1890–1957) noted about the esteemed English poet and social critic Matthew Arnold (1822–1888) that “When Abraham Lincoln was murdered / The one thing that interested Matthew Arnold / Was that the assassin shouted in Latin / As he leapt on the stage. / This convinced Matthew / That there was still hope for America.”²⁷

Even more to the point is the fact which lies at the beginnings, the historical tap roots of this issue. How did Europeans think about Lincoln and the Civil War when it was happening? As shown by the historical witness of letters, newspaper reports, editorials, workers’ songs, diplomatic memoirs and a wide variety of records, Europeans were individually divided in opinion about Abraham Lincoln, for and against North and South in the Civil War according to their own nation, class, individual groups and personalities. However, as Belle Becker Sideman and Lillian Friedman conclude in their collection of primary, historical sources *Europe Looks at the Civil War*, “the wish and belief most often expressed” among Europeans at that time “was that the United States could never again exist as one nation.”²⁸ As figured forth by Lincoln, who embodied the Union, outspoken opinion in Europe frowned upon him. Does this not then mean that at least from its historical beginnings a trend of neglect, the sin of omission, regarding America’s sixteenth president was established outside the United States? His assassination did not make him a martyr for Europeans any more than the assassination of Jean Jaurès on July 31, 1914 made the French politician a martyr for Americans.²⁹

Thus, interrogatory point number four: Is Abraham Lincoln a local hero, a national hero, and not truly an international one? Although he remains a figure of special interest to students of political history, does he not lack the global reach of the everyman heroes of history and legend such as Achilles or Caesar, Mohandas Gandhi or Martin Luther King? If so, is this partly the result of his American cinematic and telegenic uses? The likelihood that Lincoln remains stuck in local and national hero status is all the more striking since one new element of the last seven decades has been the intense use of American folklore and legend, the power of the USA’s rich, resourceful, commercially creative culture, to spread the word and propagate faith in things American around the world.

European empires of the sixteenth to twentieth centuries imposed their cultures without choice. They were empires of property. The United States, in contrast, has invited and cajoled everyone into its vast Uncle Sam’s Supermarket, and then asked them to choose what they like. As F. Scott Fitzgerald wrote: “France was a land, England was a people, but America, having still about it that quality of an idea, was harder to utter It was a willingness of the heart.”³⁰ America has been an empire of the imagination in which Abraham Lincoln sells poorly abroad. On the international scale of valued personages has Lincoln, in fact, proved to be America’s Bismarck or Garibaldi?

I shall return to the issue of Lincoln’s heroic construction in the third section. But one should anticipate the great extent to which Lincoln became a moral guide, a moral whetstone, for Americans. Good and evil in the USA could sharpen themselves against him. Lincoln embodied the rule of law and order which the Union fought for and maintained. But the Civil War, and the South in particular, bred crime and criminals. “Out of the dislocations of that conflict,” wrote history and novel writer Paul I. Wellman (1895–1966), “grew a wave of lawlessness that transcended all expectations in the length of time it lasted, and in the number of successive generations”—from William Clarke Quantrill (1837–1865) to Pretty Boy Floyd (1904–1934)—“in which it perpetuated itself.”³¹ Lincoln’s heroic stature was kept alive by darkness as much as by light, by hate as much as by love. On April 16, 1865, when Quantrill and his gang received word of Lincoln’s assassination, they held a drunken party and toasted to the phrase: “Here’s to the death of Abe Lincoln, hoping that his bones may serve in hell as a gridiron to fry Yankees on.”³²

My fifth point is the American public's appetite for Civil War stories over the years—stories which regard the Civil War more than the Revolutionary War as the event which has defined modern America. This interest has waxed and waned like a river empty or full, but the Civil War stream bed has always been there, deeply marking the land and its people. At the actual time of the Civil War, Matthew Brady's and Alexander Gardner's individual photographic collections did not sell well. This was not surprising in view of the vivid reality with which they brought home what was already home. These photos must have had a lethal, frightening redundancy between 1861 and 1865 for Americans who had friends or family fighting in the war. Although the photos of Brady, Gardner, and many others were widely used as engravings, woodcuts, or sketches in contemporary magazines such as *Harper's Weekly*.³³ Gore sells.

Point number six: The Civil War, Lincoln, and religion in the United States. Mid-nineteenth century America was an extremely religious age. And it was a coherently religious age—unlike the intense but vacillating (and non-textual based) religiosity of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. The motto 'In God We Trust' first appeared on a United States coin in 1864 amid the era's religious-military fervor, although it did not become the USA's official national motto until 1954.³⁴ Both sides in the Civil War constantly claimed that providence was at work for them alone, claimed God's own judgment and presence for their side. Churches split. During the war itself, the Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America was of two minds, two sects. Its Southern branch became the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States of America.³⁵ Once the war ended and the North won, the "conquered South" had to become the "converted South," as Edwin S. Gaustad wrote in his seminal *Documentary History of Religion in America*: "converted by the 'free churches' and the 'full gospel' of northern religion—especially Congregationalism."³⁶

Meanwhile, during the war, as the blood tide rose higher and higher and the dykes broke, President Abraham Lincoln openly struggled with the spiritual ambiguities of the war. As Gaustad saw it:

In a series of documents extending from 1855 to 1865, one observes [in Lincoln] a spiritual wrestling with realities as momentous as they were inescapable. Not only was a nation divided, but so were its churches, so was its moral purpose, so were its prayers. Lincoln, who has been called 'the spiritual center of American history' . . . reluctantly concluded that 'these are not . . . the days of miracles.'³⁷

The conclusion being what? That God is always on the side of the biggest battalions?³⁸ To paraphrase Thomas Carlyle, the Civil War attests to the sociology rather than the spirituality of religion. In America at war, religion functioned for social needs. Northern churches blessed Lincoln as President. Southern blessed Jefferson Davis as President. While Lincoln was an agnostic, he questioned how God existed amid this strife and found no answer.³⁹ Do we now know any better?

Point number seven is that Lincoln and the Civil War were a watershed for the visible incorporation of minorities—women, blacks, immigrants (but not Native Americans)—in the United States.⁴⁰ As often noted, the Civil War was as much a woman's war as a man's war, by virtue of women's war-aid associations, moral support in letters, behind the lines and near-to-the-front lines hospital and nursing support, the social wealth of public mourning commandeered by women, female espionage and occasional actual soldiering. Among notable female examples of the time were Mary Livermore, Clara Barton, Catherine Wormsley, Elley Strong, Sally Thompkins, and Mary-Anne Bickerdike—of North and South.

African Americans gained liberty, the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, but not full freedom by a long shot. Although Lincoln was swift to point out in the appalling summer of 1863: "You say you will not fight to free negroes. Some of them seem willing to fight for you. When victory is won there will be some black men who can remember that with silent tongue, clenched teeth and steady eye and well poised bayonet they have helped mankind on to this great consummation."⁴¹

Point number eight: the best sellers. Engagement with this subject has constantly and successfully been renewed in the United States. As Lincoln told Congress in 1862: “The struggle of today is not altogether for today. It is for a vast future also.”⁴² And in this future was the vast expansion and consumption of the popular culture of the American reading public. Two of the most notorious literary best sellers about the Civil War have been Thomas Dixon’s novel and play *The Clansman: An Historical Romance of the Ku Klux Klan* (1905) and Margaret Mitchell’s historical melodrama *Gone With the Wind* (1936). Which works of literature successfully and respectively became spectacular blockbuster films: D. W. Griffith’s *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) and Victor Fleming’s, George Cukor’s and Sam Wood’s *Gone With the Wind* (1939). Curiously, *Gone With the Wind* was the antithesis of an “auteur” film. Like *Casablanca* (1942; directed by Michael Curtiz), *Gone with the Wind* was a collective creation, the end result of huge teams of artists and technicians, an amalgamation of iron and lace responding to the magnetism of its diverse American audience. And in which, yet again, Lincoln was present by virtue of his absence.

