Saint-Gaudens's *Standing Lincoln*: Social Turmoil, Classical Oratory, and Plaster Casts

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Abraham Lincoln: The Man by Augustus Saint-Gaudens (1848–1907), also called the *Standing Lincoln*, has been a foundational model for our image of Abraham Lincoln (1809–1865) since it was installed in Chicago's Lincoln Park in 1887 (Figure 1).[1] It immediately garnered enthusiastic praise and has been widely reproduced in a range of sizes and mediums.[2] Many observers have admired the way in which the statue and its setting communicate the wisdom and moral nature of the president. Some features of the monument's design, however, as this article hopes to demonstrate, have not been discussed in depth. These include its contrast to the inequalities and conflicts of the society around it at the time of its installation, its references to the then well-known tradition of classical oratory, and its demonstration of the important role played by historic plaster casts in late nineteenth-century American sculpture. The *Standing Lincoln*'s visual references to casts of famous ancient orators strengthened its presentation of Lincoln as a savior of the union who represented an alternative to the nation's state of unrest. The serious and thoughtful central figure, the carefully chosen inscriptions, and the enveloping setting would have echoed the desire, among observers all along the social and economic

1. The monument was not given a name at the time of its commission and installation. Its now familiar titles were introduced later and codified by John H. Dryfhout, *The Work of Augustus Saint-Gaudens* (Hanover, N.H., and London: University Press of New England, 1982), 158.

2. Including on the cover of some issues of this journal. For a recent summary of the commission for the monument, including earlier bibliography and a discussion of reproductions, see Thayer Tolles, "*Abraham Lincoln, The Man (Standing Lincoln)*: A Bronze Statuette by Augustus Saint-Gaudens," *The Metropolitan Museum Journal*, 48 (January 2013): 223–237. In addition to the reproductions mentioned by Tolles, see the reproductions of heads described by Dryfhout, *Work*, 160. A quick Internet search reveals many more recent replicas of the figure of Lincoln, sometimes including the chair behind him, ranging from souvenirs to larger objects.

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Figure 1. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *Standing Lincoln (Lincoln: the Man)*, 1884. Bronze. Lincoln Park, Chicago. Wikimedia Commons.

spectrum, for a leader who could bring wisdom and calm to the nation and create a sense of unity.

By 1887, twenty-two years after his assassination, the racial equality and national unity imagined by Lincoln during the Civil War had not developed as hoped.[3] The country's economic growth and the expansion of its international influence during the last quarter of the nineteenth century in the United States frequently call forth positive evaluations of the period. However, as more balanced analyses describe, the nation was also rife with labor disputes, income disparity, and racial hostility. A generation after Lincoln's death, social attitudes within the Union had shifted significantly from the more optimistic period immediately following the Civil War, when greater social equality had seemed possible. Reconstruction ended in the former Confederate states by 1877, when all remaining federal troops departed. The movement of many African Americans to northern cities, beginning in about 1870, changed the racial balance in those areas.[4] Lynchings were

3. Leslie H. Fishel, "The African American Experience," in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America*, ed. Charles Calhoun (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2007), 143–165.

4. Fishel, "African American Experience," 143–144.

increasing, reaching an all-time high in 1892, and racial segregation was well established in both the North and South. The emancipation of America's enslaved population, while still proudly acknowledged in public discourse, was believed by some to be partly responsible for the unrest that was erupting throughout the country. Blacks had not achieved equal status in society by any standard, and were often disenfranchised in the North as well as the South. Immigrants, especially from Ireland, were fighting for better working conditions and were frequently open in their hostility to the freed people arriving from the South with whom they were competing for jobs. The Haymarket riot of 1886 in Chicago, a deadly battle between workers and police, was a vivid illustration of the tensions over labor issues, and would have been very fresh in the city's memory when the *Standing Lincoln* was unveiled the following year.[5]

