

RECOGNIZING LINCOLN: IMAGE VERNACULARS IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY VISUAL CULTURE

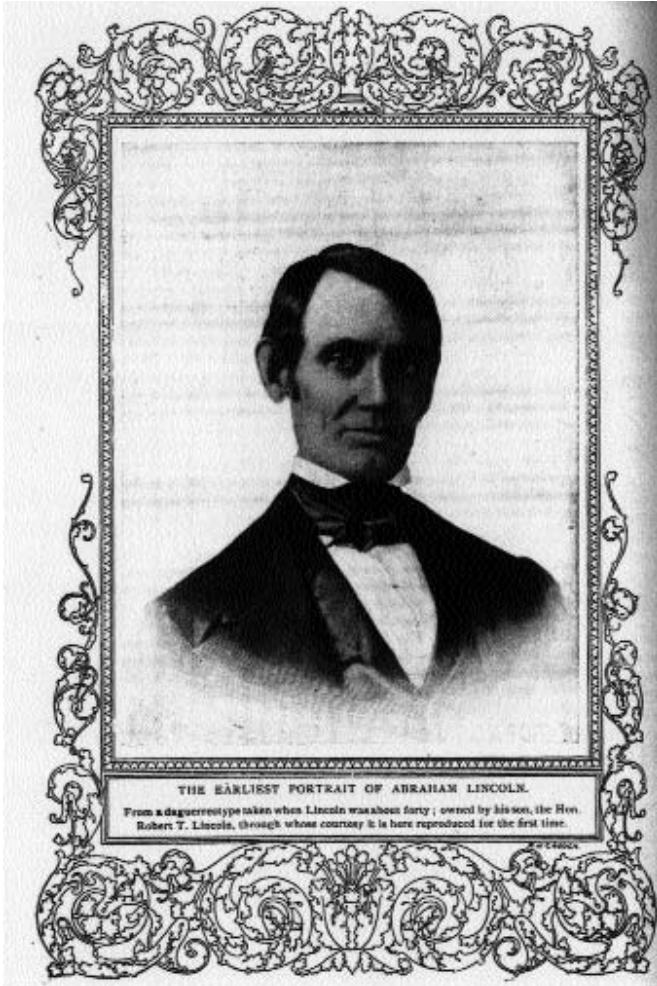
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This essay studies letters written to McClure's magazine in response to its 1895 publication of a previously unknown photograph of Abraham Lincoln. The letter writers mobilized what I call "image vernaculars," enthymematic arguments grounded in their social knowledge about photography, portraiture, and "scientific" discourses of character such as physiognomy. Armed with these image vernaculars, viewers argued the photograph was evidence of Lincoln's superior moral character, and they used it to elaborate an Anglo-Saxon ideal national type at a time when elites were consumed by fin-de-siècle anxieties about the fate of "American" identity.

In 1895 *McClure's* magazine published a newly discovered image, the earliest known photograph of Abraham Lincoln. Revealed to the American public nearly 50 years after its creation, the daguerreotype reproduction featured a Lincoln few had seen before: a thirtysomething, well-groomed middle-class gentleman (see photo on p. 32). The image was received with great delight by readers of the magazine. Brooklyn newspaper editor Murat Halstead rhapsodized,

This was the young man with whom the phantoms of romance dallied, the young man who recited poems and was fanciful and speculative, and in love and despair, but upon whose brow there already gleamed the illumination of intellect, the inspiration of patriotism. There were vast possibilities in this young man's face. He could have gone anywhere and done anything. He might have been a military chieftain, a novelist, a poet, a philosopher, ah! a hero, a martyr—and yes, this young man might have been—he even was Abraham Lincoln!¹

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The earliest portrait of Abraham Lincoln. *McClure's*, November 1895, 482.

General Francis A. Walker, president of MIT, wrote similarly but more plainly of the photograph: “The present picture has distinctly helped me to understand the relation between Mr. Lincoln’s face and his mind and character, as shown in his life’s work. . . . To my eye it *explains* Mr. Lincoln far more than the most elaborate line-engraving which has been produced.”²

The photograph hardly seems to inspire such broad claims or florid prose. Indeed, at first glance it is difficult to glean what exactly Walker thinks it might “explain.” The image is not particularly unusual save for the later fame of its

subject. Cropped by *McClure's* to highlight Lincoln's head and shoulders and reproduced in the pictorialist style of the era, the image is nevertheless a standard-issue early daguerreotype: its pose stiff and formal, body and head held firm to accommodate the long exposure times of 1840s photography.³ Yet in this utterly conventional image Halstead and Walker claim to see the seeds of Lincoln's greatness.

Those who wrote letters to the magazine in response to the photograph engaged in similar discourse. Viewers saw in the image not only a Lincoln they recognized physically, but one whose psychology and morality they recognized too. To the contemporary eye, claims such as these seem overblown. In today's saturated image culture, portraits—especially portraits of the well-known—are not taken to be windows to the soul nor keys to understanding mythic greatness.⁴ Yet for viewers in the late nineteenth century, photographs such as the Lincoln image were understood in precisely these ways. For those of us interested in the rhetorical history of American visual culture, it makes sense to ask why.

The definition of “visual culture” is a subject of much debate, but at base the concept of visual culture recognizes that visibility frames our experience and acknowledges “that vision is a mode of cultural expression and human communication as fundamental and widespread as language.”⁵ Roland Barthes presaged the concept of visual culture in his germinal 1961 essay, “The Photographic Message,” in which he observed that a photograph's “period rhetoric” needs to be understood as an aspect of the image's connoted message.⁶ Art historian Michael Baxandall wrote of the “period eye” of Quattrocento Italian painting, and Svetlana Alpers invoked the term specifically in her groundbreaking study *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century*.⁷ In the American context, some scholars have written of the 1930s as a “documentary decade,” a visual culture in which relatively distinct modes of visualization of “the real” (such as documentary photography and film) dominated public discourse.⁸ Scholarship of this sort argues that we should neither ignore an era's visual culture nor assume that we know what it is. Rather, the construction of rich rhetorical histories requires careful, situated investigation of the social, cultural, and political work that visual communication is made to do.

In this essay I model one way of accomplishing such investigation by turning critical attention to what I am calling *image vernaculars* of late nineteenth-century visual culture. Those who responded in writing to the *McClure's* photograph tapped into myths about Lincoln circulating during the late nineteenth century. Yet readers' responses to the photograph suggest that their use of these myths was tied more closely to what Baxandall calls “visual skills and habits” than it was to Lincoln the man.⁹ When *McClure's* viewers claimed to

“recognize” Lincoln, they were relying upon their social knowledge about photography and exhibiting their comfort with “scientific” discourses of character such as physiognomy and phrenology. Armed with this specific yet implicit way of talking about photographs—an image vernacular—viewers not only treated the photograph as evidence of Lincoln’s moral character, they used it to elaborate an Anglo-Saxon national ideal type at a time when elites were consumed by fin-de-siècle anxieties about the fate of “American” identity. Below I define image vernaculars and explore what their study offers public address scholarship. Then I turn to the case of the Lincoln daguerreotype reproduced in *McClure’s* and show how those who responded to the photograph deployed image vernaculars of late nineteenth-century visual culture to make rhetorical sense of what they saw.

IMAGE VERNACULARS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS STUDIES

Image vernaculars are the enthymematic modes of reasoning employed by audiences in the context of specific practices of reading and viewing in visual cultures.¹⁰ Enthymemes (arguments in which one or more premises are suppressed or assumed) are not abstract, universalist modes of argument but rather are context-bound and tied to the everyday experiences of audiences.¹¹ Enthymemes are a powerful mode of argument because they are constructed using the audience’s tacit social knowledge; describing something as “Photoshopped,” for example, requires that audiences know of this readily available digital imaging software. The power of the enthymeme lies in the fiction that its unstated premise, at once invisible and transparent, is “natural” rather than context-bound; it is simply something that “everybody knows.” In addition, enthymemes are powerful because they grant audiences agency. The audience is not merely a witness to the argument, but a participant in its creation. When I describe image vernaculars as *enthymematic modes of reasoning*, then, I mean to invoke both aspects of the enthymeme’s power. As ways of talking about images that utilize the inventional resources of particular visual cultures, image vernaculars are tacit topoi of argument that viewers employ creatively in specific rhetorical situations. Unlike some conceptions of visual culture that suggest our experience of the visual realm is determined by the overwhelming force of ideology, the concept of image vernaculars preserves a necessary space for agency by theorizing the ways that viewers mobilize images as inventional resources for argument. The critic studying image vernaculars thus avoids the extremes of either assuming that people’s responses to images are, on the one hand, merely eccentric, or, on the other hand, an inevitable product of ideology that leaves no room for the agency of rhetorical actors. Image vernaculars make available a fruitful middle space for critical engagement.