Other prominent, late-twentieth century best seller cases in point have been the Dabney Family saga written by James Street (1903–1954), specially his novel *Tap Roots* (1942), adapted for the screen by the excellent Western novelist and screenwriter Alan Le May into the Civil War blockbuster movie *Tap Roots* (1948). More recently has been Michael Shaara’s utterly brilliant best selling historical fiction novel *The Killer Angels* (1974) about the battle of Gettysburg. *The Killer Angels* won the Pulitzer Prize for fiction in 1975. It was also the source for the sprawling, uneven as a country road, 254 minutes, 1993 Turner Network Television movie *Gettysburg*.

Expanding “best seller” in its widest sense it would be fair to include the movie and book versions of the Burns brother’s *The Civil War* documentary (1989).⁴³ “Adapted from” has become “adapted to” in U.S. entertainment arts, and bestsellerdom can follow upon cinematic or telegenic release. One reason for its great success was the documentary’s timely release. The Burns’ film was initially screened in the USA on PBS television in a national environment of intensifying patriotism as the Persian Gulf War developed in the fall of 1990.⁴⁴ Another reason for its success, of course, has been its own intrinsic quality.

As previously noted, the Burns brothers’ *The Civil War* made American “viewers feel as if they were actually living through the war instead of just watching a program about it on television.”⁴⁵ So—as point number nine—I think one has to understand the Burns’ brand as the style which has marked common, popular American awareness and consciousness of the Civil War the most in the last three decades. This happened in a culturally similar way in which Henry Ford made people powerfully aware of mobility in the early twentieth century with his ubiquitous Model T.

Likewise, the Burns brand turned Americans back on to something already all-American: gothic, lugubrious, commodified mournfulness. This is the cultural trait Mark Twain half-parodied in Chapter 17 of *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.⁴⁶ Yet consider the place and role of death in modern, industrialized American culture. It became a specially death-shy society. As attested to by various highly successful sources and studies: as that cultural no-no both parodied and triumphed in Evelyn Waugh’s *The Loved One* (novel: 1948; movie: 1965), as considered up close and personal in Jessica Mitford’s marvelously sober-minded *The American Way of Death* (1963), and in Elisabeth Kubler Ross’ *On Death and Dying* (1969) and *Questions and Answers on Death and Dying* (1974). The Burns brand is deliciously maudlin, rich with the pleasures of sadness. Assassinated, Easter-weekend Lincoln allowed otherwise death-shy Americans a person for whom and with whom they could genuinely suffer. Moreover, here was a man who became a martyr, a national liberator, and who achieved posthumous charismatic authority as common as the Lincoln penny.⁴⁷

Point ten: The common cultural reality about the United States that deserves to be faced has been the development of the national hobby of American Civil War reenactment. One of the most interesting insider

and outsider studies of which has been Tony Horwitz' *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (1999).⁴⁸ *Confederates in the Attic* bears witness to the ongoing process of Americanization which happens as a Jewish American New Yorker with a fresh immigrant heritage becomes a reenactment freak because of the Civil War.

The American Civil War reenactment phenomenon dates back to 1913, but began to take on a mass scale during the 1960s. CNN estimated that by the year 2000 there were an estimated active 50,000 Civil War reenactors in the USA. The "Civil War Reenactors Home Page" currently rates among the top five percent of all online web sites.⁴⁹ To come full circle in time about Americans' personal engagement with The War between the States, see the cited movie *Gettysburg* (1993) and how "except for the professional actors, this movie featured over 13,000 volunteer Civil War re-enactors who paid their own way, provided their own props and uniforms and fought the battles presented on screen using the same tactics as were current at the time."⁵⁰ At what point does a fan turn into a fanatic?

The reenactment phenomenon is mainly about the soldiers and their military leaders, acts of commemoration, entertainment, and education. It is also a peculiarly American way of attaining authenticity. To paraphrase W. H. Auden, amateurism in the United States has about it a special degree of trust, authenticity, honesty, democracy. One is not an elite professional claiming authority. It is an act of love.⁵¹ And in general, Abraham Lincoln is conspicuous by virtue of his absence in these reenactments, present as a principle rather than as a person.⁵²

How altogether fitting for the United States which is a political culture and not an ideological one. In the three areas of best-selling historical fiction, the Burns brand, and reenactments one sees various examples of "living history." This experience precedes its formal terminology; that is: understanding history in the fact of dwelling in some place and the method of gaining one's livelihood with regard to the time and tide of events, a people or place who "live out" the history for an audience. In America, "living history" has long been there in its cracker-barrel sense of talking to someone who knew the famous person or claimed to have known the famed him or her. This happened in both print and with live stump speakers practically from the time Lincoln was assassinated. By September, 1865, P. T. Barnum bought the log cabin supposedly built by Abraham Lincoln and his father and displayed it in his American Museum in New York City, with attendants or Lincoln's "cousins" telling stories about young Abe. By the 1880s, Lincoln's White House assistant John Hay complained that "every dead-beat politician in this country is coming forward to claim that he was the depository of Lincoln's inmost secrets."⁵³

A prominent, enunciated sense of "living history" in the USA was justified with all its imperfections by a man who was born in 1863 and died in 1947, Henry Ford. His definition was enunciated in various ways, the clearest of which was when he went on record and said: "The history of historians is usually bunk . . . but history that you can see is of great value. It is not the past of the books . . . it is the past of living men and women, folks pretty much like ourselves."⁵⁴ To prove his point, Henry Ford created a visual history of America, the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan, roughly equivalent to the federal Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. So, though on the one hand one can argue for Americans' relatively ignorant sense of history and geography, at the same time when the ideas or the history are entertained, they take on a distinctly American vitality and inspire the investigation of reality.⁵⁵

Last but not least and eleventh point is the role of monuments and monumentality with regard to the social and cultural construction of Abraham Lincoln in U.S. movies and on U.S. TV. Traditionally, a monument is an object or place of veneration. A monument commemorates a person, event, or portion of space valued by a particular group or individual, large or small. It is a realized icon, massive in both size and meaning. Following his assassination, the nation's folklore and folk art in the North and Midwest were quick to picture Abraham Lincoln as an American icon. This action ranged from spiritual hagiography to material

commercialization. To go from what is usually considered bottom to top, let us consider the commercialization first, but keep in mind that in the American democratic market economy it is not always demeaning to be commercialized. For example, since the mid-twentieth century it has generally been considered to be quite a coup for a sportsman or woman to get on the cover of “The Breakfast of Champions” Wheaties in the United States. Many U.S. politicians from the 19th through the 21st centuries have practiced product promotion in a way that would be considered outrageous in Europe. Advertising can be part of a process by which someone or something becomes, confirms, and maintains their heroic status, or can be demeaned into a mere celebrity.