Saint-Gaudens's monument arrived on the scene during this period of anger and disequilibrium. The statue of Lincoln, a tall figure in contemporary clothing, stands high on a base at the center, one foot slightly advanced (Figure 2). He is unaccompanied and his downturned face does not interact with the outside world. One hand quietly holds his lapel; the other arm is bent behind his back. The Chicago memorial began a trend in representations of Lincoln that Kirk Savage has analyzed carefully.[6] As his discussion indicates, in the 1870s and 1880s, it became increasingly clear that Lincoln's dream of racial equality in American society had failed, and representations of the former president started to de-emphasize his role as the liberator of enslaved people. Most earlier works had shown Lincoln holding a scroll or paper referring to the Emancipation Proclamation and sometimes with a freed person kneeling beside him, as in Thomas Ball's (1819–1911) *Freedom's Memorial (Emancipation Group)* of 1874–1876, a motif that seems patronizing to twenty-first century eyes (Figure 3). Saint-Gaudens's composition in Chicago does not include such a figure or document to represent the act of emancipation. As noted by Savage and Richard White, it is the president's determination to save the Union that comes to the fore.[7] The most obvious sign of this shift in the *Standing Lincoln* is the oversize chair behind the figure. The seat

5. Richard White, *The Republic for Which It Stands: The United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865–1896* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), offers an excellent discussion of the period, including, in the conclusion, an analysis of Saint-Gaudens's *Standing Lincoln* as an image "softened" in its depiction of the period.

6. Kirk Savage, *Standing Soldiers, Kneeling Slaves: Race, War, and Monument in Nineteenth-Century America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

7. White, 864.

Figure 2. Detail of Figure 1. Wikimedia Commons.

Figure 3. Thomas Ball, *Freedom's Memorial (Emancipation Group)*, 1876. Bronze. Lincoln Park, Washington D.C. Wikimedia Commons.

is covered with motifs, such as Roman fasces and an eagle, that refer not to racial justice, but to the power of the American government. As will be discussed below, the inclusion of the chair was one of several innovative features that confronted viewers in the late nineteenth century, as were the downturned gaze and the gestures of the hands.[8]

The statue and chair on their plinth are surrounded by an oval setting with steps and a bench, designed by Stanford White in consultation with Saint-Gaudens. The plinth, the bench, and the bronze balls at the corners of the stairs all contain inscriptions selected from Lincoln's spoken and written words. The quotations raised the importance of textual material to a new height in American memorial monuments, as has been demonstrated by Diana Strazdes (see appendix below).[9] Each selection emphasizes national unity as well as strength against evil, although not necessarily the evil of slavery. Behind Lincoln, along the low wall that forms the back of the oval bench that surrounds him, are two brief excerpts, one from his 1860 speech at the Cooper Union in New York and another from his second inaugural address of 1864 (Figure 4). The two bronze balls at the sides of the steps leading up to the statue carry, respectively, the Gettysburg address of 1863 and a shortened version of a letter from Lincoln to Horace Greeley in 1862 (Figure 5). The latter is an especially telling selection, and the only one of the four that refers directly to slavery. In it Lincoln declared his main goal to be the preservation of the union, even if that meant retaining the institution of slavery. At the time it was written, the letter was not intended to imply that Lincoln approved of slavery and in fact coincided with his increasing determination to bring about emancipation. By 1887, however, the choice of such a quote, out of context, indicated that union, rather than emancipation, was the focus of the monument.

Portraying Lincoln as the pensive and controlled figure seen in Saint-Gaudens's statue, no longer as an active warrior or emancipator, seems to have been very welcome, at least to those whose voices could be heard. At the time of the unveiling of the Chicago *Standing Lincoln*, Mariana Griswold Van Rensselaer (1851–1934), a close acquaintance and supporter of Saint-Gaudens, laid the groundwork for a wealth

8. Lorado Taft, *The History of American Sculpture* (New York: MacMillan, 1903), 291. See also Taft's *Modern Tendencies in Sculpture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1921), 106, where he exclaims, "I remember what a surprise that empty chair gave us. It was so daring so strange!"

9. Diana Strazdes, "Recasting History: Word and Image in Augustus Saint-Gaudens's Standing Lincoln Monument," *Word and Image*, 26 (April–June 2010), 128–141.

Figure 4. Detail of Figure 1. Photograph by Jyoti Srivascava. Used by permission.

