Party of Patriarchy: Democratic Gender Politics and the Coming of the Civil War

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Introduction

In the summer of 1856, Democrat Louis Maurer issued a cartoon of Republican presidential candidate John C. Frémont. Frémont appears surrounded by his supporters, who inform him of their wishes in case he is elected in November. First comes a free black man, wearing an outrageous cravat. He says, "De poppylation ob color comes in first; arter dat, you may do wot you pleases." Two places behind him stands an unattractive old woman—"the sourest, leanest, most cadaverous, long-nosed, long-chinned. . . old maid," as one Democratic paper described her. Addressing Frémont, she offers, "I wish to invite you to the next meeting of our Free-Love Association, where the shackles of matrimony are not tolerated, and perfect freedom exists in love matters, and you will be sure to enjoy yourself, for we are all Freemounters." Behind the free love advocate stands a woman wearing bloomers, boots, and spurs, with a cigar in her mouth and a whip in her hand. She demands "the recognition of woman as the equal of man, with a right to vote and hold office." To these radical figures—a free black man, a free love advocate, and a woman's rights activist—Frémont promises, "You shall have all that you desire. . .if I get into the Presidential chair." The cartoon perfectly illustrated the Democratic Party's strategy in the election of 1856: to associate the fledgling Republican Party with the conjoined evils of abolition, woman's rights, free love, and race mixing.[1]

In the presidential election of 1860, Democrats again deployed gendered rhetoric against the Republican nominee, Abraham Lincoln. The same Democratic cartoonist portrayed Lincoln astride a rail borne by *New York Tribune* editor Horace Greeley. Lincoln's followers—the same set of radicals who appeared in the Frémont cartoon—line up behind him to march into an insane asylum. A free love activist sighs, "Oh! What a beautiful man he is, I feel a 'passional attraction' every time I

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[1] Louis Maurer, *The Great Republican Reform Party, Calling on Their Candidate*, 1856, 1856, http://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003656588/; "The Great Republican Reform Party Calling on Their Candidate," *Daily American Organ*, August 19, 1856, 1.

see his lovely face." A free black man in another ostentatious white cravat declares, "'De white man hab no rights dat cullud pussons am bound to spect' I want dat understood." And a thin, old, hook-nosed woman demands, "I want woman[']s rights enforced, and man reduced in subjection to her authority."[2]

But this election differed dramatically from the last. Northern and southern Democrats had nominated different candidates—Stephen A. Douglas and John C. Breckinridge—who used gendered arguments not only against Lincoln, but against each other, as well. Southern Democrats argued that gender radicalism had poisoned the entire North—Democrats and Republicans alike. A typical article from a southern newspaper during this election warned that a "white slavery. . .dominates in the North. . .a slavery which ostracizes and expels from the community the man who does not think with the majority—who will not submit to be led by demagogues and masculine women."[3] Another southern pamphlet warned that if Lincoln were elected, southerners stood to lose "the domestic altar; patriarchal and conservative institutions; the family circle around the hearthstone; and mothers who. . .devote themselves to their children in principle, as their chiefest jewels."[4]

The gender tactics that had bolstered Democratic unity in 1856 intensified the sectional schism over slavery by 1860. In 1856, Democrats had united around the principle of popular sovereignty, which northern and southern Democrats believed would resolve the debate over whether to expand slavery into newly-acquired western territories. And in 1857, initial—fraudulent—elections raised southerners' hopes that slavery would be established in the Kansas Territory. Northern Democrats insisted on a fair vote, and, finally given the chance to do so,

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[2] Louis Maurer, "The Republican Party Going to the Right House," 1860, http://elections.harpweek.com/1860/cartoon-1860-large.asp?UniqueID=5.
[3] "Northern Slavery," *Daily Delta*, April 18, 1860, 4.
[4] John Tyler, "The Secession of the South," *DeBow's Review*, April 1860, 390, Virginia Historical Society.

Kansans rejected slavery. Southern Democrats felt betrayed: the believed northern Democrats had snatched a slave state away from them. John Brown's raid only confirmed their doubts about their northern counterparts: not only did Democrats refuse to protect slavery in Kansas, they also could not protect slavery in Virginia. By the election of 1860, southern Democrats had come to see northern Democrats as unreliable allies. Southerners insisted on a southern nominee and a proslavery platform, a gambit that split the party in two, precipitating Lincoln's election and southern secession. The gendered language and tactics that Democrats had deployed to their advantage in 1856 exacerbated the party's divisions at every turn.

Between the election of 1856 and the secession winter of 1860-61, Democrats deployed gender in four primary ways. One, Democrats cast their political opponents—first Republicans, and then Democrats from the other section—as radical or associated with gender radicals. Second, they analogized slavery to marriage to make arguments about the government's role in regulating domestic institutions. Third, as the ties between northern and southern Democrats frayed, men on both sides denounced compromise as emasculating. And fourth, southerners justified their demands for increased protections for slavery by maintaining those measures were necessary to defend southern women, children, families, and homes from northern influence and slave insurrections.

This dissertation does not claim that these gender tactics alone caused the Civil War or the collapse of the Democratic Party. But such tactics did exaggerate and intensify the divisions within the Democratic Party. When Democrats were united, the tactics drew the party closer together. When the Democrats divided over slavery, gender tactics drove them further apart. Gender tactics turned slavery in the territories, which had previously been for Democrats a political and economic issue, into an intractable cultural issue. So doing raised the stakes of compromise for partisans from the North and South alike.