As noted in Hal Morgan’s *Symbols of America*: “Uncle Sam has sold coffee, whiskey, shoes, and even pesticides, while the Bald Eagle has been roped into the promotion of beer, laundry starch, and embalming fluid.”⁵⁶ As early as 1866, Lincoln’s name was given to any number of American products to affirm their strength and reliability—such as Lincoln’s image stamped on the label of “Dr. Bicknell’s Great Cholera Remedy,” guaranteed good for everything from “Colera Morbus” to “Diarrhoea Summer Complaint” and “Lincoln Pure White Lead,” which claimed it “deserves the name bestowed upon it.”⁵⁷ Through the twentieth century one had Old Abe cigars, sold by Thomas E. Brooks & Co. of Red Lion, Pennsylvania.⁵⁸ And to this day, one has the Ford Motor Company’s Lincoln automobile. Franklin Delano Roosevelt made the Lincoln into the U.S. presidential limousine. The Lincoln became FDR’s very own “Sunshine Special,” a sleek, armored knight of a car that weighed in at 9,300 pounds, a car shipped round the world with the president and used from Casablanca to Yalta. Ford’s Lincoln kept this honored place through the presidency of Ronald Reagan.⁵⁹

At the hallowed, hagiographic area of monumentalizing Lincoln I think one should begin with the power of chance and the idiosyncratic planning of John Wilkes Booth and his fellow conspirators. Lincoln was shot by the assassin in Washington, D.C. on Good Friday, April 14, 1865 and died the following day. That Easter Sunday came to be known as “Black Sunday” in America, when with one breath in most Northern and Midwestern places of religious worship the resurrection of Jesus and the death of Lincoln were praised, mourned, and celebrated. Abraham Lincoln then lay in state in the Rotunda of the Capitol from April 19 to 21, 1865, followed by interment in Oak Ridge Cemetery, Springfield, Illinois.⁶⁰ “An assassin’s bullet converted the savior of the Union into a martyr, but failed to overthrow the man’s mission,” as the official government website for the Lincoln memorial now proclaims to the world. Since then, “others advanced Lincoln’s work for more than a century, ensuring that Constitutional Amendments and federal legislation provided all Americans with the benefits of freedom, citizenship, and suffrage.”⁶¹

The national sacrosanctity of Abraham Lincoln began upon his death bed. “And now he belongs to the ages,” as Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton said at the moment of Lincoln’s death. The process by which Lincoln became sacred to Americans is itself a voluminous story, of which I would point out but a few aspects: First, that he was a man among men. Lincoln possessed and has maintained a potent masculine identity. When Lincoln’s personal secretary John Nicolay began doing field research in the 1870s for the biography which he and fellow Lincoln secretary John Hay would write, they did not interview a single woman. (And until quite recently Mary Todd Lincoln, his wife, was seen as a drain on his masculine energies and reputation.) The Lincoln Memorial in Washington is itself directly inspired by one of the seven wonders of the ancient world: the Temple of Zeus at Olympia.

Second, that Lincoln came to embody decency for Americans. This began quickly in sharp contrast to the next president, hard-drinking, offensive to taste and refinement Andrew Johnson (1808–1875). By September, 1866, the *Chicago Tribune* labeled Johnson “a demagogue . . . a traitor at heart . . . a malignant enemy, an oppressor, and a slanderer.” Lincoln, in contrast, was seen as gracious, kind, appropriate person with a keen sense of modesty.

Third, he was, in the words of Frederick Douglass, “emphatically the black man’s president: the first to show any respect to their rights as men.” As such, he bestowed liberty, and began the fuller freedoms of emancipation for the nation’s enslaved African-American minority.

Fourth, especially from this essay’s viewpoint, lies the importance of Ida Tarbell’s 1895 biography of Abraham Lincoln, first serialized in *McClure’s Magazine*, finally published as a four volume book in 1900: *Abraham Lincoln and the Historic Scenes of His Life*. Tarbell’s biography was the first to offer an intense, coherent blend of words and pictures. The opening “Editorial Announcement” of November 1895 in *McClure’s* read: “From a pictorial standpoint this Life of Lincoln will be unique. We shall publish fully twice as many portraits of Lincoln as have ever appeared in any Life, and we shall illustrate the scenes of Lincoln’s career on a scale never before attempted.”

Fifth, how in ideas and things interwoven—in American words, sermons and gestures, books, pictures, popular songs, magazines, statues, the names of institutions, coins, tombs, buildings, mass media, international relations—Lincoln was progressively, intensively memorialized and commemorated to a degree and intensity equal to no other U.S. president. He almost achieved a level of universal recognition and relevance. When British Prime Minister David Lloyd George tried to convince President Woodrow Wilson to enter into World War One on England’s side, Lloyd George sent Wilson a message on Lincoln’s birthday in 1917, urging Americans to help because the British were basically fighting “the same battle which your countrymen fought under Lincoln’s leadership more than fifty years ago We have been inspired beyond measure by the example of your great President.”⁶² The British Prime Minister could never have cited the example of George Washington. And did he not mention Lincoln more for what he meant to Americans than for what he meant to Englishmen?

Sixth, and probably most striking has been the Washington, D.C Lincoln Memorial itself. In international, comparative perspective does the Lincoln Memorial have an equivalent? Napoleon’s tomb at Les Invalides in Paris, Nelson’s column in London, and Germania—the statue on top of the German National Monument overlooking the Rhine River that was built in 1871 to commemorate the new, unified German state—are not the same. This is not a grave, a tomb, a place of ashes. This is not Columbia, Britannia, Germania, the mythical, feminine personification of mother country. Nor does the memorial embody a mythical, male personification of the nation, like Uncle Sam or John Bull.

The Lincoln Memorial was literally created from a place of mud, swamp, dreck. This is physically disclosed in the very fine online site “Lincoln Memorial Construction Flipbook.”⁶³ A small library exists about the Memorial itself, notably Christopher A. Thomas, *The Lincoln Memorial and American Life* (2002).⁶⁴ Yet the Memorial rises above the lower material form from which it, the American Union, and Lincoln himself were made into a place transcendent.

I would suggest that what is particularly important about understanding the Lincoln Memorial has been the evolution of the construction and on-going treatment—physical and spiritual—of the place itself. The Lincoln Memorial has been “seen as a literal site of transition, fluidity and changing thought, both at a more general level of western philosophy as well as concepts of America and what it is to be an American.”⁶⁵ Thus, to understand it, and hopefully to digest as well some of the territory already covered in this essay, one needs to turn to our final point about Heroism Studies in general: How and why Lincoln’s heroism in particular was built around images, America’s indigenous pantheon of heroes from the 19th through the 21st centuries, and the set of formative, heroic values to which Lincoln belongs as expressed in U.S. movies and on TV.

III

The structure of heroism is the result of social construction. Both Western Europe and the United States share a key set of formative elements that structure the hero. But each culture area has used these molding

forces in different ways. Each culture area also has its own pantheon of heroes. In the United States from the late nineteenth century into the early twenty-first century this has been mainly the seven figures of pathfinder, reformer, salesman, outcast, thinker, politician, military. Lincoln, as one can imagine, fits a few of these figures, as did George Washington and a few other U.S. presidents.⁶⁶

To reduce the shape-giving set to its essentials, the most important for the social construction of the heroic Western Civilization since the revolutionary era of the 1700s have been about sixteen formative elements. These are: lightning, apotheosis, totemism, collective representation, charisma, cult of personality, myth (story), monument, mass-mediated, advertising and public relations, eidetic image, role model, gender, ethnicity, cool, nexus.⁶⁷ One can equate each element with an attribute of Abraham Lincoln and a visual expression of the man.