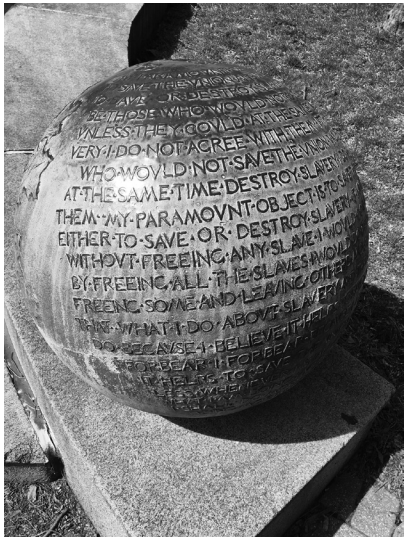

Figure 5. Detail of Figure 1. Photograph by Martha Dunkelman.

of positive responses to follow. In the *Century Magazine*, edited by the influential publisher Richard Watson Gilder (1844–1909), she wrote:

> Lincoln was not one great man but many. He was a thinker whose profound imaginings dealt with the deepest, subtilest [*sic*] public problems and a practical man of affairs . . . a wonderful orator and a wonderful master of prose. . . . This Lincoln . . . stands as a man accustomed to face the people and sway them at his will, while the slightly drooped head and the quiet, yet not passive hands express the meditativeness, the self-control, the conscientiousness of the philosopher [and] the moralist. But it also shows a union of

> perfect repose with strong dramatic significance, and this union is characteristic of classic art when at its best.[10]

Van Rensselaer's word set the tone for most later descriptions of the statue, continuing to this day, which perceive Lincoln as a deep thinker and a man of principle and also as an admired public speaker who could hold the attention of his hearers and influence their thinking. Gilder, a close friend of Saint-Gaudens who later wrote an introduction to Lincoln's works extolling his power of expression, was in perfect sympathy with her description.[11]

Several visual sources have been regularly cited for Saint-Gauden's image of Lincoln. They include Saint-Gaudens's own early memories of seeing the president, first as president-elect passing by in a carriage on the streets of New York and later lying in state. Several photographs of Lincoln were also in circulation.[12] An early version of a life mask of the president made by Leonard Volk in 1860 was discovered while the Chicago commission was underway and made available to the artist through the good offices of Gilder and others. Saint-Gaudens, in fact, used early molds of the original Volk cast to make replicas of Lincoln's face for a group of patrons, so there can be no doubt of his familiarity with it.[13]

Another often repeated origin story for the appearance of the *Standing Lincoln* recounts that the sculptor went to work on the design in New Hampshire, where he was told he could find models with the same body type as the former president.[14] This group of sources

10. M. G. Rensselaer, "Saint-Gaudens' Lincoln," *Century Magazine*, 35 (November 1887): 37–39. It is possible that Saint-Gaudens played a part in the composition of this review, since Richard Watson Gilder, editor of the *Century*, took suggestions from the sculptor for other articles about him. See Thayer Tolles, "Augustus Saint-Gaudens: His Critics, and the New School of American Sculpture, 1875–1893" (Ph.D. dissertation, City University of New York, 2003), 30ff. and 269.

11. Richard Watson Gilder, "Lincoln as a Writer," in John G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., *The Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, 12 vols. (New York: Francis D. Tandy Company, 1905), 1: ix–xxx; Gilder, *Lincoln the Leader, and Lincoln's Genius for Expression* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin,1909).

12. Tolles, "Abraham Lincoln," 225–226.

13. John Hoffman, "'The Animal Himself': Tracing the Volk Lincoln Sculptures Part II: Replicas of Volk's Original Casts," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 42 (Winter 2021), 60, hereafter cited as *JALA*; Kathryn Greenthal, *Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Master Sculptor*. Published in conjunction with the Exhibition held at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 19, 1985–January 26, 1986 (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985), 12ff.

14. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, *Reminiscences*, 2 vols. (New York: The Century Company, 1913), 1: 312.

accounts for many aspects of the statue, including the facial features and the lanky proportions of the figure, but neither Saint-Gaudens' childhood memories or the beardless, inexpressive life cast, or even the shape of a lanky New Hampshire farmer can account for the inward and meditative expression on Lincoln's face or his unusual downward glance. Nor do they explain the choices for the positions of the arms, the tilt of the head, the cautious forward motion, the use of the elaborate chair, or the addition of the inscriptions.