This argument relies on and contributes to the literature in four distinct fields of inquiry. The

first is the longstanding debate over the origins of the Civil War. In the 1920s, Charles A. and Mary R. Beard argued that the economies of the industrial North and the agrarian South were incompatible, rendering war between the two sections unavoidable. In the 1930s and 1940s, other scholars countered that agitators—abolitionists in the North, and fire-eating secessionists in the South—whipped up popular sentiment, resulting in a "needless" war between the two sections.[5]

Later scholars took up this debate, dividing into two camps: "fundamentalists" and "revisionists." Building on the pioneering work of W. E. B. Du Bois, fundamentalists such as James M. McPherson and Eric Foner contended that slavery was the root cause of the Civil War: it created two fundamentally different and ultimately antagonistic societies. These historians argue that the North's free labor economy created a more open and mobile society whose members then naturally came to support the antislavery Republican Party. The South's slave labor economy, on the other hand, created a more stratified society whose white members insisted on protection for the "peculiar institution" and all the privileges it secured for them.[6]

Contemporary revisionists such as David M. Potter, Michael Holt, and William Freehling do not deny that slavery played a critical role in the outbreak of the Civil War. But they insist that historians must also look at other factors, such as the breakdown of a cross-sectional party system, and they argue that the rise of a major antislavery political party was not inevitable. They also confound the idea of a fundamental antagonism between the two sections by pointing out both the commonalities between northerners and southerners and the divisions among northerners and

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[5] Charles Beard and Mary Beard, *The Rise of American Civilization* (New York: Macmillan, 1927); for the most influential examples of the argument that the Civil War was needless and avoidable, see Avery O. Craven, *The Repressible Conflict* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1939); James G. Randall, "The Blundering Generation," *Mississippi Historical Review* 27 (June 1940): 3–28.

[6] W.E.B. DuBois, *Black Reconstruction: An Essay toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860-1880* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1935); James M. McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988); Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970).

among southerners.[7]

This dissertation contributes to a recent literature that has broken free from the debate between the fundamentalists and revisionists. Historians such as Edward Ayers and Elizabeth Varon have acknowledged that the presence of slavery in the South and its absence in the North created two profoundly different economies and societies. But the nation had existed, to paraphrase Abraham Lincoln, part slave and part free since its founding, and yet Americans did not go to war over slavery until 1861. These historians have thus sought to understand what factors made slavery so dangerously divisive in the mid-nineteenth century. This dissertation argues that Democrats' use of gendered political tactics was one of those contingencies. In 1856, Democrats decried Republicans as radicals who demanded freedom for women and slaves at the expense of social stability and Union. But over the next four years, southern Democrats increasingly adopted those arguments for use against northern party members. Northern Democrats, meanwhile, came to see their southern counterparts as overbearing patriarchs who, if left unchecked, would exercise the same control over the national party that they did over their slaves. The increasing recriminations discouraged compromise and diminished trust between northern and southern Democrats.[8]

Second, this dissertation contributes to the literature on the Democratic Party. In the 1850s, more than half of Americans were Democrats—yet scholars have most often portrayed the Democratic Party as the backwards foil to the ascendant Republicans. Historians have conducted serious studies of the Republican Party: Eric Foner outlined the party's founding principles, and Michael Pierson described the party's gender culture, showing readers that it formed an important

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[7] David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); Michael F. Holt, *The Political Crisis of the 1850s* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978); William W. Freehling, *Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[8] Ayers calls on historians to focus "on the connection between structure and event, on the relationships between the long-existing problem of slavery and the immediate world of politics" in the two or three decades before 1861. See Edward L. Ayers, *What Caused the Civil War?: Reflections on the South and Southern History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2005), 138; Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

part of Republicans' party identity and antislavery politics.[9]

No similarly complete study exists for the Democratic Party. As the title indicates, Jean Baker's wonderful *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* attends only to northern party members; published in the early 1980s, it also does not take into account gender issues. In the past decade, works by Yonatan Eyal, Adam I. P. Smith, Graham Peck, and Mark Neely study the Democratic Party in the context of northern politics and culture more broadly. Southern Democrats are less studied. And there remains no book-length study of the national Democratic Party—of northern and southern Democrats combined. This gap is ironic, given that, by the mid-1850s, the Democratic Party stood as one of the country's last surviving national institutions. A 2015 dissertation by Joshua P. Lynn examines the whole party and even suggests that patriarchy composed an important part of the Democratic Party's identity. But Lynn's work emphasizes the Democratic Party's unity, missing an opportunity to explain the party's schism in 1860 and the coming of the Civil War.[10]

This dissertation expands on this previous work on the Democratic Party. It eschews teleological approaches that, anticipating the party's collapse, examine only northern or southern Democrats. In 1856 and 1857, Democrats formed a distinct position on gender issues that appealed to men who wanted to preserve the Union and retain control over their families. Later, southern Democrats developed an equally distinct position on gender issues to insist on increasing protections for slavery. Support for white patriarchy thus strengthened the Democrats' political

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[9] Foner, *Free Soil*; Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

[10] Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983); Yonatan Eyal, *The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Adam I. P. Smith, *The Stormy Present: Conservatism and the Problem of Slavery in Northern Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017); Graham A. Peck, *Making an Antislavery Nation: Lincoln, Douglas, and the Battle over Freedom* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017); Mark E. Neely, Jr., *Lincoln and the Democrats: The Politics of Opposition in the Civil War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2017); Joshua P. Lynn, "Preserving the White Man's Republic: The Democratic Party and the Transformation of American Conservatism, 1847-1860," n.d., Ph.D. Dissertation, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, 2015.

position in 1856—at the cost of deepening the party's divisions by 1860.

Third, this work expands on the literature on women, gender and antebellum politics. Scholars have long recognized women's role in antebellum reform movements. In the late 1970s, historians such as Nancy Cott began to examine the nature and emergence of a cult of domesticity in the antebellum era. Increasingly, Americans—especially middle-class northerners in urban areas—began to articulate the notion that men and women were fundamentally different, and therefore should inhabit different spheres: men should be out in the world, and women should remain within the home. Historians including Ann Douglas and Ellen DuBois investigated how women flipped this paradigm, harnessing it to justify their presence in the public sphere or their demands for equal rights. These works typically examined women's role in benevolent reform movements. In the 1990s, scholars demonstrated that women became involved in partisan politics even before they had the vote. Elizabeth Varon exposed white women's contributions to Whig Party politics in antebellum Virginia, and Rebecca Edwards argued that gender was central to partisan identities after the Civil War.[11]

More recently, historians have expanded the scope of their research from women's political history to gender and politics more broadly. Without abandoning earlier historians' interest in women and politics, these scholars have investigated how ideas about masculinity and femininity affected men and women's partisanship, beliefs, and political choices. Amy Greenberg, for instance, explained the inexorable march of Manifest Destiny by demonstrating that two distinct understandings of masculinity encouraged men to support that movement in various ways. In the