Where does a hero's force come from? An older, traditional response is that the hero sprang from Promethean fire. This is the hero as lightning, an idea luminously employed by the most influential nineteenth-century Anglo-American thinker in Heroism Studies, Thomas Carlyle (1795–1881). In his rhapsodic harangue *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (1840), Carlyle claimed: "The Great Man was always as lightning out of Heaven; the rest of men waited for him like fuel, and then they too would flame."⁶⁸

It is not only a question of where the hero comes from, but where the hero goes to. Thus the importance of apotheosis, when a mortal rises up and is enrolled among the gods. An ancient trait, one finds this in many Greek myths. For example, when the Greek hero Heracles' body was consumed by fire on Mount Oeta, his divine part ascended to heaven where Heracles was reconciled to Hera and married Hebe.⁶⁹ Napoleon, George Washington, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln were recorded in a variety of paintings and prints which registered them in a state of apotheosis.⁷⁰ In U.S. movies the very last scene of John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) plays on both the lightning and apotheosis motifs as Lincoln, played by Henry Fonda, is shown walking up a hill into a storm. The man is shown as an electric-like force of nature, as a veritable lightning rod, in ascendance to Lincoln's exalted state.⁷¹

Totemism is a primal form of understanding and power, a belief in the mystical kinship between an individual group and an object or subject which functions as a group emblem and a reminder of their ancestry. The word itself comes from "ote": "He is my relative" or "belonging to a local group," from the Ojibwa (or Chippewa) tribe of Algonquian-speaking Indians of the Upper Great Lakes. Totemism is practised in a society worshipping itself through a sacred animal, plant, object or subject, which is imbued with a great deal of regionalism and intense tribal identity.

The totemic hero is also a natural, has native gifts; heroes "do what comes naturally." Lincoln reads the Bible, Shakespeare and law books by the log cabin fireplace as a boy and young man without prompting. Amelia Earhart is born with a blissful sense of taking high risks and escaping. Elvis Presley asks for a guitar for Christmas and gets it. Pocahontas naturally has conversations with trees or animals. A hero has an innate sense, in accord with and predetermined by nature (and therefore expressing a force of nature), altogether possessed of winning, ingenuous ways. In the USA, the national argument goes, these natural powers are released because the hero exists in a political environment which guarantees the principle of Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness, the principle that in each American there is some great kernel waiting to burst out and bloom.

Note also how Washington's and Lincoln's birthdays which were once holidays (holy days) of national, totemic devotion, were replaced in 1983 by Martin Luther King's birthday. The new totem replaced the old. But Lincoln maintained a necessary totemic presence in U.S. TV or cinematic Civil War documentaries or dramas, along with the Western genre.⁷² This helped to keep him more alive than Washington as a totemic subject. In 1945, when the Gallup Poll asked Americans if George Washington or Abraham Lincoln was the

greater president, 42 percent named Lincoln. By 2001 more than 50 percent of Americans named Lincoln.⁷³

Collective representation is a refinement of the idea of totemism, as developed by Emile Durkheim in his 1912 study *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*.⁷⁴ Durkheim argued that collective representation was particularly evident in historic periods of collective shock when people are forced to look to each other and gather together more than ever. Their collective passions and spirits are moved to such an extent that they are attached to a common subject of worship, which itself takes on a clarity and intensity which no private individual subject or state of consciousness could provide. The object of collective representation becomes the voice of all accents, the society speaking to itself, a sacred being.

The Gettysburg Address (November 19, 1863) is a profound example of this achievement in the Lincoln mythos. The hero's authority is brought back time and again by his charisma. Charisma extended from Carlyle's idea of a power of uncompromising force that equally "rejects all rational economic conduct" and "makes a sovereign break with all traditional or rational norms."⁷⁵ As theorized by sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920) with regard to institutional power, charisma is a unique, magical quality evident either in an individual or in an office (such as the presidency), which can securely stabilize or dangerously destabilize social order. The power of Lincoln's charisma grew belatedly. Prior to his assassination Lincoln was commonly represented in the popular culture as cowardly, devious, grotesque and animal-like. Not universally, but he was clearly the object of much caricature and derision.⁷⁶

The cult of personality is a refinement of the idea of charisma. It is a term first coined by Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev with reference to Joseph Stalin soon after the latter's death.⁷⁷ The phenomenon is much older, such as the cult of the Athenian statesman Pericles (495–429 B.C.) in his own time, or the personality cult of Julius Caesar which was deeply resented by patrician republicans in Rome. The cult of personality can happen when any organization is overwhelmed by excessive praise for its founder or leader. Charisma has a crack in it. Rarely does it last forever. Once Stalin was dead, statues of his glorified person were removed, streets or cities renamed. The once-sacred leader could be publicly criticized and the cult removed or reconstructed.

Abraham Lincoln has been progressively diminished in scholarship and image since the Civil Rights era of the 1960s. Rightly so because of his cult of personality? The film and controversy surrounding the NBC miniseries *Gore Vidal's Lincoln* (1988) altogether comes closest to a nation-wide iconoclastic approach, especially when complemented by Vidal's many sensational interviews and remarks at the time (such as his claim that Lincoln might have given his wife syphilis).⁷⁸

Myth, or story, is fundamental. Men adjust to their environment through the medium of stories which reconstruct their common concerns on the logic of a narrative model. The best stories beat out a primal, complementary rhythm, like sea waves and blood throb, and the audience feels echoes in themselves. A story is an open explanation. It shows better than it tells. It is art rather than criticism. And, when well done, it is generous. The audience is at least half the story: They hear and see the song, the totem, of their tribe.

There is no such thing as a disembodied hero, a nationless hero. They are fruit of the soil, nurtured by a real environment. The hero impresses their audience with personal recognition; the hero is surrogate. Thus Lincoln has been essential matter for stories. As noted, one finds well more than four hundred feature films, TV plays and movies in which Abraham Lincoln has been a central figure—along with a huge, untabulated presence as a walk-on or commentator (movies and TV) in Civil War dramas, in holiday comedy and variety shows, news and public information shows, advertisements in all media, along with Lincoln as a strategically-placed decoration in a wide variety of broadcasted programs at the time of city, state, and national holidays.⁷⁹

The monument perpetuates the hero. But it does so at first by a blend of mass and magnificence which

celebrates victories and masks defeats. Over time—as scope broadens, as a more balanced view is possible, as the meaning of the figure heroized becomes less self-serving, self-commemorative—the monument can be a site of disclosure. Truth is the daughter of time. The creation of the Lincoln Memorial in the twentieth century reflected the growing power of the executive branch and a public perception that at first accepted this double idealization, face to face across the Reflecting Pool, of Washington and Lincoln. But over time the monument became a site where the limits of executive power and achievement were exposed.

The August 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom used the site to express the might of The People over the Executive branch. When the Lincoln memorial became a site of public protests which redefined and diminished his accomplishments, then “Lincoln remains an important part of the picture,” of the all-American Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness process, “but he stands in the background.”⁸⁰ In Oliver Stone’s movie *Nixon* (1995), the president—brilliantly portrayed by a tremulous Anthony Hopkins—was exposed on the night of May 9, 1970 as a very clumsy, inarticulate man who tried to consult with students gathering there to protest the Vietnam War soon after the Kent State killings. Finally, it is the scattering of small, Mickey Mouse-like students scurrying about the Lincoln Memorial in Stone’s *Nixon* who were reinforced by the hallowed setting and not the President of the United States.⁸¹

The hero throughout the nineteenth to twenty-first centuries was increasingly mass-mediated. Strictly speaking, the popular hero began to be shaped by mass media in America as soon as there was mass consumption of mass-diffused communications. In Lincoln’s own day this would include newspapers, sermons, pamphlets, dime novels and more respectable reading matter in clothbound books. The dime novel hero Seth Jones, a “brave and virtuous backwoodsman from New Hampshire,” first released in 1860, was known to be among Lincoln’s favorite reading matter.⁸² The Street and Smith dime novel Horatio Alger series actively promoted Lincoln to young Americans in *The Backwoods Boy, or, The Story of Abraham Lincoln*, published in 1883.