The chair echoes the format of a type of ancient chair designated for use by a person of stature, but is transformed by Saint-Gaudens into a symbol of the power afforded the union of the states. Its proportions are enlarged in relation to the figure, suggesting that it is not actually a chair that the president could have used, but a metaphorical object. On the other hand, from its position directly behind the figure, it is possible to imagine, even if only momentarily, that Lincoln has just arisen from it, on his way to speak to a waiting audience. Many descriptions, in fact, simply assume that he has just stood up. Perhaps the artist was deliberately suggesting multiple meanings. The Chicago chair, with its symbolism of power, is larger than life, yet it also suggests a recent movement and the beginning of action on the part of the president. Leonard Volk's plaster Lincoln of 1877 in the Illinois State Capitol in Springfield, which also shows Lincoln with a chair behind him, provides a telling comparison. The seat in this sculpture is a proportionally sized piece of furniture from which the figure rises to present the Emancipation Proclamation. Saint-Gaudens, unlike Volk, eliminates the proclamation and enlarges and decorates the chair.[15]

In his *Reminiscences*, Saint-Gaudens described studying a plaster cast that inspired his design:

> I was told the other day that [Phillips Brooks] related with much enjoyment a story of a visit he made to the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where he found me absorbed before the cast of a Greek seat in the theater at Athens. He passed me by without my noticing him, and after having been around the Museum he came back and found me in the same place and still as oblivious to his passage as before. I was studying material for the chair that is back of the figure of Lincoln.[16]

15. John Hoffman, "'The Animal Himself': Tracing the Volk Lincoln Sculptures Part I," *JALA*, 41 (Summer 2020), 42–44.

16. Saint-Gaudens, *Reminiscences*, 1:331–332. Phillips Brooks (1835–1893), an American Episcopal clergyman and author, was the rector of Trinity Church in Boston and, for a brief time, the Bishop of Massachusetts.

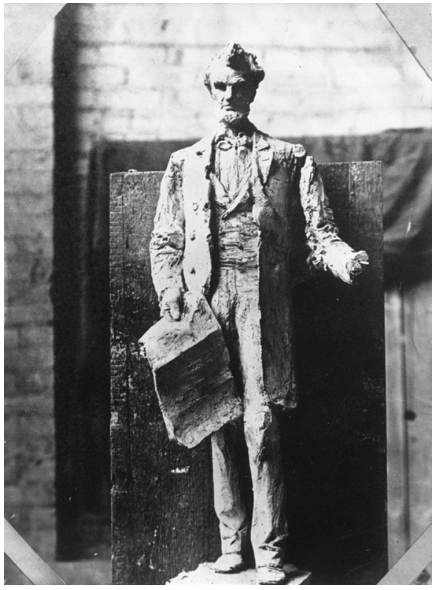

Figure 6. Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Clay sketch for *Abraham Lincoln: The Man* (*Standing Lincoln*), 1885, destroyed. Photograph courtesy of National Park Service, Saint-Gaudens National Historic Site, Cornish, N.H.

This anecdote, in addition to providing a fascinating glimpse of Saint-Gaudens's powers of concentration, also confirms a central point of this article: the importance of plaster reproductions of ancient works for the artist in the design of the *Standing Lincoln* monument. As we will see below, he turned to these objects, much neglected in recent scholarship, when he was working out the appearance of the figure itself.

Surviving bits of evidence indicate that Saint-Gaudens moved through a number of changing ideas for the composition of his statue of Lincoln, ranging from an early mention of a seated figure to a series of now lost clay sketches, preserved only in photographs, that show a standing figure with arms and head in a variety of arrangements (Figure 6).[17] The greatest variation among the sketches is in the positioning of the arms, which sometimes retain the traditional scroll representing the Emancipation Proclamation. The angle of Lincoln's head also changes from one clay model to the next. Significantly, none of these variations match the sculptor's final choice, which came to encompass a particular mood and presents him as a wise leader whose contribution to a unified society was even more important than his emancipation of the slaves.