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[11] Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Ann Douglas, *The Feminization of American Culture* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977); Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women's Movement in America, 1848–1869* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1979); Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery: Gender in Party Politics from the Civil War to the Progressive Era* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

realm of partisan politics, Michael Pierson has examined how antislavery political parties defined themselves in terms of their views on gender issues, and how women contributed to the cause of political antislavery. He argues that those parties "articulated cogent, diverse stands on gender roles and family practices, and that many people who assumed a partisan identity did so in part because they understood the party's gender culture and imagined themselves with that worldview." These approaches have borne fruit, helping us understand events as consequential as westward expansion as well as the rise of a major antislavery political party. This dissertation takes a similar tack, deploying gender analysis to understand why, in 1860, the Democratic Party split over slavery and how, by 1861, northerners and southerners could no longer compromise over slavery.[12]

In so doing, this work owes a great debt to gender theorists. In 1986, Joan Wallach Scott famously called on historians to examine "gender as an analytic category"; soon after, Judith Butler declared that gender was a performance—its "'naturalness' constituted through discursively constrained performative acts." This dissertation takes up Scott's call to analyze how gender creates and reinforces power relationships. Democrats both invoked and reified their particular, conservative definitions of masculinity and femininity through their political speeches, their partisan newspapers, their out-of-doors politics, and their private letters. R. W. Connell has pushed beyond seeing even gender's construction as a process that occurs in a masculine-feminine binary, arguing that men define their masculinity in relation to other men. Readers will see the influence of this theory on my work: much of this dissertation examines how Democrats and Republicans, and later northern and southern Democrats, competed to define themselves as model patriarchs in contrast with opponents who, for one reason or another, were not so ideally suited to leadership.[13]

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[12] Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood and the Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 3.

[13] Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 31; Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990), x; R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley: University of California, 2005).

This dissertation elaborates on this argument over the course of five chapters. The first deals with the election of 1856. During that campaign, Democrats used gender in three distinct ways to paint the Republican Party as illegitimate and sectionalist: they criticized Republican John Frémont's appearance and his wife Jessie's independence. Second, they associated the Republican Party with the women's rights and free love movements. Third, they argued that abolitionism was at once the source of all Republican gender radicalism and its most terrifying manifestation. These tactics defined Republicans as the party of woman's rights, free love, abolitionism, and disunion, and the Democrats as the party of patriarchy, conservatism, and Union, and contributed to the election of Democrat James Buchanan.

The second chapter reveals that Republicans and Democrats used gender tactics in attempt to gain the upper hand in the debates over popular sovereignty in Kansas and Utah. In 1856, Republicans claimed that popular sovereignty had created chaos and social immorality in Kansas, with its "domestic institution" of slavery, as well as in Utah, with its "domestic institution" of polygamy. Northern and southern Democrats alike squirmed as Republicans demanded to know whether the Democratic doctrine of popular sovereignty meant that Democrats supported Mormon polygamy. But in 1857, northern Democrats fought against the ratification of Kansas' fraudulent Lecompton Constitution by reaching for the same weapon Republicans had used: analogizing slavery and marriage. If southerners would not hinder a man's right to make laws regarding marriage, why did they now reject Kansans' right to make laws regarding slavery? The whole Kansas controversy revealed that gendered language could not resolve the Democrats' profound internal disagreements over the purpose and practice of popular sovereignty.

The third chapter examines how Democrats responded to John Brown's raid. Northern Democrats blamed Brown's actions on Republican radicalism, linking Brown's outspoken supporters, such as women's rights activist and abolitionist Lydia Maria Child, to the Republican

Party as a whole. But southern Democrats blamed northerners in general, and they decried the raid as an attack against southern homes, women, and children.

The fourth chapter analyzes the rupture of the Democratic Party in 1860. In that year's election, northern and southern Democrats nominated and ran separate candidates, splitting the vote and ultimately handing the election to Republican Abraham Lincoln. Democrats expressed alienation from each other in highly gendered political language. That language, emphasizing the social and cultural incompatibility of North and South, made Democrats' disagreements seem more profound and compromise seem dangerous.

The last chapter contends with the secession winter of 1860-61. For four years, Democrats had caricatured Republicans as social radicals who wanted to impose a program of woman's rights, free love, and abolition on the South. After Lincoln won the election, northern Democrats frantically tried to walk back this rhetoric, but it was no use: southern Democrats had come to believe their slave society was profoundly different from, superior to, and under threat by northern free society. Conservative southern women such as Mary Schoolcraft bolstered this claim by publishing domestic fiction and anti-Tom novels, which portrayed southern slavery as benign and southern patriarchy as benevolent. By combining a gendered appeal with a political one, southern secessionists pushed wavering southern moderates toward war.

Through the winter and spring of 1860-61, northern Democrats sought a peaceful resolution to the secession crisis—trying, as ever, to inhabit a middle ground between northern Republicans and southern Democrats that had, by then, almost completely disappeared. But after the attack on Fort Sumter, northern Democrats rallied to support the war effort. By the night of April 25, 1861, when Stephen Douglas addressed the Illinois State Legislature, he was ready to proclaim, "I believe in my conscience that it is a duty we owe ourselves, and our children, and our God, to protect this

government and that flag from every assailant, be he who he may."[14] Goaded on by gender hyperbole, the Democratic Party and the Union had split in two, and only war could save both.

[14] Quoted in Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 268–69.

Chapter One: Election of 1856

On June 17, 1856, members of a new political party gathered at the Musical Fund Hall in Philadelphia to nominate a candidate to run for President of the United States. These Republicans, as they had decided to call themselves, chose celebrated explorer John C. Frémont as their standard-bearer. According to Horace Greeley's *New-York Daily Tribune*, "the ratification meeting of the Republican ticket. . .was a complete success." Led by Frémont, "a young man of energy and action, of tried courage, and of a nice heroic sense of honor," the new party set out to introduce itself to voters as the defender of "free speech, free press, free soil, [and] free men"—the party for freeholding farmers and other northern businessmen.[1]

Democrats, however, painted their new competition in a different light. Coopting the Republicans' slogan, Democrats ridiculed Republicans as the party of "free niggers, free women, free land, free love, and Fremont," as the *Richmond Enquirer* crassly put it.[2] Contrasting the Republicans' sectional, northern base with their own national base, Democrats cast the election as a battle between the forces of disunion and the forces of Union. In part, these accusations typify the hyperbolic language of nineteenth-century political campaigns. But gendered accusations—that Republicans supported woman's rights and free love, in addition to abolitionism—had never before been deployed as tirelessly and as effectively in a national campaign as Democrats used them in 1856.