A dime novel hero had to be ready-made and homespun. As long as the novel was readable, writing style was undistinguished. The dime novel’s main importance was to quench Americans’ thirst for tribal story. Like TV later on, the dime novel was a bardic text. “The public knew what it wanted and clearly found its pleasure in knowing exactly what it would find in the pages of these novels.”⁸³

American mass media hit their mark at a slow speed until the late nineteenth century. It is commonly been estimated that when Lincoln was assassinated it took one week for the news to reach London. A major difference in the mass-mediated hero began with electricity, electrically-communicated information and entertainment: the telegraph, movies, radio, telephone, television, computer, video cassette, compact disk, DVD, satellite and digital-generated communications such as the Internet. Electrically-communicated information and entertainment have threatened to devolve the hero into the celebrity. Some argue that the new technology of television helped maintain Lincoln’s classic heroic stature. “Supplementing magazine and newspaper articles, television brought dramatic depiction of Lincoln’s life to unprecedented numbers of people.”⁸⁴ But TV mirrored the times. This was the case from the late 1940s through the mid 1960s. But when national media began to question the previously unquestioned validity of Lincoln’s pure accomplishments, beginning in the iconoclastic 1960s, his popular TV image was deflated.

Regarding the importance of fame in U.S. culture, if the Lincoln Memorial was meant to be a temple of respect, moral responsibility and hope for the nation what is one to make of the frivolous use of the man and his memorial as a celebrity object? Is not this what happened when it was used as a promotional venue for Manhattan’s Radio City Music Hall precision dance company The Rockettes to strut their stuff? For “it was rendered harmless as a souvenir snowball when the Rockettes kicked their way down the steps for President George W. Bush’s [2001] first inauguration.”⁸⁵

Fame, celebrity status, have threatened to cheapen and end heroism (or else force heroism into finding

different ways in which to be expressed). Celebrity culture provides the two-way opiate of audience and entertainer as an end in itself. The celebrity became the new eminence of our contemporary Information Age, this “person who is known for his well-knownness . . . a new substitute for the hero,”⁸⁶ media figments with short, shiny shelf life who help sell TV (such as Donna Rice, Jennifer Flowers, Paula Jones, Monica Lewinsky, Alexandra Polier) who detract from more serious issues of public policy.⁸⁷ “The hero was distinguished by achievement; the celebrity by his image or trademark,” and while “the hero created himself; the celebrity is created by the media. The hero was a big man; the celebrity is a big name.”⁸⁸

Lincoln’s use in advertising and public relations has already been partly noted. Using Abraham Lincoln to sell something has been an ambiguous process that expands, diminishes, or merely spreads the word and keeps alive awareness of the hallowed personality. Advertising, the commodity propaganda of our common mass-mediated life in the United States and Western Europe, assaults its audience with the monologue of the beautiful product endorsed by astonishing people. Heroic charisma has been harnessed. In the United States, it has been done by women’s rights advocate Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton (who endorsed Fairy Soap), President William McKinley (whose face and signature sold Waterman Pens), King Edward VIII of Great Britain (who endorsed Angelus Player Pianos), Ty Cobb (Tuxedo Tobacco), Amelia Earhart (Lucky Strike cigarettes), Eleanor Roosevelt (the Zenith hearing aid), Ernest Hemingway (Ballantine Ale). And so it goes. Rare is the public personality, the hero of modern times, who has not succumbed to the siren call, to this traditional marriage of income and publicity. Certainly more so in the United States than elsewhere.⁸⁹

His is a very well-known face. One reason for his heroic power is that Abraham Lincoln has achieved the force of an eidetic image among Americans. His photogenic record is the fundamental seedbed. An eidetic image is an unusually accurate mental picture of a past event, object, or subject. The adjective stems from the German *eidetisch*, which comes from the Greek *eidos*, “form,” specifically the ideal, essential form of an idea, value, or thing. Hence, eidetic means: of, relating to, or marked by extraordinarily detailed and vivid recall of visual images. Eidetic apprehension implies the intuitive understanding of an essence.

All people carry eidetic images in their minds: a place, a thing, a person, an event. Concentrate. Think. Can you “see” a Coke bottle? One of your parents? The event of 9/11? The face of Abraham Lincoln? An eidetic image can keep a person in mind, can also elevate that person to an exalted, shared level among a people. Heroes may therefore be created, constructed, and kept functioning because they possess an eidetic presence in our minds—sometimes valued, sometimes not, but there.⁹⁰

Although the phrase role model is a modern usage, the phenomenon itself, like cult of personality, is older than the term. Awareness of role model was specially developed by the American-based Canadian social scientist theoretician Erving Goffman (1922–1982).⁹¹ Goffman’s thesis was that individuals play many roles, each of which is derived from a set of expectations associated with a person’s position in a social organization—some roles ascribed, some achieved. Modeling itself is a form of imitation, or learning by observing, based on watching other people who either deliberately or inadvertently demonstrate the desired behavior.

Abraham Lincoln functioned as a heroic role model in many ways for Americans, one of the most outstanding of which has been as a juvenile role model. Images of Abraham Lincoln have proliferated for young people in America. One already noted was in the 1883 Horatio Alger series *The Backwoods Boy, or, The Story of Abraham Lincoln*. Another more nuanced and widely disseminated set of twentieth-century versions would be those painted and sold by Norman Rockwell, often in commercial accordance with Lincoln’s February 12th birthday and in an issue of *Saturday Evening Post*—such as “Lincoln the Rail Splitter,” “Lincoln for the Defense,” “Law Student (Young Lawyer).”⁹² Rockwell’s versions are characterized by Lincoln’s striking health and physical strength, concentration, moral determination, self-help, indifference to enmity and malice, and lean acuity—the very opposite of a flabby anti-hero.

Heroes are important as role models, very important for young people everywhere and Americans in particular. The hero as role model is greatly reduced in importance in Europe. It is less evident in advertising (or seen as an “Americanization”). European social scientists see less free will and far more socioeconomic determinism as decisive shaping factors. The world in which culture critics live gives bias. Role model makes great sense in shifting-economy, performance-oriented, opportunity-possible American culture, much less in the authoritarian, bureaucratic, set-economy societies of modern Europe. In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries the potency of the hero as role model was increased in the USA by the intense focus in everyday life and throughout the media on the politics of gender identity. In the atmosphere of heightened, contemporary gender interest, specious claims have been made about Lincoln’s possible homosexual tendencies.⁹³ These arguments are characteristically unaware of historic antebellum customs. Most writers have a thesis, but some have an axe to grind. Reading Lincoln as homosexual has been more a defense of personal politics than a reading of historical fact. The masculine, fatherly, Father Abraham, heterosexual Lincoln is pronounced.