17. Illustrated in Tolles, "*Abraham Lincoln*," 226, and John H. Dryfhout, *Work*, 159.

The final pose of the *Standing Lincoln* undoubtedly owes something to an interaction that Saint-Gaudens had with Gilder, who, many years later, in a letter to Saint-Gaudens's son, described an encounter with the sculptor while he was working on the commission:

> He sent for me to look at the small model of the first Chicago statue in his studio, and asked me what I thought of it. I said to him, "What do you think of Lincoln?" He replied, "I take him to be a good man, a benevolent, kind man, called upon to take great executive office." "But," I said, "how about a prophet, a poet, a dreamer, called upon to take great executive office." He said, "what else shall I read of his." I loaded him up with more of Lincoln's writings and later he sent for me again. A change had come over the statuette. The only thing I was sure of was that he had thrown the head down a little, giving that contemplative look which is so fine, and so characteristic of Lincoln.[18]

The inner-directed quality of the Chicago *Standing Lincoln* corresponds much more directly to the prophet-poet-dreamer evoked by Gilder than to the designs seen in the earlier models.

The contemplative mood of the figure introduced into the context of the tense and often violent happenings in the country was quickly appreciated. Jane Addams, for example, found solace in the figure:

> I recall a time of great perplexity in the summer of 1894, when Chicago was filled with federal troops sent there by the President of the United States, and their presence was resented by the governor of the state, that I walked the wearisome way from Hull-House to Lincoln Park . . . in order to look at and gain magnanimous counsel, if I might, from the marvelous St. Gaudens statue which had been but recently placed at the entrance of the park. Some of Lincoln's immortal words were cut into the stone at his feet, and never did a distracted town more sorely need the healing of "with charity towards all" than did Chicago at that moment, and the tolerance of the man who had won charity for those on both sides of "an irrepressible conflict."[19]

In addition to the sources mentioned above that contribute to the realism of Lincoln's face and figure and to the chair and inscriptions that present him as the savior of the Union, there is another tradition

18. Richard Watson Gilder to Homer Saint-Gaudens, March 25, 1909, in Gilder, *The Letters of Richard Watson Gilder* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 149–150.

19. Jane Addams, *Twenty Years at Hull House*, (London: Macmillan, 1916), 32.

woven through the monument that would have reverberated in the late nineteenth century much more strongly than today and deserves recognition. Both the pose of the *Standing Lincoln* and the inclusion of multiple quotations from his speeches indicate an awareness of Lincoln's role as an orator. His skill at moving his listeners was an accepted fact in the 1880s and for some decades after.[20] It is an important factor in the review of the monument by Van Rensselaer quoted above, as well as in Gilder's estimation of Lincoln's speeches and other writings.[21] In 1909, William Jennings Bryan, in a eulogy for Lincoln on the centennial of his birth, called him an outstanding American orator.[22]

Oratory and rhetoric were serious and wide-spread subjects of study in the late nineteenth century, as they had been for centuries, to a degree that may be hard to realize now. References to ancient orators and their speeches would have been widely recognizable. In schools, students read the speeches of ancient thinkers, particularly Cicero (106–43 BCE) and Demosthenes (ca. 384–322 BCE) and were expected to recite passages from memory. Quintilian's (ca. 35–100 CE) *Institutio Oratorio* was a standard reference work of which several English translations were available. It emphasizes strongly that an orator must be a moral man, setting up an equivalence between good oratory and goodness of soul.[23] Quintilian's recommendations are notable for including, along with instructions about reading, writing, and moral character, descriptions of appropriate demeanor for speakers, including dress, facial expression, and gesture.[24] Lincoln's power as an orator would have been perceived as part of his moral nature.

20. James Percoco, *Summers with Lincoln: Looking for the Man in the Monuments* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 99, says the myth that Lincoln was a great orator was entrenched by the time of the Chicago monument. Other analysts have debated Lincoln's qualities as a speaker, although there is general agreement that he was able to move an audience, whether by traditional methods or not. See Gary Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words That Remade America* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992); Thomas J. Brown, *Civil War Monuments and the Militarization of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992); Strazdes, "Recasting," 139.

21. Gilder, "Lincoln as a Writer," ix–xxx.

22. Robert L. Kincaid, "Abraham Lincoln: The Speaker," *Southern Speech Journal*, 16 (May 1951): 241.

23. The most commonly used edition was Quintilian, *Institutes of Oratory; or, Education of an Orator*, ed. J. S. Watson (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1856).