The Kansas-Nebraska Act and the Birth of the Republican Party

By 1854, Senator Stephen A. Douglas of Illinois had spent ten of his eleven years in Congress pushing for the construction of a transcontinental railroad. As a leading light of the Young

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[1] "From Philadelphia," *New York Tribune*, June 21, 1856, 5; "Rallying Song," *New York Herald*, June 26, 1856, 1.
[2] "What Abolition Has Effected," *Richmond Enquirer*, October 24, 1856, 1.

America movement, which sought to modernize the nation's politics and economy, Douglas was particularly well-suited to champion the cause of the railroad. And with his political and financial future invested in Chicago, Douglas stood to benefit if the city were chosen as the eastern terminus of the line. Douglas was certainly not alone in his pursuit of the railroad. Politicians from states all along the Mississippi Valley had spent the previous decade jockeying to have the line begin in their cities, hoping to secure their own political prospects and a share of the inevitable profits.[3]

But after ten years of debate, Congress had still not settled on a plan for the railroad. Northerners blocked a southern route, complaining that federal money should not subsidize the construction of a railroad within the limits of a state. (The railroad could not run west from Vicksburg, Memphis, or New Orleans without running through Texas.) Southerners blocked a northern route for an entirely different reason. The lands west of Iowa and Missouri lay above the Missouri Compromise's 36º 30' line. Any states carved out of those lands would be free states, which would reduce the southern slave states' relative power in Congress.

In 1854, Douglas brokered a compromise that brought southerners on board with the northern route. Congress would organize the northern lands as the Kansas and Nebraska territories, with the understanding that the railroad would likely extend west from Chicago through Kansas toward the Pacific. But Douglas would apply the principle of popular sovereignty as a new basis for settlement, leaving settlers, in the language of the bill, "perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way."[4] Many Americans had long regarded the Missouri Compromise as permanent—a position that Douglas himself had taken in 1849.[5] But the Kansas-

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[3] Louisiana's Judah P. Benjamin was deeply involved in the Tehuantepec Railroad Company; Missouri's Thomas Hart Benton declared his willingness to be the Peter the Hermit of the railroad crusade--making St. Louis the Holy City. See David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 148–49.

[4] "An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas," in *Public Acts of the Thirthy-Third Congress of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, n.d.), 277–90, https://memory.loc.gov/ll/llsl/010/0300/03050283.tif.

[5] In 1849, Douglas said that the Missouri Compromise was "canonized in the hearts of the American people as a sacred thing which no ruthless hand would ever be reckless enough to disturb." Quoted in Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 156, n23.

Nebraska Act repealed the 1820 act, replacing it with the principle of popular sovereignty.

Northern and southern Democrats thus united to support the Kansas-Nebraska Act, but they did so for different reasons. Southern Democrats felt that they only stood to gain from the situation. At worst, voters could reject slavery in the Kansas and Nebraska territories, making those territories free, as they would have been under the Missouri Compromise, anyway. But if voters instituted slavery, then southern Democrats would have carved slave states out of land previously slated to be free.

Meanwhile, most northern Democrats accepted the Kansas-Nebraska Act as a solution to the greater problem of westward expansion, and the subsidiary issues of the railroad and slavery. Adherents of Manifest Destiny, these Democrats believed westward expansion would increase America's power and influence. The railroad would support westward expansion, by moving people, connecting markets, and growing the economy. But recently, moving people west had been the easier part of expansion: debates over slavery had stalled the admission of territories won from Mexico in the 1840s. Democrats reasoned that the process might be smoother if they devolved the power to decide the slavery question from the national government to the settlers in the territories, thus also putting an end to contentious national debates over slavery. Moreover, Douglas truly believed that popular sovereignty was irreproachably democratic. The Missouri Compromise had abrogated the rights of citizens—of white men—to govern themselves in all matters, Douglas reasoned. The Kansas-Nebraska Act would restore those rights. Many of Douglas' colleagues agreed. Congressman Hendrick B. Wright of Pennsylvania defended the act as continuing the Revolutionary era's battle against centralized authority. "Congress had no right to encroach on the power of the States and popular sovereignty," he claimed.[6]

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[6] Quoted in Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 253. Recently, historians have debated why Douglas and the northern Democrats battled so tenaciously to support popular sovereignty. Adam I. P. Smith argues that northern Democrats believed that popular

But some northern congressmen—including northern Whigs—were incensed by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise. Originally formed in the 1820s to oppose Andrew Jackson and his Democrats, the Whig Party supported a centralized banking system, protective tariffs, internal improvements, and moral reform movements. Like the Democrats, the Whigs were a national party; like the Democrats, Whig candidates had to appease supporters in the North and the South to retain a chance at winning national elections. But unlike the Democrats, the Whigs ultimately ran aground on the contentious issue of slavery. Politicians had long forged compromise over slavery by agreeing that it was a local institution, but acquisition of vast amounts of land from Mexico forced the federal government to act. When Congress moved to resolve the issue with the Compromise of 1850, northern and southern Whigs split on the measures. Northern Whigs opposed the compromise because it extended slavery and strengthened the Fugitive Slave Act. President Millard Fillmore and the southern Whigs—under heavy attack by Democrats for their association with antislavery northern Whigs—supported the measures. Two years later, in the presidential election of 1852, northern Whigs sunk Fillmore's renomination and the party suffered a crushing defeat. The Kansas-Nebraska Act sealed the party's demise: southern Whigs generally supported the measure, while northern Whigs opposed it.

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sovereignty would result in the restriction of slavery from the territories where it was formerly prohibited by the Missouri Compromise. "The challenge of the Democratic Party after 1854," Smith writes, "was to exploit the underlying acceptance of the principle of popular sovereignty and to try to argue that in practice it worked, both in the sense of giving settlers real power, and also—as a presumed consequence—by prohibiting the expansion of slavery." On the other side of the debate, Graham Peck asserts that Douglas' personal toleration of slavery "emboldened him to risk the possibility of slavery's expansion." Peck supports this claim by pointing to Douglas' admission that some slaveholders had already established themselves in Kansas and Nebraska; Peck also notes that northern free-soil opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska bill actually deepened Douglas' resolve to get it passed. I believe that timing is critical in resolving this debate. Between 1854 and 1857, Douglas had no way of knowing for sure whether Nebraska would end up a free or slave territory—and his rhetoric indicates that he did not care much about the morality or the expansion of slavery either way, as long as it did not interfere with national expansion and the endurance of the Union. Moreover, it seems illogical that free soilers would have so passionately opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act if people believed that popular sovereignty guaranteed a free-soil outcome. Only in 1858—when Kansans roundly rejected the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution—did it become clear that popular sovereignty would lead to more free territory. See Adam I. P. Smith, *The Stormy Present: Conservatism and the Problem of Slavery in Northern Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 104; Graham A. Peck, *Making an Antislavery Nation: Lincoln, Douglas, and the Battle over Freedom* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2017), 117.