Abraham Lincoln’s heroic stature and relation to ethnicity are inextricable because of his relation to abolitionism and slavery. It has also become part of the debate about if he was heroic or not because of what he did or did not want to achieve regarding African-Americans and other national minorities (specially Native Americans). A cluster of standard images which heroicise Abraham Lincoln through the mid-twentieth century show him as a father figure dispensing liberty and justice to American blacks. The Freedman’s Memorial by Thomas Ball (1819–1911) in Washington, D.C. has stood out in this respect. Dedicated on April 14, 1876, it is seen by many now as a dated, derogatory image of “the American negro,” and has been rechristened by the U.S. National Park Service as the Emancipation Memorial.⁹⁴

Rather than enter into the interminable debate about Lincoln and ethnicity, I would suggest one outstanding point: From the time of Homer’s *Iliad*, *Odyssey*, and classical Greece, when the word hero was first used both for men and women, heroes have been notoriously imperfect. Heroes could be exceedingly devious at times, egotistical, sulky and almost craven as well as courageous. The hero affirms Shakespeare’s lines: “They say, best men are molded out of faults / And, for the most, become much more the better / for being a little bad” (*Measure for Measure*, V.1. 437–39). Heroes have not been distinguished by impeccable warriorhood, valor, and moral perfectionism. Heroic life is a battle in a passionate, whimsical universe. The hero’s life when told in full was not perfect. There were stains, imperfections, sins, hamartia. There was always an Achilles’ heel or the deviousness of Odysseus’ arrows. So be it. They fought to win. And the fact that they won made each the protector and progenitor of their tribe.

Abraham Lincoln was “cool.” In modern times cool is seen as a characteristic American trait, integral to the American process. It is fuel in the engine, electricity in the lines. Did Abraham Lincoln in his office of the presidency not often act disengaged, yet in touch, affirmative, cocked, yet relaxed as a cracker-barrel joker? You can see it in his face in certain portraits, in his actions in such TV shows as *You Are There* (CBS, 1953–1957, hosted by Walter Cronkite). Cool, after all, is “an emotional mantle which shelters the whole personality from an embarrassing excess” allows one to be “in complete control of one’s emotions . . . hip . . . indifferent to whatever is nonessential to one’s own individualism.”⁹⁵

Finally, a hero is nexus, a meeting point of a disparate series, lines, or groups; a concrete analogy drawn from science and mathematics. Nexus is especially needful in the United States. Heroes function as a connection or tie between people. Those linked by the hero’s nexus can themselves be alone, group members, or groups connected. They can be one out of many. In America, the otherwise isolated achieve union by point in common, however short-term or long-lived. With Abraham Lincoln, this did not happen overnight. Americans were slow to build both Washington and Lincoln as a national nexus. George Washington died in 1799. The Washington Monument in the District of Columbia was begun in 1836, when Robert Mills (1781–1855) won the competition for the design. Actual construction began in 1848, and the monument was not completed until 1884. Soon after Lincoln was martyred by the unfortunate blessing of

his assassination, it was suggested that a memorial be built to him. But it was not until 1922, about fifty-six years later, that his definitive memorial was completed and dedicated. It took generations for a nation that had been divided by the blood and gore of a civil war to honor their common, federal leader. Plus, America is an anti-state nation. Witness Thomas Paine: "Society in every state is a blessing, but government, even in its best state, is but a necessary evil," and Henry David Thoreau: "That government is best which governs least." Plus, in most cases, the majority does not vote. Why vote? It only encourages the government. But the hero can eventually rise above government or a single political party or region and may indeed in time belong to the ages.

Notes

1 Mark S. Reinhart, *Abraham Lincoln on Screen: A Filmography of Dramas and Documentaries Including Television, 1903–1998* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1999), 2. If one uses Reinhart's and author Barry Schwartz' current listings as a gauge, along with the catalogues of New York City's Paley Center for Media and Chicago's Museum of Broadcast Communications, one finds well more than 400 U.S. feature films, TV plays and movies in which Abraham Lincoln has been a central figure; along with a huge, untabulated presence as a walk-on or commentator (movies and TV) in U.S. Civil War dramas, in holiday comedy and variety shows, news and public information shows, along with Lincoln as a strategically-placed decoration in a wide variety of broadcasted programs at the time of city, state, and national holidays.² Since the 1980s, this was celebrated as Presidents Day (a de facto celebration for all U.S. Presidents), the third Monday in February.

3 Michael Wigglesworth, "Heavenly Crowns for Thorny Wreaths," in *The Puritans: A Sourcebook of Their Writings*, vol. 2, eds. Perry Miller and Thomas H. Johnson, (Mineola, NY: Dover, 2001), 628–30. Wigglesworth (1631–1705) was a New England poet. Lincoln's posthumous reality for the nation was martyrdom, not unlike St. Joan in France. When alive he was considered less-than-decently human by many. Once he died for the cause, he became more than human.

4 Anne Norton, *Republic of Signs: Liberal Theory and American Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), back cover blurb.

5 See statistics provided by Michael C. Kearl in "An Investigation into Collective Historical Knowledge and Implications of Its Ignorance" at <http://www.trinity.edu/~MKearl/histignr.html> (accessed September 8, 2010); see also Sam Wineburg, "Crazy for History," *Journal of American History* 90 (2004), <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/90.4/wineburg.html> (accessed September 8, 2010).

6 Norton, *Republic of Signs*, 92–93, 183.

7 John Walker, ed., *Halliwel's Film Goer's and Video Viewer's Companion*, 10th ed. (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993), 289, "Henry Fonda."

8 These and hundreds more are best documented to date in: Reinhart, *Abraham Lincoln on Screen*.

9 *The Day Lincoln Was Shot*, directed by Delbert Mann (1956). For further information see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0581149>.

10 Hal Morgan, *Symbols of America* (New York: Viking, 1986), 17–23, 43–45.

11 *Tad*, directed by Rob Thompson (1995); also see Reinhart, *Abraham Lincoln on Screen*, 246–48.

12 *United States v. Eichman*, 496 U.S. 310 (1990), <http://www.esquilax.com/flag/eichman.html> (accessed

September 8, 2010).

- 13 Jefferson, Letter to Tenche Coxe, May 21, 1799.
- 14 “In spite of variations at the level of explicit statements, [these] motifs are drawn from repertoires that are widely shared and are of remarkable historical stability,” Rob Kroes, “America and the European Sense of History,” *Journal of American History*, 86.3 (1999), <http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/jah/86.3/kroes.html> (accessed September 8, 2010).
- 15 Reinhart, *Abraham Lincoln on Screen*, 82–83.
- 16 *The War*, directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick (2007); *The Civil War*, directed by Ken Burns (1989). In spite of an altogether worthy and professional set of about twenty-five U.S. cultural historians who worked as creative consultants, there were some gross historical errors in the actual TV productions—such as the mistake that Lincoln was 54 years old when he was assassinated, when in fact he was 56.
- 17 *The Sorrow and the Pity/Le chagrin et la pitié*, directed by Marcel Ophüls (1969); for further information see <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0066904>.
- 18 As quoted on his Wikipedia website at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murray_Abraham.
- 19 As quoted in Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Hill & Wang, 1989), 80.
- 20 Philip B. Kunhardt III, Peter W. Kunhardt, and Peter W. Kunhardt Jr., *Looking for Lincoln: The Making of An American Icon* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008).
- 21 See, e.g., Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 463–74; eighty of these photos can be seen online at http://www.physical-lincoln.com/wiki/Abraham_Lincoln_photographs (accessed September 8, 2010).
- 22 Mary Renault, *The Nature of Alexander* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1975), 42.
- 23 Gutzon Borglum, “His Dual Nature,” in Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 424.
- 24 Valenti and Spiegel as, respectively, quoted under the definitions of “movies” in Walker, *Halliwel’s Film Goer’s and Video Viewer’s Companion*, 552–53.
- 25 As contained in personal email copy from the author: February 5, 2009.
- 26 Quotes respectively: William McKinley, “The Family of Freedom,” as quoted in Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 345; Leo Tolstoy as quoted in Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 406; W. E. B. Du Bois as quoted in Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 455; Andrew Delbanco, *The Portable Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Penguin Books, 1993), xiii.
- 27 Christopher Morley, “Points of View,” in *Poems*, Christopher Morley (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday Doran, 1929).
- 28 Belle Becker Sideman and Lillian Friedman, eds., *Europe Looks at the Civil War: An Anthology* (New York: The Orion Press, 1960), xx.
- 29 Jean Jaures (1859–1914)—pacifist and socialist leader, outspoken opponent of World War One and a powerful leader for peaceful negotiation prior to that great debacle—subsequently appeared widely in French and European popular culture as a regional and “universal” martyr.
- 30 F. Scott Fitzgerald, “The Swimmers,” in *Cambridge Edition of The Works of F. Scott Fitzgerald*, eds.