24. His recommendations can become quite specific, as in: "The following gesture is admirably adapted to accompany modest language: the thumb and the next three fingers are gently converged to a point and the hand is carried to the neighbourhood of the mouth or chest, then relaxed palm downwards and slightly advanced. It was with this gesture that I believe Demosthenes to have commenced the timid and subdued exordium of his speech in defence of Ctesiphon, and it was, I think, in such a position

The power of oratory was demonstrated by admired speakers of Lincoln's and Saint-Gaudens's time, such as Edward Everett or Daniel Webster, and was understood to have originated in the tradition of classical oratory. Orators were compared to Greek and Roman figures for their appearance and movements, in keeping with the admonishments of Quintilian and others. Admired poses and gestures were pointed out in works of art from the classical period. E.L. Magoon, in an 1849 essay entitled, "Living Orators of America," for example, compared the manner of Edward Everett to the grace of the *Apollo Belvedere*.[25] Thomas Ball's posthumous statue of Daniel Webster, dedicated in 1876 in New York's Central Park, stands in a recognizably classical pose. Busts and statues of Demosthenes, Cicero, and others were popular acquisitions among tourists to Italy.

Saint-Gaudens, in designing the monument, would have been familiar with the tradition of emulating ancient orators and the respect that was accorded them. In 1873, in fact, William M. Evarts (1818–1901), a senator from New York who was later to participate in giving Saint-Gaudens the commission for the *Standing Lincoln*,[26] had commissioned the young sculptor to make copies of busts of Cicero and Demosthenes, so he would have known images of these famous speakers well.[27]

Beginning in the 1870s and reaching a peak in the 1880s and 1890s, images of ancient orators became widely accessible to the American audience at the new public museums that were accumulating plaster copies of famous works. Many museums were founded during the 1870s, with a goal of teaching the young country about the most admired works of the past, especially those of the classical and Renaissance periods. Since original works from antiquity were rarely available, institutions bought affordable plaster replicas, made from

that Cicero held his hand, when he said, 'If I have any talent, though I am conscious how little it is.'" This translation taken from Harold E. Butler, *Quintilian's Institutio Oratoria*, 4 vols. (New York: Putnam's Sons, 1922), 4: 295.

25. E. L. Magoon, *Living Orators of America* (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1849), 103.

26. Brown, *Civil War Monuments*, 142. There is surprisingly little research on the role that classical statues, particularly of orators, played in the design of monuments to American heroes and statesmen in the late nineteenth century. In 1974, John Stevens Crawford, "The Classical Orator in Nineteenth Century American Sculpture," *American Art Journal*, (November 1974): 56–72, proposed a range of connections to ancient statues of orators, emphasizing the role of the formulas outlined by Quintilian, but his research remains unfollowed.

27. Thayer Tolles, "Augustus Saint-Gaudens in the Metropolitan Museum of Art," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin*, New Series, 66 (Spring 2009): 9. Louise Hall Tharp, *Saint-Gaudens and the Gilded Era* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969), 61, seems to say that Elihu Root also ordered busts of Cicero and Demosthenes.

molds taken from famous works and sold by suppliers in Europe and the United States. These reproductions fell out of favor in the early twentieth century, but have been receiving increased scholarly attention in recent decades.[28] Catalogs of the extensive cast collections of the Metropolitan Museum and the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, among others, list casts of statues and portraits of Demosthenes and other orators. The Boston Athenaeum had acquired some replicas even earlier, including a statue of Demosthenes that was purchased in 1858.[29] Throughout his career Saint-Gaudens is known to have studied plaster casts of ancient works and to have owned such casts himself.[30] So, as he debated between possible poses, and as he read the speeches by Lincoln that Gilder recommended, Saint-Gaudens was also increasingly able to see reproductions of famous classical speakers.[31]

Saint-Gaudens certainly drew directly upon one such cast of an ancient orator for his final pose of the *Standing Lincoln*. The figure of Lincoln himself replicates, in reverse, the pose of a famous statue known then as *Aeschines* (ca. 389–314 BCE), an orator famed for his direct and simple delivery (Figure 7).[32] Like Lincoln, *Aeschines* stands

28. The literature on plaster casts has become extensive. For a review of cast making going back to classical times, see Martha Dunkelman, "Export/Import: Italian Plaster Casts Come to the United States," in D. Budd and L. Catterson, (eds.), *Italy for Sale: Alternative Objects—Alternative Markets* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2023), 13–16, as well as S. L. Dyson, "Cast Collecting in the United States," in R. Fredericksen and E. Marchand, (eds.), *Plaster Casts: Making, Collecting and Displaying from Classical Antiquity to the Present* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 557–575, and B. Fahlman, "A Plaster of Paris Antiquity: Nineteenth-Century Cast Collections," *Southeastern College Art Conference Review*, 12, no. 1 (1991): 1–9.