In the months following the Nebraska bill's passage, these Whigs joined with free-soil Democrats to form a new political organization: the Republican Party. Republicans opposed the extension of slavery, calling for the federal government to ban the institution in the territories. This antislavery position attracted support from a broad spectrum of northerners. The majority were free white men, who wished to move west and work the land without fearing competition from slave labor. Others hoped restricting slavery would set the institution on a path to gradual, peaceful extinction. And a minority wanted slavery abolished immediately.

Antislavery politics did not stop simply because Congress was at an impasse over the railroad and slavery issues. From the late 1830s through the 1850s, women, long the engines of benevolent reform, took up the cause of abolition in ever more public and political ways. In 1837, sisters Sarah and Angelina Grimké set out on a speaking tour of New England, determined to convince listeners that antislavery activism was a Christian duty and a moral imperative. In 1838, a group of female abolitionists convened a national convention at Pennsylvania Hall in Philadelphia. In 1839, the abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison appointed Abby Kelley to a leadership role in the American Anti-Slavery Society. In 1848, Jane Grey Swisshelm began publishing an abolitionist newspaper, the *Pittsburgh Saturday Visiter*. In 1851, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* began its serialization in *The National Era*, an abolitionist newspaper. Beginning in 1854, these antislavery women found a home in the Republican Party, focusing attention on the sexual abuse of enslaved women and inspiring many more women to support the new organization.

Each move by these brave women wrought an unequal and opposite reaction by southerners and anti-abolitionists northerners, who were horrified by the women's involvement in politics and their public speechmaking. Massachusetts clergymen issued a letter and delivered a series of sermons condemning the Grimké sisters' public activism. An anti-abolitionist mob burned down Pennsylvania Hall to intimidate the abolitionist women who had spoken there. Lewis Tappan and

his followers left the American Antislavery Society to protest women's increasing role in that organization. And southern critics disparaged Stowe for inserting herself into public life as much as for her antislavery message.[7]

In the same period, women began to organize for equal rights. Between 1848 and 1860, women held annual "woman's rights" conventions in a number of northern states. There, they articulated what Nancy Isenberg has described as "ingenious arguments for women's full entitlement as citizens."[8] The women demanded property rights, educational opportunities, the rights of citizenship, and equality under the law. They also exposed the oppressions of nineteenth-century family life, fighting to reform marriage so that it would recognize women's "mutual consideration and equal interest" in the relationship.[9] These women battled for space in public life, despite their formal legal exclusion from the same.

It was in this environment—of a new, anti-slavery party; of violence in Kansas; of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and women's increasing public activism—that Republicans and Democrats prepared to fight out the election of 1856. The two parties stood diametrically opposed to one another on the key question of the election: whether and how slavery should be extended to the western territories. In their platform, Republicans avowed their opposition to the "repeal of the Missouri Compromise; to the policy of the present Administration; [and] to the extension of Slavery into Free Territory."[10] Meanwhile, in Cincinnati, Democrats issued a platform affirming their commitment "to the organization of territories, and to the admission of new States, with or without domestic slavery, as they may elect."[11] One side insisted that the federal government forbid slavery's extension; the other

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[7] Summary of women's antislavery activism and its backlash from Varon, *Disunion!*, 131–35, 144–45, 245–46; on women's support for the Republican Party, see Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 139–63.
[8] Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 20.
[9] Isenberg, 189.
[10] "Republican Party Platform of 1856," June 18, 1856, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29619.
[11] "1856 Democratic Party Platform," June 2, 1856, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29576.

insisted that voters in the territories should decide for themselves—that the federal government had no role in this debate.

Though northern and southern Democrats supported popular sovereignty for different reasons—northerners to devolve the slavery question to the states, southerners to extend slavery—both groups fell in line behind the Cincinnati platform and moved to discredit the Republicans and their nominee, John C. Frémont, as radical, abolitionist, and disunionist. They did so by deploying gendered language and tactics in three distinct but related ways. First, they criticized the physical appearance and the marriage of Frémont and his wife, Jessie. Second, they associated the Republican Party with the woman's rights and free love movements. Finally, and most critically, Democrats contended that Republicans' gender radicalism dovetailed with Republicans' support for abolition: both movements grew out of an excessive commitment to individual freedom at the expense of social stability.

This portrayal of the Republican Party was an absolute caricature. Though woman's rights activists and many abolitionists supported the Republican Party, and though the Republicans did offer a slightly more progressive gender vision, mainstream Republicans supported neither woman's rights nor abolition. But for many years, conservative politicians had deployed uncompromising hyperbole, condemning any person who dared disagree with them as abolitionists bent on tearing apart the Union.[12] The rise of the Republican Party—the first viable major antislavery party—prompted Democrats to use that same tactic with even more force, decrying Republicans as dangerous radicals whose program would imperil the Union. Though certainly a crass political tactic, that accusation also spoke to Democrats' fear that support for abolition and woman's rights was on

[12] As Elizabeth Varon has described it, anti-abolitionists claimed "that all antislavery supporters were disunionists. . . [H]owever hard immediatists tried to distinguish true abolitionism from gradual emancipation. . . and from Free-Soil political antislavery. . . anti-abolitionists denied that there was a meaningful distinction between these varieties of opposition to slavery." See Varon, *Disunion!*, 15.

the rise in the North. And finally, the attacks on the Republicans offered the additional advantage of uniting northern and southern Democrats around a vision of cultural conservatism. If Republicans stood for woman's rights, free love, abolitionism, and disunion, then Democrats must stand for patriarchy, social order, racial hierarchy, and the Union.