James L. W. West III et al., 12 vols. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991–2009).

31 Paul I. Wellman, *A Dynasty of Western Outlaws* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1986), 13.

32 Wellman, *A Dynasty of Western Outlaws*, 59.

33 George Sullivan, *Mathew Brady: His Life and Photographs* (New York: Cobblehill Books, 1994), 97–98.

34 See United States Department of the Treasury, “Fact Sheets: Currency & Coins,” <http://www.treas.gov/education/fact-sheets/currency/in-god-we-trust.shtml> (accessed September 9, 2009).

35 Joseph Blount Cheshire, *The Church in the Confederate States: A History of the Protestant Episcopal Church in the Confederate States* (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1911).

36 Edwin S. Gaustad, *A Documentary History of Religion in America*, Vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 12.

37 Edwin S. Gaustad, *A Documentary History of Religion in America*, Vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1983), 518ff.

38 Attributed to Maréchal Turenne (1611–1675): “Dieu est toujours pour les gros bataillons.”

39 “Religion is indeed an Allegory, a Symbol of what men felt and knew about the Universe, and all Religions are symbols of that, altering always as that alters,” quoted from Thomas Carlyle, *Heroes, Hero-Worship and The Heroic in History* (1841; London: Chapman and Hall, 1899), 23. See Lecture 1, “The Hero as Divinity” (1840).

40 See “November 1876: Lincoln and Indians” and “December 29, 1890: The Bloody End of Lincoln’s Indian Policy” in Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 214–15, 306–07.

41 Lincoln as quoted in *The Civil War*, directed by Ken Burns (1989): Episode 6, “Valley of the Shadow of Death.”

42 As quoted in *The Civil War*, directed by Ken Burns (1989): Episode 2, “A Very Bloody Affair.”

43 Geoffrey C. Ward, Kenneth Burns, and Richard Burns, *The Civil War: The Complete Text of the Bestselling Narrative History of the Civil War—Based on the Celebrated PBS Television Series* (New York: Vintage, 1994).

44 *The Civil War*, directed by Ken Burns (1989): Episode 1, “The Cause 1861.” Full production documentation of the nine part documentary at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0098769/>.

45 Reinhart, *Abraham Lincoln on Screen*, 82–83.

46 In which, as Twain wrote: “This young girl kept a scrap-book when she was alive, and used to paste obituaries and accidents and cases of patient suffering in it out of the *Presbyterian Observer*.”

47 Lincoln being like and unlike Franklin Delano Roosevelt: emancipator, savior, a liberator. See Norton, *Republic of Signs*, 89–93; The Lincoln penny was first introduced in the Lincoln Centennial Year 1909 and is still in use. The Lincoln Centennial itself was a commercial bonanza in the USA. The Waterman Company even issued a special Lincoln Fountain Pen with the slogan “The emancipation of millions of slaves to the ink bottle.” See Thomas Mallon, “Set in Stone: Abraham Lincoln and the Politics of Memory,” *The New Yorker*, October 13, 2008, http://www.newyorker.com/arts/critics/books/2008/10/13/081013crbo_books_mallon?currentPage=all (accessed September 9, 2009); also see the actual 1909 Waterman poster in Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 388.

- 48 Tony Horwitz, *Confederates in the Attic: Dispatches from the Unfinished Civil War* (New York: Vintage, 1999).
- 49 See, e.g., The Civil War Reenactors Home Page at <http://www.cwreenactors.com>; also see “Civil War biscuits are making a Comeback,” *Victoria Advocate*, August 5, 2000, 8D: “Word spread among roughly 50,000 Civil War buffs, and business boomed.”
- 50 *Gettysburg*, directed by Ronald F. Maxwell (1993, Turner Network Television); for further information see especially “Trivia for *Gettysburg*” at <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0107007/trivia>. This four hour, eight minute movie originally opened in only 124 U.S. movie theaters, but its popular success soon caused it to be distributed in 248 theaters.
- 51 “America has always been a country of amateurs where the professional, that is to say, the man who claims authority as a member of an elite which knows the law in some field or other, is an object of distrust and resentment.” Quoted from W. H. Auden, ed., *Faber Book of Modern American Verse* (London: Faber, 1956), Introduction.
- 52 However, some reenactments do include Lincoln, e.g. the Civil War Commemoration at Port Sanilac, Michigan, May 30–31, 2009: “Esteemed Civil War re-enactor guests to include Abraham Lincoln and Mary Todd Lincoln, General George Armstrong Custer, Governor Austin Blair and Sarah Blair,” quoted from Civil War Events 2009 (April 16, 2009), <http://www.living-history.net/BBCivilWarEvents.htm> (accessed September 9, 2009).
- 53 Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 92–93, 261.
- 54 In an article probably written by Cameron under Ford’s name, as quoted in Charles M. Stowe article “Henry Ford and History That Is Not Bunk,” from: *Clippings Books, Boston Evening Transcript*, 38, p. 95, Saturday May 23, 1925, courtesy Benson Ford Research Center, Henry Ford Museum, Dearborn, Michigan.
- 55 For “living history” as a formal movement and school of thought see Jessica Foy Donnelly, ed., *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2002) and Jay Anderson, *Time Machines: The World of Living History* (Nashville, TN: American Association for State & Local History, 1984) —who defines *living history* as “a simulation of life in another time for the purpose of research, interpretation and/or play,” as quoted by D. A. Reid in Donnelly, *Interpreting Historic House Museums*, 94. Personally, I think “simulation” can include the bestseller and the blockbuster film, but this is debatable.
- 56 Morgan, *Symbols of America*, 17.
- 57 Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 110.
- 58 Morgan, *Symbols of America*, 42.
- 59 Thomas E. Bonsall, *The Lincoln Motorcar: The Complete History of an American Classic* (Baltimore, MD: Stony Run Press, 1992); Herbert Ridgeway Collins, *Presidents on Wheels* (Washington, DC,: Acropolis Books, 1971).
- 60 See *Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress* at <http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=L000313> (accessed September 9, 2009).
- 61 See “Abraham Lincoln the Man,” <http://www.nps.gov/linc/historyculture/abraham-lincoln-the-man.htm> (accessed September 9, 2009).
- 62 This five points can be found succinctly located in Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 103, 118–19,

194, 334–37, 352–53, 438.