The study of image vernaculars also attunes us to a rhetorical history of photography for which rhetoricians and photography historians have insufficiently accounted. Rhetorical scholars are increasingly turning attention to public address in its visual forms and exploring how visual discourse functions as public address.¹² But those of us who study visual rhetoric have yet to devote much attention to public address *about* the visual. If we seek to understand the artifacts of particular visual cultures, it makes sense to pay attention to how rhetorical expression taps into, shapes, and contests the norms of those visual cultures. Fortunately, as scholars of rhetoric and argumentation, we are uniquely positioned with the critical resources with which to do so.

In “Photography: The Emergence of a Keyword,” Alan Trachtenberg argues somewhat paradoxically that what is missing from the history of photography is attention to language. Scholars have done a good job of constructing the history of photography as a medium, a technology, and an art, but they have not connected these histories to “a history of picturing photography in the medium of language.”¹³ Trachtenberg aims to correct this omission by tracing the social and cultural emergence of “photography” as a keyword in the public discourse of nineteenth-century Americans. He deftly shows how early photography functioned not only as a mass medium, a technology, and an art, but also as a rhetoric: a metaphor, an image, an idea.¹⁴ Trachtenberg’s critical approach is a familiar one to rhetorical historians; indeed, his desire to construct what he calls a “history of verbalizations” about photography might well constitute a good definition of what public address studies do best: construct histories of the ways that publics verbalize their relationships to people, issues, artifacts, and ideas. As the social knowledge that informs how we respond to images and use them as intentional resources, image vernaculars constitute a readily available medium for reclaiming the lost history of photography’s “verbalizations.”

Photographs of Abraham Lincoln are particularly fascinating in this regard because of the staggering force of the Lincoln mythos. Throughout his career, but particularly after his assassination, Lincoln was (and remains) a potent but contested visual icon. Lincoln was one of the earliest and arguably one of the most photographed political figures of the middle nineteenth century.¹⁵ By the close of the nineteenth century, he began to surpass George Washington as the political icon of the republic.¹⁶ Today, in academia and in popular culture, Lincoln is big business.¹⁷ In rhetorical studies, of course, he remains one of our most cherished subjects, though visual representations of Lincoln remain largely unexplored territory for rhetoricians.¹⁸ But exploration of Lincoln iconography can be fruitful territory. Indeed, Lincoln was probably the only American whose image could produce the kind of public response that tapped directly into contested meanings of national identity in the late nineteenth cen-

ture. As Barry Schwartz argues, in the 50 or so years following his death, “Lincoln was not elevated . . . because the people had discovered new facts about him, but because they had discovered new facts about themselves, and regarded him as the perfect vehicle for giving these tangible expression.”¹⁹ Strictly speaking, then, this is not an essay about Abraham Lincoln but an essay about how people used the image vernaculars of their own visual culture to make sense of Lincoln and, as a result, of their evershifting national identity.

THE *McCLURE'S* LINCOLN

The image in question was published in *McClure's* to accompany the first in a series of articles on the life of Abraham Lincoln, penned by Ida Tarbell. Tarbell is best known today as the Progressive Era muckraking journalist who exposed corporate corruption at the Standard Oil Company.²⁰ Like many of her generation, Tarbell had a passing fascination with Lincoln; one of her most vivid childhood memories was witnessing her parents' grief upon his death.²¹ As the foundation for her life of Lincoln, Tarbell relied heavily on the biographers who had known him most intimately.²² But her series went beyond the familiar tales—it delivered new facts, documents, and images in an era when people had begun to conclude that there was nothing new to learn about Lincoln. She traveled to Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois, interviewing people who had known Lincoln in person and consulting court records, newspapers, and other archival resources that previous Lincoln biographers had neglected.²³

The Tarbell series would cement the early success of *McClure's*, a middle-brow literary magazine barely three years old. Publisher S. S. (Samuel Sidney) McClure founded the magazine in 1893 in the belief that a cheap, illustrated literary magazine could succeed. Seeing a gap between the working-class *People's Literary Companion* and the higher-end elitism of periodicals like *Century*, *Harper's*, and *Scribner's*, Sam McClure sought to create an affordable mainstream periodical squarely positioned for the middle-class reader.²⁴ McClure's efforts were made easier by technical developments in image reproduction. The halftone process appeared in the 1880s; by the 1890s it was in wide use by magazines.²⁵ Halftone, combined with the availability of cheaper glazed paper, made it possible for publishers like McClure to provide an inexpensive, yet lavishly illustrated, product.²⁶

McClure's promised that its Lincoln series would “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.”²⁷ Readers responded. Between its first issue in 1893 and the first installment of Tarbell's Lincoln series in November 1895, the circulation of the magazine rose

from eight thousand to well over one hundred thousand readers per month.²⁸ For the November issue, Sam McClure sought to make a heavily publicized splash with one of the most vivid Tarbell discoveries: a previously unpublished photograph of the late president made when he was a much younger man.

During the course of her research Tarbell met Robert Todd Lincoln, the only surviving child of the president. Robert Lincoln guarded his father's legacy closely and famously battled with many of Lincoln's biographers. He did not provide Tarbell with much (his personal papers, which included a wealth of hitherto unknown information related to his father, were not made available to researchers until 1947),²⁹ but he did show her a daguerreotype that he said was the earliest known photograph of his father.³⁰ Tarbell was shocked at what she saw. The photograph looked like Lincoln, but one the public had never seen before. Previously known photographs of Lincoln dated only as far back as the late 1850s, well into Lincoln's public career and middle age. The most famous of these early images was made by photographer Alexander Hesler in 1857. Known as the "tousled hair" portrait, it portrayed a strong but rather disheveled Lincoln.³¹ This new but older image would allow *McClure's* readers to encounter Lincoln as a much younger and more dignified-looking man. While the 1857 "tousled hair" photograph figured Lincoln as a raw frontier lawyer having what may only be described as a bad hair day, this new image showed a youthful, dignified, reserved Lincoln. Tarbell recalled, "It was another Lincoln, and one that took me by storm."³²

Access to the daguerreotype was thus quite a coup. Sam McClure decided the image should be published as the frontispiece of Tarbell's first article in November 1895. The magazine proudly trumpeted its find: "How Lincoln Looked When Young can be learned by this generation for the first time from the only early portrait of Lincoln in existence, a daguerreotype owned by the Hon. Robert T. Lincoln and now first published, showing Lincoln as he appeared before his face had lost its youthful aspect."³³ While forgery of Lincolniana was common, this image was not a fake; coming from Lincoln's own son, readers would not doubt its authenticity.³⁴ McClure promoted the photograph for all it was worth.

The image is a cropped version of a quarter-plate, three-quarters-length-view daguerreotype most likely made in the mid to late 1840s. The *McClure's* version isolates Lincoln's head and shoulders and frames him in a fuzzy pictorialist haze common to magazine reproductions of portraits in the 1890s. Yet editors also used an elaborate line drawing to frame the image, perhaps attempting to signal to viewers its daguerrean origins (see photo on p. 32). The differences between the two images should be of interest, for not only were 1890s viewers encountering an 1840s photograph, but they were encountering it framed in a decidedly 1890s fashion.