Republican Marriage: John and Jessie Frémont

When Republicans nominated John C. Frémont as their standard-bearer, they nearly guaranteed that gender would become an issue in the campaign. Frémont was handsome, young—only forty-three years old—and had made his name as an explorer of the West. But he offered relatively little in the way of political experience. Luckily, he had married well: his wife, the beautiful Jessie Benton Frémont, was the daughter of Missouri senator Thomas Hart Benton. The couple married for love, but Jessie brought intelligence and political acumen to the marriage.

Republican strategists recognized Jessie's potential for generating enthusiasm in the election. Party papers published breathless, romantic descriptions of John and Jessie's elopement. One writer described the young Jessie as possessing "every charm calculated to produce a profound and lasting impression on the ardent and appreciative nature of Lieut. Frémont."[13] Republican fascination with Jessie extended beyond the Frémont's initial elopement. Socially conservative Republicans depicted her as the charming, domestic wife adorning the arm of their handsome candidate. A typical Republican campaign song described Jessie as "sweet" and "bright."[14] More progressive Republicans used Jessie's image to legitimize women's participation in antislavery causes and partisan politics. Republican women formed so-called "Jessie Circles" to foster partisanship and organize events.[15]

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[13] Quoted in Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 126.
[14] *O, Jessie Is a Sweet, Bright Lady* (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856), http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/Songs/jessieisasweetbrightlady.html.
[15] Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 109.

One song told voters Jessie's political acumen would help John as president: "for the Chieftain's White Mansion she's better than [one]."[16] Indeed, Republicans invoked Jessie so frequently that one historian remarked that "'Frémont and Jessie' seemed to constitute the Republican ticket rather than 'Frémont and [vice presidential nominee] Dayton.'"[17]

Where Republicans saw in Frémont a man who was dashing, if politically inexperienced, Democrats saw a candidate who was insubstantial and foppish. Frémont's hairstyle became a central line of attack for the Democrats. Frémont parted his thick, wavy, brown hair in the middle. In the mid-nineteenth century, this was an unconventional look for a man: only women typically parted their hair in the middle, while men parted theirs on the side. Democrats leapt on Frémont's hairstyle, using it to imply that Frémont himself was feminine, weak, and unfit to lead. On September 24, William Reed, a Pennsylvania Democrat and academic, gave a speech in support of Buchanan's campaign. Reed claimed he would try to "avoid personal reference to Mr. Fremont." "I have neither time nor taste for such insignificant details," Reed claimed. But when a publisher printed copies of Reed's speech for distribution, he included a paragraph-long description of Frémont's hair—"heavy, waving, dark hair," parted "in the middle."[18] An article in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* added that "owing to the feminine arrangement of his locks," Frémont was "the most distinct and *sui generis* in the Union."[19] But Democratic voters did not want a man who distinguished himself by wearing his hair like a woman. "The old farmers and laboring men in the country are not going to vote for the son of a French dancing master, who. . . parts his hair in the middle (*a la Marie [Antoinette]*) for President,"

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[16] "Jessie Fremont," in *The Campaign of 1856. Fremont Songs for the People.*, ed. Thomas Drew (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1856).
[17] Allan Nevis, quoted in Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 129.
[18] William Bradford Reed, *The Appeal to Pennsylvania. A Speech by William B. Reed. Delivered at a Meeting of the Friends of Buchanan and Breckenridge, at Somerset, Pa., September 25, 1856*. (Philadelphia? s.n., 1856), 27.
[19] "Fremont's Religion--Two Fremonts in the Field," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 11 1856, 2. An article in *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* implied that Democratic hero Andrew Jackson would never have bothered to part his hair down the middle. See "Fremont," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, October 9 1856.

the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* insisted.[20] It might seem incredible that Frémont's center part became a campaign issue. But as Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover point out, in antebellum America, "manhood did not exist except in contrast to womanhood."[21] On the one hand, then, Democrats attacked Frémont's hairstyle to argue that Frémont femininity disqualified him for the presidency. But additionally, the attacks encouraged voters to think of Democrats as the party for real men. Democrats aligned the binary of femininity and masculinity with the binary of America's two-party system. If Republicans were feminine, then Democrats must be masculine.

Even more troubling for Democrats than John's appearance was Jessie's public involvement in the campaign. Democrats had welcomed women's involvement in their political campaigns since the 1830s. Democratic women attended mass meetings, listened to debates, baked cakes for party barbecues, and even marched in torchlight parades. And yet when Jessie made public appearances to support her husband, Democrats retrenched, decrying her involvement in politics as evidence of the Republicans' supposed gender radicalism. Democrats worried that Jessie did not depend totally on John as they believed a proper wife should. Democratic newspapers were aghast at Jessie's public appearances during the campaign. In July, a crowd of Republicans gathered outside the Frémont's lodgings in New York, cheering and crying out for the Frémonts to make an appearance. John made a brief speech and then retired. After a short wait, Jessie came out onto the balcony, and was greeted by the roar of the Republican supporters below. The *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* sneered that the interval before Jessie appeared had been a "pretense of holding back—a sham of coyness." Jessie's public appearance proved that she held none of the traits that Democrats idealized in women: modesty, deference, and domesticity. Rather, Jessie relished her public role as "the feminine partner

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[20] "Prospects in New York," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, August 20, 1856, 4.
[21] Craig Thompson Friend and Lorri Glover, ed., *Southern Manhood: Perspectives on Masculinity in the Old South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2004), xiii.

in the business."[22] Jessie's independence indicted John's masculinity as much as it did Jessie's femininity. To Democrats, the incident made it clear that John, whom Democrats frequently emasculated as the "husband of Jessie," would not and indeed could not control his wife.[23] How could voters trust such a weak man to lead the entire country?

Other Democrats went further, claiming that Jessie had masterminded John's bid for the White House and would seek power if he were elected. Holding forth at an outdoor meeting one August night in New York's Lower East Side, Democrat Isaiah Rynders claimed that Frémont's election would render Jessie president "*de facto*," because she was the "*best man* of the two."[24] A subscriber to the *Boston Post*, meanwhile, mailed a song to the paper, asking readers to "imagine Jessie singing [it] to her darling spouse." This fictional Jessie dreams of sharing power with her husband. "How happy we shall be/ When you and I, my darling John/ Shall rule the land and sea!" one verse goes. In another, "Jessie" disparages "the people" as "great ninnies"—a jab at Republicans' supposed elitism—and then goes on to promise, "And this we'll let them know/ When you and I are president/John C. Frémont, my jo."[25] Like Rynders' speech, the song exaggerated Jessie's control over her husband's politics, thereby portraying him as weak and her as masculine and subversive. Democrats would have seen this behavior as inappropriate in any marriage. In the marriage of the president, it threatened the political stability of the country as a whole.