63 See “. . . Enshrined forever: Building an American Icon,” <http://www.nps.gov/featurecontent/ncr/linc/Linc2.html> (accessed September 22, 2010).

64 Christopher A. Thomas, *The Lincoln Memorial and American Life* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 193ff.

65 Sara Anne Heaton, review of *The Lincoln Memorial and American Life* by Christopher A. Thomas, *American Studies Today Online* (2005), http://www.americansc.org.uk/Reviews/Lincoln_memorial.htm (accessed September 9, 2009); see also Howard Gillette, Jr., review of *The Lincoln Memorial and American Life* by Christopher A. Thomas, *Indiana Magazine of History* 100.4 (2005), http://www.historycooperative.org/journals/imh/100.4/br_8.html (accessed September 9, 2009).

66 I have tried to explain the essential meaning in Western civilization of heroes and heroism along with the exceptional American ingredients of heroes and heroism in greater depth elsewhere: John Dean, “U.S. and European Heroism Compared,” in *Heroes in a Global World*, eds. Susan J. Drucker and Gary Gumpert (Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press, 2008).

67 Dean, “U.S. and European Heroism Compared.”

68 Thomas Carlyle, *On Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1872), 71.

69 See, e.g., “Heracles” in *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15th ed. (Chicago, IL: Encyclopædia Britannica, 1974), 4:1036.

70 See Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 226.

71 *Young Mr. Lincoln*, directed by John Ford (1939, Cosmopolitan Productions); see various videos at http://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=John+Ford+Young+Mr.+Lincoln&search_type=&aq=f (accessed September 9, 2009).

72 Hilary Stewart, *Looking at Totem Poles* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1993); Thomas Barnfield, ed., *Dictionary of Anthropology* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

73 Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era: History and Memory in Late Twentieth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 123, 333 (footnotes 16–18).

74 Emile Durkheim, *Les Formes élémentaires de la vie religieuse: Le système totémique en Australie* (Paris: Alcan, 1912). See *The Durkheim Pages*, <http://durkheim.uchicago.edu> and <http://durkheim.uchicago.edu/Summaries/forms.html> (accessed September 9, 2009).

75 Max Weber, in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, eds. and trans. Hans H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 247, 250.

76 See The Lincoln Institute, *Cartoon Corner*, http://www.abrahamlincolnsclassroom.org/Cartoon_Corner/ (accessed September 10, 2009).

77 Nikita S. Krushchev, “Secret Speech to the Closed Session of the Twentieth Party Congress, February 25, 1956,” in *Internet Modern History Sourcebook* (Fordham University, 1997), <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1956khruschev-secret1.html> (accessed September 10, 2009).

78 See Reinhart, *Abraham Lincoln on Screen*, 125–28.

- 79 Cf. footnote 1 in this essay.
- 80 Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era*, x.
- 81 The Memorial's August 1963 event which witnessed Martin Luther King's "I Have a Dream" speech. *Nixon*, directed by Oliver Stone (1995, Cinergi Pictures Entertainment).
- 82 See *Dime Stories and Penny Dreadfuls*, <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/dp/pennies/cover.html> (accessed September 8, 2010).
- 83 Victor Neuberg, *The Popular Press Companion to Popular Literature* (Bowling Green, OH: Bowling Green State University Press, 1983), 83.
- 84 Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln in the Post-Heroic Era*, 332, (footnote 93).
- 85 Hillel Italie, "Lincoln Memorial a Temple of Respect, Hope," *San Francisco Chronicle*, February 8, 2009, <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/02/08/MNEJ15MCQP.DTL> (accessed September 10, 2009).
- 86 Daniel J. Boorstin, *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America* (New York: Colophon Books, 1961), 57.
- 87 Donna Rice: would-be Miami model with whom would-be Presidential candidate Senator Gary Hart was caught having an extramarital affair in Spring 1987; Gennifer Flowers: U.S. night club singer who surfaced amid the 1992 presidential campaign and claimed a longtime sexual liaison with William J. Clinton, subsequently denied by the Clintons on CBS's program "60 Minutes"; Alexandra Polier: the supposed D.C. "intern" who supposedly had worked for Senator John Kerry and had a sexual liaison with him (news as spread by internet muckraker Matt Drudge in February 2004).
- 88 Boorstin, *Image*, 60–61.
- 89 Robert Atwan, Donald McQuade, and John W. Wright, *Edsels, Luckies and Frigidaires: Advertising the American Way* (New York: Dell, 1979), 282–24.
- 90 The twentieth-century German psychologist Erich R. Jaensch first investigated eidetic imagery among people and found it specially prevalent in young children. The U.S. anthropologist Franz Boas argued that one secret of creativity is that "perhaps the artists have a greater eidetic power than most adults." Modern researchers believe the imaginative power of eidetic imagery is present in around 50% of young children, but is an ability retained by few adults. Diminishment around six years of age suggests that eidetic power gives way to abstract reasoning. Nevertheless, some ability for vivid, intuitive, visual recall exists for many people. See Alan R. White, *The Language of Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990).
- 91 Canadian, American-based, not unlike Marshall McLuhan (1911–1980). Erving Goffman's key work is *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, first published in the United Kingdom in 1956, widely disseminated throughout the USA in its 1959 paperback edition: *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Anchor Books, 1959). His role model theory is also known as "dramaturgical interaction" and "dramaturgical perspective." For further information on Erving Goffman see <http://www.csudh.edu/dearhabermas/goffman.htm>.
- 92 See versions at the Butler Institute of American Art, <http://173.201.36.209/Butler/src/Detail.php?Window=Enlargement&CRID=Coll20518> (accessed September 22, 2010) and at the Norman Rockwell Museum, <http://store.nrm.org/page.htm?PG=BIGIMAGE&ID=854&PIC=AP837A.jpg> (accessed September 22, 2010). These illustrations have a range of dates, usually because Rockwell first did an oil version, then

later transformed his vision into a printed, magazine version, which, in turn, could further be reprinted and disseminated in newspaper, magazine, postcard, catalogue (and now online) form.

93 See, e.g., Richard Brookhiser, "Was Lincoln Gay?" Review of *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, by C. A. Tripp, *New York Times*, 9 January 2005, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/01/09/books/review/09BROOKHE.html> (accessed September 10, 2009).

94 See Kunhardt et al., *Looking for Lincoln*, 200–01, 253; also see the online information on Lincoln Park by the U.S. National Park Service http://www.nps.gov/cahi/historyculture/cahi_lincoln.htm and <http://www.nps.gov/history/nr/travel/wash/dc87.htm>. Part of the ethnicity debate among contemporary social scientists is that "race" does not exist but "ethnicity" does. See entry on "race" in Adam Kuper, ed., *The Social Science Encyclopedia* (New York: Routledge, 1989).

95 Peter N. Stearns, *American Cool: Constructing a Twentieth Century Emotional Style* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), 1–2; Harold Wentworth and Stuart B. Flexner, *Dictionary of American Slang* (New York: Cromwell, 1975), 4, 6, 121; Bruce Horowitz, "The Quest for Cool," *USA Today*, September 5, 1996, 8B. A more visible twentieth-century cool president (prior to Obama) was John F. Kennedy, whose assassination "was a death of the prodigal son. Youth had been sacrificed, replaced by the venal father figure of Lyndon Johnson." See John Leland, *Hip: The History* (New York: Ecco, 2005), 297.

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