To be specific, what *McClure's* readers encountered in the pages of the magazine was a halftone reproduction of a photograph of a daguerreotype. Most photographic reproductions of images, especially photographic reproductions of photographs, are viewed simply as transparent vehicles for communication of the earlier image. But art historian Barbara Savedoff warns against the assumption of transparency: "We are encouraged to treat reproductions as more or less transparent documents. But of course, photographic reproductions are not really transparent. They transform the artworks they present."³⁵ Daguerreotypes, in particular, are dramatically transformed in the process of reproduction.³⁶ The mirrored daguerreotype image is meant to be directly and intimately engaged by the viewer, literally manipulated by hand in order for the mirrored image to come into view.³⁷ Photographic reproductions of daguerreotypes thus lose both their magical mirrored quality and the visual depth of the original.³⁸ The photographic reproduction of Lincoln necessarily removed the image from its association with daguerreotypy (despite the editors' attempt to "frame" it) and transformed it into an image more familiar to late nineteenth-century magazine readers. *McClure's* viewers' experiences of the photograph were thus several steps removed from an encounter with the "magical" aura of the daguerreotype. This conceptual distance makes viewers' effusive responses to the image initially all the more surprising. What exactly was it about the photograph, no longer a magical daguerreotype but a run-of-the-mill halftone illustration, that produced such passionate discourse? As we shall see, the image's potency had a lot to do with cultural understandings of what portrait photographs were believed to communicate to viewers in 1895.

Sam McClure was right that the photograph would draw immediate attention to Tarbell's series. Circulation swelled to 175,000 for the first of Tarbell's articles in the series and then catapulted to 250,000 for the second installment in December.³⁹ Circulation numbers were not the only sign of interest in the series. A number of readers responded specifically to the photograph itself. The December 1895 issue featured a full four pages of letters, the January 1896 issue two more. As noted earlier, *McClure's* was intended to be a low-cost, middle-class magazine of letters, more affordable and "popular" than other magazines of the day such as *Scribner's* or *Harper's*. Yet curiously, the majority of letters published in response to the photograph were not from these middle-class readers but from those who represented the era's intellectual elite: university professors, Supreme Court justices, former associates of Lincoln.⁴⁰ Judging from the content of the letters and the identities of the letter writers, McClure must have sent advance copies of the photograph and its accompanying text to members of the eastern political and scholarly establishment.⁴¹ His motivations for doing so were likely manifold: to drum up interest in the upcoming Tarbell series, to show his confidence in the authenticity of the

image by testing it out before “experts,” and to solicit elite responses in order to signal to *McClure’s* readers the “proper” way to interpret the photograph. When I discuss the letters below, it is important to keep in mind that those whose responses to the photograph were published in the pages of *McClure’s* were not necessarily the same readers who would have purchased the magazine on the newsstand or subscribed to it at home. This disjuncture, as we shall see, becomes important for understanding the particular image vernaculars upon which letter writers relied when making rhetorical sense of the *McClure’s* Lincoln.

“VALUABLE EVIDENCE AS TO HIS NATURAL TRAITS . . .”

Overwhelmingly, letter writers discussed the photograph not as a material object of history, nor as an artful example of a technology no longer in use, but in terms of the kind of evidence it offered about its subject. In interpreting the photograph’s significance, they deployed image vernaculars that tapped into culturally available narratives about photography and character in complex and fascinating ways.

None of the writers disputed the identity of the photograph as Lincoln, though a few did have trouble seeing a resemblance to the man they remembered from history. The Hon. David J. Brewer, associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, wrote, “The picture, if a likeness, must have been taken many years before I saw him and he became the central figure in our country’s life. Indeed, I find it difficult to see in that face the features with which we are all so familiar.”⁴² Similarly, Charles Dudley Warner of Hartford had a hard time seeing his recollected Lincoln in the photograph: “The deep-set eyes and mouth belong to the historical Lincoln, and are recognizable as his features when we know that this is a portrait of him. But I confess that I should not have recognized his likeness. . . . the change from the Lincoln of this picture to the Lincoln of national fame is almost radical in character, and decidedly radical in expression.”⁴³

Brewer’s and Warner’s difficulties mirrored Tarbell’s own reported experience of first viewing the photograph—it *was* radical, a Lincoln no one had ever seen before. Yet most viewers reported the opposite. A colleague from Lincoln’s younger years wrote, “This portrait is Lincoln as I knew him best: his sad, dreamy eye, his pensive smile, his sad and delicate face, his pyramidal shoulders, are the characteristics which I best remember . . . This is the Lincoln of Springfield, Decatur, Jacksonville, and Bloomington.”⁴⁴ Henry C. Whitney, identified in the magazine as “an associate of Lincoln’s on the circuit in Illinois,” wrote, “It is without doubt authentic and accurate; and dispels the illusion so common (but never shared by me) that Mr. Lincoln was an ugly-

looking man.” Implying perhaps the famed roughness of Lincoln’s frontier habits, Whitney concluded bemusedly, “I never saw him with his hair combed before.”⁴⁵

Many of the correspondents in *McClure’s* noted the absence of “melancholy” in Lincoln’s face, a characteristic of many of the later presidential-era portraits. John C. Ropes of New York City wrote, “It is most assuredly an interesting portrait. The expression, though serious and earnest, is devoid of the sadness which characterizes the later likenesses.” And Woodrow Wilson, then professor of finance and political economy at Princeton, noted, “The fine brows and forehead, and the pensive sweetness of the clear eyes, give to the noble face a peculiar charm. There is in the expression the dreaminess of the familiar face without its later sadness.”⁴⁶ Similarly, Herbert B. Adams, professor of history at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, wrote, “The portrait indicates the natural character, strength, insight, and humor of the man before the burdens of office and the sins of his people began to weigh upon him.”⁴⁷

Some readers saw in the photograph shades of Lincoln’s future greatness, a man whose rise to prominence was literally prefigured in his visage. John T. Morse, biographer of Lincoln, Jefferson, and Adams, among others, wrote to the magazine, “I have studied this portrait with very great interest. All the portraits with which we are familiar show us the man as *made*; this shows us the man *in the making*; and I think every one will admit that the making of Abraham Lincoln presents a more singular, puzzling, interesting study than the making of any other man known in human history.”⁴⁸ Morse went on to note that he had shown the portrait to several people without telling them who it was: “Some say, a poet; others, a philosopher, a thinker, like Emerson. These comments also are interesting, for Lincoln had the raw material of both these characters very largely in his composition. . . . This picture, therefore, is valuable evidence as to his natural traits.”⁴⁹

This initial, cursory reading of the letters reveals that writers connected the surface aspects of the image to prevailing cultural myths about Lincoln. Merrill D. Peterson argues that five myths or themes have dominated our national public memory of Lincoln: the Great Emancipator, the Man of the People, the First American, the Self-Made Man, and the Savior of the Union.⁵⁰ While overall the themes have remained relatively stable, not all eras embraced each of these Lincolns. Recalling Schwartz’s contention that each era invents the Lincoln it needs, we should expect that viewers of the 1890s would see in the *McClure’s* photograph a Lincoln who fit their unique needs and interests. Thus the interesting question is not which myths about Lincoln were invoked, but rather *how* and *why* they were invoked. To answer these questions we must dig deeper, moving beyond Lincoln to take up the letters in light of late nineteenth-century visual culture.

The letters are striking for the way that they negotiate the complex temporality of the photograph. Lincoln has been dead for nearly 30 years, the photograph itself is nearly 50 years old, yet the letter writers write in the present tense: the image “*is Lincoln*,” it “*explains*” Lincoln. The ontology of the photograph permits such a slippage, of course, for via the photograph Lincoln is persistently present despite his absence. Importantly, this temporal ambiguity enables readers to engage the image actively. Rather than simply noting the photograph’s existence as a document of the past, *McClure’s* readers activated the image in their own present. In doing so, they did not assume that the photograph spoke for itself but transformed it into a playful space for interpretation.

In particular, the topoi of *character* and *expression* come across strongly in the letter writers’ remarks—specifically, character as revealed in expression. The photograph is uniformly read as offering evidence about Lincoln’s character. Lincoln’s face is “noble”; both his eyes and his smile are “pensive.” His brow is “fine” and illuminated with “intellect”; his eyes are read alternately as “clear” and “dreamy.” Several correspondents explicitly compared this early image of Lincoln with ones more familiar to them. While later images offered a “sad” Lincoln, this image avoided such melancholy; the younger Lincoln is merely “serious and earnest.” The collective image of Lincoln constructed by these readings is a man for all people, alternately a dreamy romantic and a strong patriot, a “pensive” intellectual and an insightful empath, a manly “military chieftain” and a feminized figure of “sweetness” and delicacy. Letter writers grounded their arguments in the assumption that there was a direct correspondence between Lincoln’s image and his “natural traits”—between, as General Walker so tellingly put it, “Mr. Lincoln’s face and his mind and character.” In making such arguments, *McClure’s* readers employed image vernaculars grounded in the relationship between photographic portraiture and popular nineteenth-century discourses of physiognomy and phrenology.