29. https://bostonathenaeum.org/explore-learn/special-collections/paintings-sculpture-online/demosthenes/. Accessed September 22, 2023.

30. A large body of evidence, written and visual, establishes Saint-Gaudens's use of plaster casts in designing his works of art. See Martha Dunkelman, "Augustus Saint-Gaudens, Donatello, and America's Self-Image," *Sculpture Journal*, 31, no. 4 (2022): 484–488.

31. Saint-Gaudens was well aware of both Boston collections and also a devotee of plaster casts, of which he owned a large number, some of them still visible today at his estate in Cornish, New Hampshire. In the 1880s, he was a member of the Special Committee to Enlarge the Collection of Casts at the Metropolitan. The Metropolitan lists a statue of Demosthenes in its earliest cast catalog: *Sculptural Plaster-casts Reproduced by the Metropolitan Museum of Art from its Own Collections, Exhibited in Halls 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum, 1890), 135; it can be assumed that it had been purchased at least several years earlier. The Boston Museum of Fine Arts, where Saint-Gaudens became absorbed by the cast of a Greek throne, lists a *Demosthenes* and an *Aischines* in their *Catalogue of Casts* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1896), 243.

32. Strazdes, "Recasting History," 135, is the only other writer to have noticed this exact relationship, to my knowledge; Brown, *Civil War Monuments*, 147, notes that "His left hand touched the lapel of his coat, an updated reversal of an ancient pose," but does not mention orators. Francis Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), 153, identify the ancient figure as a statue

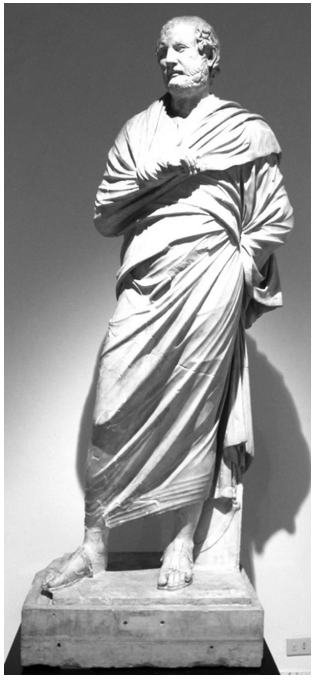

Figure 7. *Aeschines*, Roman copy of Greek original. Marble. Museo Nazionale, Naples. Wikimedia Commons.

with one foot extended forward, one hand holding onto his clothing and, in a rare gesture, one hand hidden behind his back.[33] Neither *Lincoln* nor *Aeschines* makes any outward gesture towards the viewer or an imagined audience. Aeschines was known have spoken using a common and understandable style, and said—in a text that Saint-Gaudens and his literary friends might easily have known—that in the time of Pericles (495–429 BCE) "to speak with the arm outside the cloak, as we all do nowadays as a matter of course, was regarded then as an ill-mannered thing, and they carefully refrained from doing it."[34] Aeschines's suggestion that a speaker keep his hand in his clothing to prevent an excess of physical gesture parallels the advice of the widely

of the general Aristides, but it was known as *Aeschines* in Saint-Gaudens' time, and is often still labeled *Aeschines*.

33. A well-known figure of Sophocles also puts his hand behind his back. Saint-Gaudens might have seen the cast still at the Boston Athenaeum (https://www.bostonathenaeum.org/paintings-sculpture-online-search?search_api_views_fulltext=Sophocles&op.x=0&op.y=0). Lincoln himself uses the gesture in some photographs, such as the one by Mathew Brady in Tolles, "*Abraham Lincoln*," 226. Eric Gibson, "Augustus Saint-Gaudens and the American Monument," *New Criterion*, 28 (October 2009), 46, compares the gesture to that of Verrocchio's *St. Thomas*.