Frémont also fell short in his other family obligations. Democratic papers scandalized their readers by reporting that Frémont had abandoned his own mother. According to the *Richmond Enquirer*, Frémont's mother was widowed, impoverished, and living alone in Charleston, where she

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[22] "New Election 'Wrinkle' -- 'Our Jessie'," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, July 9 1856, 2. A similar article questions why Jessie appeared at a campaign rally on her own, as a stand-in for John, after John was forced to cancel. See "New Mode of Electioneering for the Presidency," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, July 13 1856, 2.
[23] See both "The Closing Scenes of the Monster Democratic Meeting at Indianapolis," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, July 19 1856, 4; "Inasmuch as the Black Republicans," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, July 4 1856, 2.
[24] "The Fourteenth Ward Democracy in a Glow of Enthusiasm," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 15 1856, 2.
[25] "Saline Lake," *Boston Post*, October 30, 1856, 4, Boston Athenaeum - Vershbow Special Collections.

had become a washer woman for "several benevolent ladies in the neighborhood" who had given her work only to "lessen. . . the humiliation of her condition."[26] The notion—whether true or not—that Frémont abandoned his mother to poverty told readers that he was a poor patriarch, and therefore would make a poor leader.

Not only had Frémont deserted his family, but he had encouraged his wife to leave hers. On September 29, a Democratic speaker in Cambridge, Massachusetts described for listeners how Frémont "induced a confiding daughter"—that is, Jessie—"while within her teens, to trample on the commands of her parents, and consummate a marriage, without their knowledge and consent."[27] Jessie's parents had indeed initially opposed the match. The couple eloped, and later, her parents embraced John as a member of the family. Michael Pierson has shown how Republicans used the story of the Frémonts' elopement to argue that John was bold, manly, and decisive.[28] Here, however, we see Democrats holding that the very same story revealed John's carelessness toward a daughter's duty to obey her parents. Democrats believed that the relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, and masters and slaves bound society together. As a result, Democrats saw Frémont's behavior—abandoning his mother, encouraging his bride to defy her parents—as a threat to those relationships, and therefore as a threat to American society as a whole.

In New York, meanwhile, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* harped on Frémont's neglect of another kind of dependent: those men who were under his command during an expedition across the Rocky Mountains. During one expedition, ten men died in the snowy Rockies after Frémont had insisted that they forge onward. "No man"—no real man—"with an American heart would desert his comrades while life lasted."[29] Democrats believed that Frémont had failed to control his wife, and he

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[26] "John C. Fremont's Mother," *The Richmond Enquirer*, October 24 1856, 4. "Grand Rally in the Fifth Ward," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 19 1856, 2.
[27] Joseph C. Lovejoy, *The True Democracy: A Speech Delivered at East Cambridge, Sept. 29, 1856* (Boston: s.n., 1856), 1.
[28] Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 124–26.
[29] "Grand Rally in the Fifth Ward."

had failed to provide for those who depended on him.

Compared to the outrageous example set by John and Jessie Frémont, Democratic outlets asserted that husbands were responsible for maintaining control over their wives. To drive the point home, journals published stories about marriages that went sour when wives sought equality or autonomy in their relationships with their husbands. In a typical story, titled "Three Ways of Managing a Husband," a wife finds that two of the three ways of relating to her husband end in disaster. The first method combined laziness with independence. The wife assumes that she "had a right to say and do a little as [she] pleased," which results in her husband being unable to "bear anything from [her]." Next, the woman pushed for equality in her marriage, "struggle[ing] fiercer than ever for the ascendency." This behavior precipitates a fight, causing the husband to withdraw and the couple to live aloof from one another for a full year. Finally, the wife "gave up," her "pride, self-will, [and] anger. . . conquered." She "was a weak woman in the hands of a strong-minded man." The "least" she could do was to "obey." But in her new obedience, the wife finds peace. Tying up her own will "with a silken fetter" miraculously transforms her marriage into a happy one.[30] For the Democrats who would have read the story, the moral was clear: an orderly and happy marriage depended a man's control over his wife.

Democrats believed patriarchal control over families played an important role in ensuring the stability and durability of the nation. The *Richmond Enquirer* looked back to the Roman Empire to prove the point. When Roman husbands "relaxed their rule. . . . wives, children, and slaves had lost much more in protection, guardianship, affection, and even supervision and control, than they had gained by the larger liberty in which they were permitted to indulge." This, the *Enquirer* told readers, critically weakened the Roman Republic, leaving it "disgraced and lingering to her fall."[31] Democrats

[30] As retold in Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 106.
[31] "The Family," *The Richmond Enquirer*, July 1 1856, 1.

believed in political independence and equality among white men, but a corollary of that believe was the political dependence and inequality of non-whites and women. In this vision of society, it was white husbands' right and responsibility to exercise steady control over their families, since content and obedient wives and slaves would result in a stable and prosperous America.

Democrats believed that men should exercise this power with benevolence and generosity. Of course, the abuse of wives and the horrors of southern slavery reveal that men most often failed on this account. Still, short stories and poems in Democratic periodicals reinforced paternalistic ideals. One story told readers what happened to the families of neglectful husbands. The man lords over his wife with "selfish, arbitrary, and implacable" mastery. His wife, who at the time of their marriage had been like a "confiding, dependent child"—the ideal wife—became a "self-possessed woman" as a result of her husband's mistreatment. Physical illness followed quickly on the heels of moral decay: the wife died of consumption. A different story emphasized the positive effects of one husband's generosity. The husband had the power to grant her every wish, and he usually did. His benevolence pleased him and mad her "happy in the possession of a complying husband and pleasant anticipation of future gratifications."[32] Though not explicitly political, these stories appeared in democratic publications alongside partisan editorials. Taken in context, then, they reveal a party structuring its political culture around the ideals of patriarchy and paternalism.