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTRAIT

By the end of the nineteenth century, Miles Orvell argues, photography was an increasingly “intrusive presence in society.”⁵¹ Viewers of the Lincoln photograph could scarcely remember a time when photography did not exist. What appeared in 1839 as a unique, nonreproducible object was by the early 1890s endlessly reproducible as an artifact of mass culture. The photographer, who in the early 1840s was as much a chemist as a businessperson, had by the 1890s become also an artist, a journalist, and most strikingly, an amateur hobbyist. Cameras became increasingly portable while exposure times decreased, so much so that Eadweard Muybridge was able to literally stop time in his movement studies of the late 1880s.⁵² The first Kodak camera,

which would revolutionize the average person's relationship to photography, entered the market in 1889; by 1896 George Eastman's company had sold more than one hundred thousand of them.⁵³ Until the late 1880s, photographs had to be turned into engravings in order to be circulated in mass media. The invention of the halftone process enabled magazine and newspaper publishers to bring photographs more directly to readers. By the turn of the century photographs were ubiquitous at home in the magazines and newspapers middle-class families read and in the albums of family photographs they carefully tended.

In the nearly 50 years between the creation of the Lincoln daguerreotype and its reproduction in *McClure's*, then, photography was dramatically transformed: "No longer regarded as a mysterious hybrid with unclear application and unknown potential, photography at the age of fifty was an accepted fact of modern life, and photographers and photographic images were commonplace."⁵⁴ Late nineteenth-century viewers of the *McClure's* Lincoln brought with them a history of reading and viewing practices influenced by these transformations. Embedded in a visual culture in which photography very much took center stage, they creatively employed image vernaculars that reflected their acquired (but seemingly intuitive) understanding of the rhetoric of the photograph—especially the photographic portrait.

In the nineteenth century, portraits were thought to be *ekphrastic*—that is, they were believed to reveal or bring before the eyes something vital and almost mysterious about their subjects.⁵⁵ It was assumed that the photographic portrait, in particular, did not merely "illustrate" a person but also constituted an important locus of information about human character. Art historian David M. Lubin observes, "Even though a portrait purports to allow us the close observation of a single, localized, individual, we discern meaning in it to the extent that it appears to *reveal* something about general human traits and social relationships."⁵⁶ Even after changes in photographic technology after the Civil War enabled more idiosyncratic, spontaneous images, the prevailing rhetoric of photography preferred a more formal style of portraiture thought to say something more general about human nature.

As loci of generalizable information about character, portraits educated common people about the virtues of the elites and warned them against the danger of vice; thus they served as a way of educating the masses about what it meant to be a virtuous citizen. Images such as the large daguerreotypes made by Mathew Brady in his New York and Washington, D.C., studios at mid-century provided visitors not only with an afternoon's stroll and entertainment, but with "models for emulation."⁵⁷ Brady's galleries functioned as citizenship training of a sort, offering a democratic space for viewing a democratic art that paradoxically perpetuated elitist definitions of virtue: "Viewing

portraits of the nation's elite could provide moral edification for all its citizens who needed to learn how to present themselves as good Americans in a quest for upward mobility.⁵⁸ *Gallery of Illustrious Americans*, a book featuring exquisite lithographs made from the Brady studio's daguerreotypes of national luminaries, constructed the story of national destiny by offering the reading and viewing public "a space for viewing men in the guise of republican virtue: *gravitas, dignitas, fides*."⁵⁹

Visual discourses of morality did not just emphasize the virtuous civic elite, however. Just a few years after photography appeared, the portrait was already being used for the purposes of criminal identification and classification.⁶⁰ By the 1850s, the mug shot was a standardized genre that could be taught to police photographers. "Rogues' Galleries" began to appear in the urban centers of the United States and Western Europe, in which the faces of known criminals were put forth in a kind of "municipal portrait show" displayed in police headquarters to help solve and prevent crime.⁶¹ Mug shots not only constituted products of a visual order of surveillance, but served simultaneously as elements of spectacle and moral education.⁶²

Such education was possible because of the connection between portrait photography and "scientific" discourses such as phrenology and physiognomy, which connected physical attributes to moral and intellectual capacities. Allan Sekula argues, "we understand the culture of the photographic portrait only dimly if we fail to recognize the enormous prestige and popularity of a general physiognomic paradigm in the 1840s and 1850s."⁶³ Throughout the nineteenth century, "the practice of reading faces" was part of everyday life and remained so into the early twentieth century.⁶⁴ Whether it was images like Brady's *Gallery of Illustrious Americans* or those of the Rogues' Galleries, Americans were accustomed not only to reading the faces in photographs, but to making judgments about the moral character of their subjects. Viewers of the Lincoln photograph in *McClure's* paid close attention to the face, implying that in Lincoln's face may be found the key to his character. If we are to understand these kinds of assumptions, we need to trace how the portrait photograph circulated in a fin-de-siècle visual culture heavily influenced by the discourses of physiognomy.

PHYSIOGNOMY AND THE MORAL SCIENCE OF CHARACTER

Scholars have documented the nineteenth century's commitment to the formation of "character" as well as the popularity and prevalence of the "sciences" of phrenology and physiognomy. Karen Halttunen argues that during the bulk of the nineteenth century character formation was incredibly important to middle-class Americans, "the nineteenth-century version of the Protestant work ethic."⁶⁵

“Most importantly,” Halttunen observes, “a man’s inner character was believed to be imprinted upon his face and thus visible to anyone who understood the moral language of physiognomy.”⁶⁶ The popular prominence of this language coincided with the birth of photography in the United States and Europe. The first volume of the *American Phrenological Journal* (produced by the Fowler brothers, Lorenzo and Orson, who popularized phrenology in the United States) was published in 1839—the same year the daguerreotype was introduced to the public.⁶⁷ While discourses of phrenology and physiognomy predated photography by many years, the introduction of photography gave them modern relevance and vigor.⁶⁸

Allan Sekula calls phrenology and physiognomy “two tightly entwined branches” of the so-called moral sciences.⁶⁹ Conceived in the late eighteenth century by Johann Caspar Lavater and popularized in the United States and Europe in the nineteenth century, physiognomy involved paying attention to “the minuteness and the particularity” of physical details and making analogies between those details and the character traits they were said to illustrate.⁷⁰ Physiognomy was framed as a science of reading character “in which an equation is posited between facial type and the moral and personal qualities of the individual.”⁷¹ Similarly, phrenology was founded upon the belief that “there was an observable concomitance between man’s mind—his talents, disposition, and character—and the shape of his head. To ascertain the former, one need only examine the latter.”⁷² Both “sciences” were, as Stephen Hartnett observes of phrenology, “essentially *hermeneutic* activities.”⁷³ These interpretive practices “fostered a wide-ranging ‘self-help’ industry that . . . blanketed the nation with magazines and manifestoes intended to guide confused Americans through the multiple minefields of their rapidly changing culture.”⁷⁴ Employing a circular rhetoric, both practices “drew on the moral and social language of the day in order to guarantee the claims made about human nature.”⁷⁵

Samuel R. Wells, a protégé (and brother-in-law) of the Fowler brothers, ran the publishing operation that helped to popularize their work. Wells believed that physiognomy, phrenology, and physiology constituted a tripartite “science of man.”⁷⁶ Beginning in the 1860s, Wells wrote and published several books on physiognomy, including *New Physiognomy; or, Signs of Character, as Manifested through Temperament and External Forms, and especially in ‘The Human Face Divine’* and the first of several volumes of *How to Read Character: A Handbook of Physiology, Phrenology and Physiognomy, Illustrated with a Descriptive Chart*. Wells argued in both texts that while the brain “measures the absolute power of the mind,” the face may be understood as “an index of its habitual activity.”⁷⁷ The Peircean language should not be lost on us here, for Wells treats the face as an index, a sign of the first order. The books outline in exquisite detail how to read faces in order to ascertain temperament and character; they discuss every

facial feature, including mouth, eyes, jaw, chin, and nose, as well as hands and feet, neck and shoulders, movement, and even palmistry and handwriting analysis.