34. C. D. Adams, *The Speeches of Aeschines* (London: William Heinemann, 1919), 23.

read Quintilian that gestures should not be over dramatic. A proper appearance was understood to be a reflection of proper behavior in a regulated society, something undoubtedly longed for by those living in the tumultuous 1880s. All of these features would have encouraged Saint-Gaudens to perceive the image of *Aeschines* as appropriate for his *Lincoln*. The ancient statue, known to the sculptor through a plaster cast, was much more important than has been recognized in serving as a precedent for the pose and dignified demeanor of the figure of Lincoln, and in cementing his oratorical prowess and his moral leadership. Many observers, including those who commissioned the monument, would have recognized the reference and its meaning, perhaps from their travels and most importantly, from plaster casts.

The tilted head of Lincoln recalls still another well-known statue of an ancient orator, *Demosthenes*, whose features and pose Saint-Gaudens would have studied when he made a copy of its head in the Vatican for Evarts and which he would have seen again in plaster casts in American collections (Figure 8).[35] A recent observer has described the "unprecedented pathos" of *Demosthenes*'s facial expression as "a signal for burning political commitment. . . . This is not the expression of a man in mourning. The contracted brows reflect the struggle to find the mot juste."[36] The same words could easily apply to the *Standing Lincoln*.[37]

Saint-Gaudens's image of Lincoln, in calling up the recognizable figure of *Aeschines*, in imitating *Demosthenes*'s angled glance, in using an ancient throne, and in giving emphasis to certain selections from Lincoln's speeches, ascribed to Lincoln both great oratorical powers and moral strength. Maria van Rensselaer's words ring true even now, in observing a "union of perfect repose with strong dramatic significance, and this union is characteristic of classic art when at its best."[38] Even those who did not know the exact sources for Lincoln's pose could (and can) understand the message of dignity, self-control, and concern that he presents. Many viewers in Saint-Gaudens's time, furthermore, would have understood that their hero, pausing for a

35. See note 19.

36. Paul Zanker, *The Mask of Socrates: the Image of the Intellectual in Antiquity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 48.

37. Dryfhout, *Work*, 158, attributes to Saint-Gaudens a statement describing the artist seeing Lincoln with his head "bent." This quote is an inexact variant on Saint-Gaudens's description of a memory of Lincoln found in Saint-Gaudens, *Reminiscences*, 1: 42. I have been unable to locate Dryfhout's version anywhere, and I suspect he may have made an error in transcribing the quote.

38. See note 10.

Figure 8. *Demosthenes*, ca. 1845. Plaster. Boston Athenaeum, Boston, Mass.

moment in contemplation, was about to speak with an authority equivalent to that of the ancients.

This calm, contemplative, unruffled, thoughtful Lincoln, surrounded by symbols of leadership and quotations referring to heroism and righteousness, was dropped into the midst of the turmoil of Chicago and the wider United States in the 1880s. To its wealthy patrons it may have represented the dignity and greatness of a former president and reverberated with their yearning for another such leader. To a wider audience, it offered someone with solutions to the upheavals of their time. Of the various features that went into the creation of this iconic image, Saint-Gaudens' knowledge of ancient sculpture, acquired in large part through plaster casts, and his admiration for Lincoln as an orator, are indispensable contributions.

Appendix

Inscriptions on the Standing Lincoln Monument

Excerpt from Cooper Union Address, February 27, 1860:
Let us have faith that might makes right, and in that faith let us to the end dare to do our duty as we understand it.

Excerpt from Second Inaugural Address, March 4, 1865:
With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on.

Excerpt from letter to Horace Greeley, August 22, 1862:
If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time save slavery, I do not agree with them. If there be those who would not save the Union unless they could at the same time destroy slavery, I do not agree with them. My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and is not either to save or to destroy slavery. If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it; and if I could save it by freeing some and leaving others alone, I would also do that. What I do about slavery and the colored race, I do because I believe it helps to save the Union; and what I forbear I forbear, because I do not believe it would help to save the Union.

Gettysburg Address, November 19, 1863:
Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this. But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate—we cannot consecrate—we cannot hallow—this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.