Such rhetorics tied a hermeneutic of the face to individuated aspects of morality as well as to broader typologies of national character. The practices of phrenology and physiognomy were not parlor-game fun; indeed, not many more steps were necessary for a full-blown discourse of eugenics.⁷⁸ These sciences of moral character enabled anxious Americans, especially those of the middle and upper classes, to use a language that placed themselves (as well as marginalized others) in “proper relation.” And use this language they did. Historian Madeleine Stern observes, “Often without knowing precisely what they were saying, people spoke phrenology in the 1860s as they would speak psychiatry in the 1930s and existentialism in the 1960s.”⁷⁹ The sciences of moral character constituted readily available image vernaculars for late nineteenth-century Americans.

“I THINK WE CAN SEE IN HIS FACE . . .”

Turning back now to the Lincoln letters, we may see how these image vernaculars grounded the arguments made by the *McClure's* letter writers. The letter writers assume that the photograph's links to Lincoln's character are obvious; no one needs to make the case for reading Lincoln's face. The question is not whether the photograph shows a relationship between character and expression, but what specifically that relationship is. Descriptions of Lincoln's eyes as being “clear,” for example, or his smile as being “pensive,” are characterological references that would resonate for viewers familiar with physiognomic discourse. Perhaps the most vivid combination of discourse about Lincoln's character and expression may be found in the letter of Thomas M. Cooley of Ann Arbor, Michigan, former chief justice of the supreme court of Michigan, who began,

I think it a charming likeness; more attractive than any other I have seen, principally perhaps because of the age at which it was taken. The same characteristics are seen in it which are found in all subsequent likenesses—the same pleasant and kindly eyes, through which you feel, as you look into them, that you are looking into a great heart. The same just purposes are also there; and, as I think, the same unflinching determination to pursue to final success the course once deliberately entered upon.⁸⁰

Thus far Cooley's reading is similar to other correspondents' interpretations in its attention to physiognomic detail. Lincoln's face reveals not only “pleasant

and kindly eyes,” but eyes that signal a “great heart.” His expression reveals “just purposes,” as well as “unflinching determination.” Here is a man, Cooley suggests, who can be relied upon to make the right decisions, a man who is thoughtful, determined, kind. The physiognomic image vernacular thus mobilized, Cooley goes on to elaborate what specifically the photograph reveals about Lincoln’s character. Transcending temporal boundaries as only photographic interpretation can, Cooley reads the photograph in the present while speculating about a future that is already past. He constructs the meaning of the image in the conditional tense, even though from his point of view 50 years later there is no uncertainty:

It seems almost impossible to conceive of this as the face of a man to be at the head of affairs when one of the greatest wars known to history was in progress, and who could push unflinchingly the measures necessary to bring that war to a successful end. Had it been merely a war of conquest, I think we can see in this face qualities that would have been entirely inconsistent with such a course, and that would have rendered it to this man wholly impossible. It is not the face of a bloodthirsty man, or of a man ambitious to be successful as a mere ruler of men; but if a war should come involving issues of the very highest importance to our common humanity, and that appealed from the oppression and degradation of the human race to the higher instincts of our nature, we almost feel, as we look at this youthful picture of the great leader, that we can see in it as plainly as we saw in his administration of the government when it came to his hands that here was likely to be neither flinching nor shadow or turning until success should come.⁸¹

This passage is extraordinary for the way it oscillates between the specifics of the image and imaginative generalities about Lincoln’s character and behavior. The face that Cooley has already “read” for us is not the face of someone who is “bloodthirsty” or desirous of power; rather, this is the face of a man who will unflinchingly pursue a course of deliberate action. However (note the conditional tense), *if a war should come* (an eerie echo of Lincoln’s Second Inaugural: “and the war came”), we can be assured that this man would only go to war for the right reasons; indeed, his face signals a character for which doing otherwise would be patently “impossible.” This is not the face of a power-hungry, bloodthirsty “ruler of men,” but of a benevolent, thoughtful, decisive leader: Lincoln, Savior of the Union.

Strikingly, Cooley goes a step beyond analysis of Lincoln’s character to make quite another argument altogether: he actually argues that the war was not a war of conquest *precisely because the photograph does not reveal a man*

with such impulses: “I think we can see in this face qualities that would have been entirely inconsistent with such a course.” Cooley not only uses the photograph to articulate a vision of Lincoln as the Savior of the Union, he mobilizes it in the service of arguments about the nature of the war itself. Such a move is not possible without recourse to image vernaculars that enable him creatively to use the photograph as an inventional resource.

Cooley is not alone in reading Lincoln’s image in this way. In fact, Lincoln figures prominently in the physiognomy literature. Samuel Wells’s discussion of an engraved reproduction of a Lincoln photograph amounts to a near-complete physiognomic study of Lincoln, prefiguring Cooley’s own remarks by nearly 30 years:

This photograph of 1860 shows, not the face of a great man, but of one whose elements were so molded that stormy and eventful times might easily stamp him with the seal of greatness. The face is distinctively a Western face. . . . The brow in the picture of 1860 is ample but smooth, and has no look of having grappled with vast difficult and complex political problems; the eyebrows are uniformly arched; the nose straight; the hair careless and inexpressive; the mouth, large, good natured, full of charity for all . . . but looking out from his deep-set and expressive eyes is an intellectual glance in the last degree clear and penetrating, and a soul *whiter* than is often found among the crowds of active and prominent wrestlers upon the arena of public life, and far more conscious than most public men of its final accountability at the great tribunal.⁸²

Reading the past of the Civil War into the present of the picture, Wells, like Cooley, uses the image vernacular of physiognomy to predict the future: this man with the “white soul” is destined for greatness in the face of heavy burdens. Lest the reader of *New Physiognomy* be unclear about the implications of his reading, Wells sums up: “The lesson . . . is one of morals as well as of physiognomy. Let any one meet the questions of his time as Mr. Lincoln met those of *his*, and bring to bear upon them his best faculties with the same conscientious fidelity that governed the Martyr-President, and he may be sure that the golden legend will be there in his features.”⁸³

While neither Cooley nor the other correspondents in *McClure’s* write of Lincoln with the precise physiognomic detail found in the Wells account, the influence is there. Clearly, by the 1890s the discourses of physiognomy still offered a potent image vernacular. Furthermore, those who read the photograph mobilized the physiognomic image vernacular not only to claim Lincoln for their own era, but also to proclaim him as a new “American type” in an age of intense anxiety about the fate of Anglo-Saxon national identity.

“A NEW AND INTERESTING CHARACTER . . .”

Lincoln's physical appearance was a popular topic in the Gilded Age. Writers sought to construct a preferred image of Lincoln in the public mind; in doing so, they tied that image to broader questions about American national identity. In 1891 John G. Nicolay, Lincoln's former private secretary, published an essay in *Century* magazine called “Lincoln's Personal Appearance.” Nicolay's stated goal in the essay was to dispel the persistent myth of Lincoln's ugliness.⁸⁴ Yet Nicolay was also interested in framing Lincoln as a new, distinctively “American” type. In defense of Lincoln's purported gawky ugliness, Nicolay quoted accounts that relied heavily on physiognomic detail. Sculptor Thomas D. Jones recalled to Nicolay that Lincoln's “great strength and height were well calculated to make him a peerless antagonist. . . . His head was neither Greek nor Roman, nor Celt, for his upper lip was too short for that, or a Low German. There are few such men in the world; where they came from originally is not positively known.”⁸⁵ Nicolay constructed Lincoln as distinctly American, so much so that his ancestry was unimportant. Lincoln's Americanness could be found, Nicolay contended, in the frontier upbringing that exposed him to a variety of people and situations: “It was this thirty years of life among the people that made and kept him a man of the people—which gave him the characteristics expressed in Lowell's poem: ‘New birth of our new soil; the first American.’”⁸⁶

Viewers of the photograph in *McClure's* made similar arguments. Several letter writers argued that the Lincoln photograph revealed him as a distinctly American type, one whose physiognomy indicated a new stage in American characterological development. One of the *McClure's* letter writers was Truman H. (T. H.) Bartlett, identified by editors as an “eminent sculptor, who has for many years collected portraits of Lincoln, and has made a scientific study of Lincoln's physiognomy.”⁸⁷ In his letter to *McClure's*, Bartlett observes that the photograph suggested the rise of a “new man”:

It may to many suggest certain other heads, but a short study of it establishes its distinctive originality in every respect. It's priceless, every way, and copies of it ought to be in the gladsome possession of every lover of Lincoln. Handsome is not enough—it's great—not only of a great man, but the first picture representing the only new physiognomy of which we have any correct knowledge contributed by the New World to the ethnographic consideration of mankind.⁸⁸

Setting aside Bartlett's somewhat tortured prose, we see that for Bartlett (as for Nicolay), Lincoln's physical features signaled a marked shift in the social and cultural makeup of American man. While some might be content to tie the

image to other physiognomic types (“other heads,” as Bartlett so wonderfully puts it), Bartlett suggests that the “distinctive originality” of Lincoln’s features signaled something entirely new. Twelve years later, Bartlett published in *McClure’s* the study to which editors had alluded.⁸⁹ In “The Physiognomy of Lincoln,” a highly detailed analysis of photographs and life masks of Lincoln’s face and hands, Bartlett elaborated how Lincoln’s physiognomy represented a distinct departure from those “other heads.” Classifying the “excellences of Lincoln’s appearance” by analyzing both his facial expressions and his bodily movement, Bartlett contended that both constituted a new American type. He claimed to have shown the life masks and photographs to famous sculptors in France, including Rodin, who agreed with Bartlett that they illustrated “‘a new and interesting character. . . . If it belongs to any type, and we know of none such, it must be a wonderful specimen of that type.’ . . . ‘It is a new man; he has tremendous character,’ they said.”⁹⁰ In all of these texts Lincoln is constituted not only in terms of his individual moral character, but in terms of his representativeness. Why was it so vital for *McClure’s* readers—especially the elite letter writers—to connect Lincoln to this “new,” uniquely American ideal? Their desire can in large part be traced to cultural anxieties about the changing character of the American citizenry at the end of the nineteenth century.

Anxiety consumed many elites during the Gilded Age. Many causes have been posited for this cultural “neurasthenia,”⁹¹ including confusion about what it meant to be an American in the industrial age. Historian Robert Wiebe suggests that this confusion constituted nothing less than a national identity crisis: “The setting had altered beyond their [elites’] power to understand it and within an alien context they had lost themselves. In a democratic society who was master and who servant? In a land of opportunity what was success? In a Christian nation what were the rules and who kept them? The apparent leaders were as much adrift as their followers.”⁹² Attempts to grapple with these questions led elites to define American identity by emphasizing both what Americans were and what they were not.

The White Anglo-Saxon Protestant (WASP) cultural elite believed it had good cause to be worried about the future of American identity in the face of rising immigration and the threat of miscegenation. Jacob Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives*, published in 1890, visualized these anxieties. Beginning in the late 1880s, Riis made photographs of New York’s poor and their living conditions in the city’s ghettos, which he then shared in lantern slide lectures delivered to upper-class New York City audiences.⁹³ Writing of the cultural makeup of the New York tenements, Riis observed,

[T]here was not a native-born individual in the court. . . . One may find for the asking an Italian, a German, a French, African, Spanish, Bohemian, Russian,

Scandinavian [*sic*], Jewish, and Chinese colony. . . . The one thing you shall vainly ask for in the chief city of America is a distinctively American community. There is none; certainly not among the tenements.⁹⁴

The assumption grounding Riis's remarks is that there is, in fact, a "distinctively American community"—but it is one, by definition, of which these immigrants can not be a part.

During these years the United States also passed through a violent period of labor unrest, including most prominently the Haymarket Riot of 1886 and the bloody Pullman Strike of 1894. The voices of immigrants made themselves increasingly heard in these powerful labor movements, producing real fears of a violent class revolution. Anxious elites sought rhetorically to dissociate activist citizens from the identity of "American." After the incident at Haymarket Square in Chicago, one newspaper editorial pronounced, "The enemy forces are not American [but] rag-tag and bob-tail cutthroats of Beelzebub from the Rhine, the Danube, the Vistula and the Elbe."⁹⁵ Historian T. J. Jackson Lears observes, "Worry about . . . destruction by an unleashed rabble, always a component of republican tradition, intensified in the face of unprecedented labor unrest, waves of strange new immigrants, and glittering industrial fortunes."⁹⁶

Many elites sought to alleviate their anxiety by embracing historical and "scientific" representations of American identity that articulated the "natural" dominance of a WASP ideal. They received help on a number of fronts. In 1893 at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, historian Frederick Jackson Turner posited his influential "frontier thesis." Emphasizing the heroic, masculine traits of westward-moving pioneers, Turner argued that it was on the frontier that Americans had become Americans, forging a unique national identity apart from their European ancestry.⁹⁷ The frontier thesis provided a coherent reading "of the American past at a time of disunity, of economic depression and labor strife, of immigrant urban workers and impoverished rural farmers challenging a predominantly Anglo-Saxon Protestant economic and social elite."⁹⁸ It gave WASP elites a narrative that acknowledged the dynamism of American cultural history but conveniently ignored difference and multiplicity. Similarly, genealogical organizations such as the Daughters of the American Revolution rose in response to perceived threats to "American civilization," making available "the consolidation of a *seemingly* stable, embodied, and racialized identity, one that conflated American borders with Anglo-Saxon bloodlines."⁹⁹ And eugenics discourse reached down from the rarified universe of science into the everyday lives of Americans, where it emphasized the importance of retaining a "pure" American identity in the face of the "threat" of the blending of the races.¹⁰⁰

Physiognomy was used in these discourses to define those who were “real Americans” and those whose physiognomy revealed them to be dangerous threats to a pure American identity. In *New Physiognomy* Wells included a lengthy discussion of “The Anglo-American.” Emphasizing Americans’ genetic connections to the Anglo-Saxon, Celtic, and Teutonic “races,” Wells observed that contemporary Americans differed strikingly in temperament and character from their European counterparts. As exemplars of this representative illustrious American, Wells offered up Cornelius Vanderbilt and Abraham Lincoln.¹⁰¹ In Wells’s complex rhetoric, Anglo-Saxon no longer stood for European, but for American. At the same time that Americans were being told there existed a uniquely American identity, then, this identity was declared to be threatened by the forces of social disorder. The physiognomic rhetoric constructing Lincoln as a “new and interesting character” reflected these broader tensions. Ironically, the Lincoln daguerreotype, no longer a mirror image itself, functioned as a mirror for these anxieties. Those who read the photograph employed image vernaculars that reflected back a Lincoln whose high moral character and apparently “American” genes fulfilled their need for a “distinctive” American type capable of mitigating the social anxieties of their age.

CONCLUSION

The goal of this essay has been to show how attention to image vernaculars—the enthymematic modes of reasoning employed creatively in particular visual cultures—enables us to construct rich rhetorical histories of American public address. The *McClure’s* letter writers established the portrait photograph’s worth as a vehicle for the communication of beliefs about individual and collective moral character. They constructed interpretations of the photograph that embodied contemporary tensions about the nature of America and Americans, the uniqueness of national character, and the boundaries of national morality. Attention to image vernaculars enables us to locate the cultural circulation of such anxieties in visual cultures of public address, illustrating how visual rhetoric constitutes powerful world-making discourse.

NOTES

1. “Miss Tarbell’s Life of Lincoln,” *McClure’s*, January 1896, 208.
2. “The Earliest Portrait of Lincoln: Letters in Regard to the Frontispiece of the November *McClure’s*,” *McClure’s*, December 1896, 112.
3. The photograph was most likely made in 1846 or 1847 in Springfield, Illinois, by local photographer N. H. Shepherd. See Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf, *Lincoln in*

- Photographs: An Album of Every Known Pose* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), 4–5.
4. Even an iconic figure such as John F. Kennedy does not inspire the specific kind of talk that the Lincoln image did. For a fascinating, if somewhat idiosyncratic, reading of photographs of John F. Kennedy and Jacqueline Kennedy, see David M. Lubin, *Shooting Kennedy: JFK and the Culture of Images* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).
 5. W. J. T. Mitchell, “Interdisciplinarity and Visual Culture,” *Art Bulletin*, December 1995, 543. A good illustration of the multiple definitions of “visual culture” may be found in the infamous “Visual Culture Questionnaire” published in *October 77* (Summer 1996): 25–70. See also James Elkins, *Visual Studies: A Skeptical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 1–30.
 6. Roland Barthes, “The Photographic Message,” in *Image—Music—Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 18.
 7. Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1972); Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983).
 8. See for example William Stott, *Documentary Expression and Thirties America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973/1986); Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); Cara A. Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty: Print Culture and FSA Photographs* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 2003).
 9. Baxandall, *Painting and Experience*, 152.
 10. On image vernaculars, see also Cara A. Finnegan, “Image Vernaculars: Photography, Anxiety, and Public Argument,” *Proceedings of the Fifth Conference of the International Society for the Study of Argumentation*, ed. Frans H. van Eemeren et al. (Amsterdam: Sic Sat, 2003), 315–18. The concept “vernacular” appears elsewhere in rhetoric and photography scholarship. Although these uses of the term differ from my own (as well as from one another), they are related in that each invokes a sense of “vernacular” as unofficial, colloquial modes of communication. See Gerard Hauser, *Vernacular Voices: The Rhetoric of Publics and Public Sphere* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999); Kent A. Ono and John M. Sloop, *Shifting Borders: Rhetoric, Immigration, and California’s Proposition 187* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002); Geoffrey Batchen, “Vernacular Photographies,” *History of Photography* 24, no. 3 (2000): 262–71.
 11. In his translation of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, George Kennedy articulates the enthymeme’s role thusly: “rhetoric [forms enthymemes] from things [that seem true] to people already accustomed to deliberate among themselves” (Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, trans. George Kennedy [New York: Oxford University Press, 1991], 41). See also the entry on the enthymeme in Thomas M. Sloane, ed., *Encyclopedia of Rhetoric* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 247–50.
 12. See Dana L. Cloud, “‘To Veil the Threat of Terror’: Afghan Women and the <Clash of Civilizations> in the Imagery of the U.S. War on Terrorism,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 90 (2004): 285–306; Cori E. Dauber, “The Shot Seen ‘Round the World: The Impact of the Images of Mogadishu on American Military Operations,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 4 (2001): 653–87; Kevin M. DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999); Kevin M. DeLuca and Anne Teresa Demo, “Imaging Nature: Watkins, Yosemite, and the Birth of Environmentalism,” *Critical Studies in Media*

- Communication* 17 (2000): 241–60; Finnegan, *Picturing Poverty*; John M. Murphy, “Our Mission and Our Moment’: George W. Bush and September 11th,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6 (2003): 607–32; Lester C. Olson, *Benjamin Franklin’s Vision of American Community: A Study in Rhetorical Iconology* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2004); Bryan C. Taylor, “Our Bruised Arms Hung Up as Monuments’: Nuclear Iconography in Post–Cold War Culture,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 20 (2003): 1–34.
13. Alan Trachtenberg, “Photography: The Emergence of a Keyword,” in *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, ed. Martha A. Sandweiss (Fort Worth and New York: Amon Carter Museum and Harry N. Abrams, 1991), 22.
 14. Trachtenberg, “Photography,” 22. On the daguerreotype as a rhetoric, see also Stephen John Hartnett, *Democratic Dissent and the Cultural Fictions of Antebellum America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 132–72.
 15. Charles Hamilton and Lloyd Ostendorf note that there are over one hundred extant photographs of Lincoln, more than 50 made before he became president, and more than 60 taken during his presidency. See Hamilton and Ostendorf, *Lincoln in Photographs*, ix–x.
 16. Barry Schwartz traced references to both Lincoln and Washington in newspapers and in the *Congressional Record* from roughly 1865 to 1920. He found that references to Lincoln markedly increased after 1900 and soon thereafter surpassed references to Washington. See Barry Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln and the Forge of National Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 57–58, 78, 110–13. See also Marcus Cunliffe, “The Doubled Images of Lincoln and Washington,” in *Gettysburg College*, 26th Annual Robert Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture (Gettysburg College, Pa., 1988), 7–34; Merrill D. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 27–29.
 17. On the consumer culture surrounding Lincoln, see Frank J. Williams and Mark E. Neely Jr., “The Crisis in Lincoln Collecting,” in *Lincoln and Lincolniana*, ed. Harold Holzer (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press, 1985), 79–96; Richard J. S. Gutman and Kellie O. Gutman, “Lincoln Dollars and Cents: The Commercialization of Abraham Lincoln,” in Holzer, *Lincoln and Lincolniana*, 97–113. On the iconography of Lincoln in relation to questions of public memory more generally, see Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, and Schwartz, *Abraham Lincoln*.
 18. One exception is Brian Snee, “Shooting Lincoln: Rhetorical Dimensions in Historical Films” (Ph.D. diss., Pennsylvania State University, 2000). Harold Holzer is the foremost historian of the visual iconography of Lincoln. See Harold Holzer, *Lincoln Seen and Heard* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2000); Harold Holzer, Gabor S. Boritt, and Mark E. Neely Jr., *The Lincoln Image: Abraham Lincoln and the Popular Print* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001); Harold Holzer, Gabor S. Boritt, and Mark E. Neely Jr., *Changing the Lincoln Image* (Fort Wayne, Ind.: Louis A. Warren/Lincoln Library and Museum, 1985). As evidence for Lincoln’s continued relevance to rhetorical studies, see David Zarefsky, “The Continuing Fascination with Lincoln,” *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6 (2003): 337–70.
 19. Barry Schwartz, “The Reconstruction of Abraham Lincoln,” in *Collective Remembering*, ed. David Middleton and Derek Edwards (London: Sage, 1990), 101.
 20. Tarbell was already a veteran writer for *McClure’s*; during its first year she wrote a popular series, “Life of Napoleon,” for the magazine. On Tarbell see Kathleen Brady, *Ida Tarbell: Portrait of a Muckraker* (New York: Seaview/Putnam, 1984); see also Tarbell’s autobiography, *All in a Day’s Work* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1939).
 21. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 149.

22. In particular, Tarbell relied heavily on the recent work of Lincoln's former secretaries, John G. Nicolay and John Hay. See John G. Nicolay and John Hay, *Abraham Lincoln, A History* (New York: Century Co., 1890).
23. Brady, *Ida Tarbell*, 96–98; Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 150–52.
24. The monthly magazine first sold for 15 cents an issue (most similar magazines sold for 25 to 35 cents). McClure later cut the price to 10 cents. See Theodore Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1964), 6–7, 9–10.
25. On the importance of the halftone process to the circulation of photographs in print culture, see Robert Taft, *Photography and the American Scene* (New York: Dover, 1938), 427–41, 446.
26. Brady, *Ida Tarbell*, 92.
27. "Editorial Announcement," *McClure's*, November 1895, 483–84.
28. Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 10.
29. Brady, *Ida Tarbell*, 98.
30. Brady, *Ida Tarbell*, 99; Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 151.
31. The "tousled hair" photograph was widely circulated after Lincoln's senate nomination. Lincoln wrote to a friend that he thought the photograph was "a very true one; though my wife and many others do not. My impression is that their objection arises from the disordered condition of the hair" (Hamilton and Ostendorf, *Lincoln in Photographs*, 6–7).
32. Quoted in Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 152; see also Tarbell, *All in a Day's Work*, 165–68.
33. "McClure's Magazine for 1895–6: How Lincoln Looked When Young," *McClure's*, November 1895, 3.
34. However, legend has it that despite its excellent provenance and strong resemblance to Lincoln, the family later was required to authenticate the image three times. See Harold Holzer, "Is This the First Photograph of Abraham Lincoln?" *American Heritage*, February–March 1994, 39–42. The daguerreotype eventually was donated by Robert Todd Lincoln's daughter to the Library of Congress. On forgery of Lincolniana in general, see Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 144–55, 291–98, 341; see also Holzer, *Lincoln and Lincolniana*.
35. Barbara Savedoff, *Transforming Images: How Photography Complicates the Picture* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), 152.
36. On the history of daguerreotypes, see Beaumont Newhall, *The Daguerreotype in America*, 3d rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1976); Taft, *Photography and the American Scene*, 2–101.
37. See Trachtenberg, "Photography," 20; Susan S. Williams, *Confounding Images: Photography and Portraiture in Antebellum Fiction* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 52; Alan Trachtenberg, "Likeness as Identity: Reflections on the Daguerrean Mystique," in *The Portrait in Photography*, ed. Graham Clarke (London: Reaktion Books, 1992), 177.
38. Savedoff, *Transforming Images*, 174.
39. Peterson, *Magazines in the Twentieth Century*, 10.
40. Of the first set of 12 letters published in the December 1895 *McClure's*, four are from members of the legal profession (including Supreme Court justices), five are from academics, and two are from newspaper editors.
41. Many correspondents began their letters by thanking McClure for sending an advance copy of the image; for example, C. R. Miller, editor of the *New York Times*, wrote on October 24,

- "I thank you for the privilege you have given me of looking over some of the text and illustrations of your new *Life of Lincoln*" ("The Earliest Portrait," 111).
42. "The Earliest Portrait," 111.
 43. "The Earliest Portrait," 112.
 44. "The Earliest Portrait," 110.
 45. "The Earliest Portrait," 110.
 46. "The Earliest Portrait," 111.
 47. "The Earliest Portrait," 109.
 48. "Miss Tarbell's," 206–7.
 49. "Miss Tarbell's," 207.
 50. See Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 27.
 51. Miles Orvell, *The Real Thing: Imitation and Authenticity in American Culture, 1880–1940* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), 101.
 52. On Muybridge see Rebecca Solnit, *River of Shadows: Eadweard Muybridge and the Technological Wild West* (New York: Viking, 2003).
 53. Michael L. Carlebach, *American Photojournalism Comes of Age* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), 18–19. An earlier invention of Eastman's, roll film, made the first Kodak cameras possible. The consumer would expose the roll of film, then mail the entire camera back to Kodak. The company would process the film and print its photographs, then send the photographs as well as the camera (reloaded with film) back to the consumer.
 54. Sarah Greenough, "'Of Charming Glens, Graceful Glades, and Frowning Cliffs': The Economic Incentives, Social Inducements, and Aesthetic Issues of American Pictorial Photography, 1880–1902," in Sandweiss, *Photography in Nineteenth-Century America*, 259.
 55. On the rhetoric of portrait photographs see Graham Clarke, ed., *The Portrait in Photography* (London: Reaktion Books, 1992).
 56. David M. Lubin, *Act of Portrayal: Eakins, Sargent, James* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985), 3.
 57. Trachtenberg, "Photography," 33.
 58. Barbara McCandless, "The Portrait Studio and the Celebrity," in *Photography in the Nineteenth Century*, 49. See also Williams, *Confounding Images*, 19.
 59. Alan Trachtenberg, *Reading American Photographs: Images as History from Mathew Brady to Walker Evans* (New York: Noonday Press, 1989), 48. Stephen Hartnett reads Brady's *Gallery* in light of the politics of the era, particularly debates about slavery, and argues the images are examples of the "new genre of the daguerreotype as politician's tool" (Hartnett, *Democratic Dissent*, 152).
 60. John Tagg, *The Burden of Representation: Essays on Photographies and Histories* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 74. On the role of photography as an instrument of the state, see also Allan Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," *October* 39 (Winter 1986): 3–64; Suren Lalvani, *Photography, Vision, and the Production of Modern Bodies* (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1996), 87–137.
 61. Harry Soderman and John J. O'Connell, *Modern Criminal Investigation*, 5th ed. (New York: Funk and Wagnall's, 1962), 71; Martha Merrill Humphrey, "'The Sun Has Been Too Quick for Them': Criminal Portraiture and the Police in the Late Nineteenth Century," *Studies in Law, Politics and Society* 16 (1997): 144. See also Trachtenberg, *Reading*, 28–29.

62. Martha Umphrey argues that one of the most popular late nineteenth-century texts on criminality, Thomas Byrne's *Professional Criminals of America* (1886), functioned as an ambivalent moral warning against criminal behavior because it both condemned and celebrated the most sensational forms of criminal activity (Umphrey, "The Sun," 142). See also Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 37–38.
63. Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 12.
64. Orvell, *The Real Thing*, 16.
65. Karen Halttunen, *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-Class Culture in America, 1830–1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 28.
66. Halttunen, *Confidence Men*, 40–41.
67. On the Fowlers see Madeleine B. Stern, *Heads and Headlines: The Phrenological Fowlers* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1971); see also O. S. Fowler, *Fowler's Practical Phrenology* (New York: Edward Kearney, 1846).
68. On relationships between phrenology/physiognomy and photography, see also Allan Sekula, "The Traffic in Photographs," *Art Journal* 41 (1981): 18–19; Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 10–16; Hartnett, *Democratic Dissent*, 156–59.
69. Sekula, "The Body and the Archive," 11; Lucy Hartley, *Physiognomy and the Meaning of Expression in Nineteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 2.
70. Hartley, *Physiognomy*, 127.
71. Orvell, *The Real Thing*, 14.
72. Stern, *Heads and Headlines*, x.
73. Stephen Hartnett, "'It Is Terrible to Possess Such Power!' The Critique of Phrenology, Class, and Gender in Hawthorne's 'The Birth-Mark,'" *Prospero* 5 (1998): 6.
74. Hartnett, "'It Is Terrible,'" 6.
75. Hartley, *Physiognomy*, 12.
76. Stern, *Heads and Headlines*, 212.
77. Samuel R. Wells, *How to Read Character: A Handbook of Physiology, Phrenology and Physiognomy, Illustrated with a Descriptive Chart* (New York: Fowler, Wells, and Co., 1888), 127.
78. Beginning in the late 1870s, Francis Galton made composite photographs that relied heavily on discourses of phrenology and physiognomy to construct typologies of criminality and deviance. Allan Sekula points out that Galton's "career was suspended between the triumph of his cousin Charles Darwin's evolutionary paradigm in the late 1860s and the belated discovery in 1899 of Gregor Mendel's work on the genetic ratio underlying inheritance" (Sekula, "Body and the Archive," 42). See also Orvell, *The Real Thing*, 92–94. On the rhetoric of eugenics in the twentieth century, see Marouf Arif Hasian Jr., *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996).
79. Stern, *Heads and Headlines*, 214.
80. "The Earliest Portrait," 109.
81. "The Earliest Portrait," 109.
82. Samuel R. Wells, *New Physiognomy; or, Signs of Character, as Manifested through Temperament and External Forms, and Especially in 'the Human Face Divine'* (New York: Fowler and Wells, 1866), 550–51. Lincoln's Second Inaugural haunts Wells's text, too: "charity for all."

83. Wells, *New Physiognomy*, 552.
84. John G. Nicolay, "Lincoln's Personal Appearance," *Century*, October 1891, 932.
85. Quoted in Nicolay, "Lincoln's Personal Appearance," 933.
86. Nicolay, "Lincoln's Personal Appearance," 935, emphasis added. Nicolay is quoting the final line of James Russell Lowell's "Commemoration Ode," written for Harvard's graduation in the summer of 1865. See Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, 32–33.
87. "Miss Tarbell's," 207.
88. "Miss Tarbell's," 207.
89. Truman H. Bartlett, "The Physiognomy of Lincoln," *McClure's*, August 1907, 390–407.
90. Bartlett, "Physiognomy," 399, 405.
91. On neurasthenia, see T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), 47–54; Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 47–48.
92. Robert Wiebe, *The Search for Order, 1877–1920* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 43.
93. Jacob Riis, *How the Other Half Lives: Studies among the Tenements of New York* (New York: Dover, 1890/1971). See also Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 88.
94. Riis, *How the Other Half Lives*, 19.
95. Quoted in Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 29.
96. Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 28.
97. Trachtenberg, *Incorporation*, 14.
98. Trachtenberg, *Incorporation*, 16.
99. Shawn Michelle Smith, *American Archives: Gender, Race, and Class in Visual Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999), 136.
100. Even seemingly innocuous artifacts such as the baby book were developed as a cultural response to anxieties about the loss of American identity. Eugenicist Francis Galton promoted baby books to "those who care to forecast the mental and bodily faculties of their children, and to further the science of heredity" (quoted in Smith, *American Archives*, 125).
101. Wells, *New Physiognomy*, 409.

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