The Democrats' nominee, however, was not exactly a successful patriarch. Pennsylvanian James Buchanan had won the Democratic nomination on account of his deep government experience—over the previous forty years, he had served as a member of the Pennsylvanian House of Representatives, member of the United States House of Representatives, Minister to Russia, United States Senator, Secretary of State, and Minister to Great Britain—his moderate views, and his cross-sectional appeal. Stephen Douglas had too little support in the South, and President Franklin

[32] *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 107-08.

Pierce, angling for renomination, had the same problem in the North. As Adam I. P. Smith has described the sixty-five-year-old Buchanan, "he was a *fogey*—but one who was so steeped in the tradition of the Democracy that all the factions could rally behind him. . .he was the only potential contender who offended no one."[33] Yet unlike Frémont, who had eloped with beautiful Jessie, Buchanan was a lifelong bachelor and had no children of his own.

As a result, Democrats had to seek out more creative ways of casting Buchanan as a responsible patriarch. The *Richmond Enquirer* did this by reporting that Buchanan had given 4,000 dollars to create a trust for the "relief of poor and indigent females in the city of Lancaster," Buchanan's hometown in Pennsylvania. Buchanan's generosity toward the impoverished women, the paper assured readers, was "only one of the many evidences of Mr. Buchanan's judicious and warmhearted generosity."[34] A Democratic campaign pamphlet repeated this story, adding that the interest on Buchanan's donation continued to fund the purchase of fuel for the women's homes.[35] The same pamphlet also recalled how in 1828, on the floor of the House of Representatives, Buchanan defended John Quincy Adams' wife against disrespectful insinuations made by another congressman. "I believe that the person to whom he has alluded is not only a lady by courtesy, but a lady by nature and education. I shall not credit one word derogatory to her reputation. The man who attempts to destroy the character of a woman, destroys his own," Buchanan scolded.[36] Buchanan had no wife or children, so Democrats told readers these stories—of Buchanan's donation to the women of Lancaster and his defense of Adams' wife—to assure them Buchanan was indeed a model patriarch, whose steady but firm guidance would hold the Union together.

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[33] Smith, *The Stormy Present*, 90.
[34] "Mr. Buchanan's Charities," *The Richmond Enquirer*, September 26 1856, 2. A similar article published in the same paper one month later praised Buchanan's charitable activities. See "Buchanan at Home," *The Richmond Enquirer*, October 24 1856, 1.
[35] Nahum Capen, *Plain Facts and Considerations: Addressed to the People of the United States, without Distinction of Party, in Favor of James Buchanan, of Pennsylvania, for President and John C. Breckinridge, of Kentucky, for Vice President. By an American Citizen.* (Boston: Brown, Bazin and Co., 1856), 6.
[36] James Buchanan, quoted in Nahum Capen, 6.

In Democrats' eyes, the Frémonts' marriage embodied the irrational, destructive nature of the Republican Party as a whole. Jessie's independence made her seem masculine, while John's appearance and his inability to control his wife or support his mother made him seem weak and feminine. Even by themselves, these traits worried Democrats, who could not imagine that a man who exercised so little control over his wife would be strong enough to lead the country. But the Frémonts' relationship also seemed to confirm Democrats' fears about the increase in woman's rights activism over the previous decade. Apparently, voters were prepared to elect a man who treated his wife as his equal. Moreover, even though Democrats believed that the Kansas-Nebraska Act had denationalized the slavery issue, they remained ever-vigilant on behalf of the Union. The Frémonts' unconventional marriage worried them on this point, then, as well, as it conjured images of creeping social disorder that Democrats believed led to political instability.

Frémont, Free Women, Free Love

On July 19 and 20, 1840, about 300 people attended a convention in a small town in New York State, about thirty miles south of Lake Ontario. The woman's rights convention at Seneca Falls was the first meeting of its kind. Only 100 attendees signed their names to the convention's final document, the Declaration of Sentiments. Modeled on the Declaration of Independence, the document declared "that all men and women are created equal," listed the "repeated injuries and usurpations on the part of man toward woman," and insisted that women "have immediate admission to all the rights and privileges which belong to them as citizens of these United States."[37] But the convention made waves, inspiring a similar convention in Rochester a few weeks later, as well as annual, national woman's rights conventions beginning in Worcester, Massachusetts, in 1850. Broadly, the movement called for women's political, legal, and social equality with men. Yet

[37] "Declaration of Sentiments," July 19, 1848, http://ecssba.rutgers.edu/docs/seneca.html.

although their conventions received significant attention, woman's rights activists made no serious progress in achieving their goals over the ensuing decade, and both they and their movement remained intensely unpopular with the general population. Indeed, woman's rights seemed so radical to most Americans that even abolitionists split over whether to welcome women into leadership roles within their movement. In 1856, Democrats nonetheless took up condemning the woman's rights movement as a campaign tactic, portraying this movement as a growing force that would be emboldened and empowered by a Republican victory.

Sometimes, Democratic journals simply described woman's rights activists' demands. The *Richmond Enquirer* wrote that "women deem the throwing off the restraints of modesty and marriage, a '*sine qua non*.'" In their radical social circles, the "women wear masculine attire, preach infidel sermons, abuse the constitution and the marriage tie, and yet do not lose caste in society."[38] In another article, the *Enquirer* incriminated the women's husbands, as well. "No wonder the women are rebelling," the *Enquirer* sneered. "It is shameful and disgraceful to leave wives and children unprotected."[39] Woman's rights activists did hope to liberalize divorce laws and expand opportunities for women beyond the home. But Democrats found even these modest demands deeply troubling. Changes in divorce laws would undermine men's power at home, while increasing women's participation in religious and political life would challenge men's power over the public sphere. By describing and exaggerating the women's demands, the *Enquirer* fanned the flames of these fears.

More frequently, Democratic papers connected the woman's rights to the Republican Party, implying—and sometimes claiming outright—that Republicans secretly supported the movement. It was true that the Republican Party offered a relatively progressive gender vision, at least when

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[38] "No. 2: Will the Union Be Preserved? If Dissolved Can the South Maintain Herself?," *The Richmond Enquirer*, September 9, 1856, 2.
[39] "Woman's Rights," *The Richmond Enquirer*, April 15 1856, 2.

compared to the Democrats. As Michael Pierson has explained, more forward-thinking Republicans advocated for reformed gender roles. "Voting Republican," Pierson writes, "identified a man as the champion of female morality, male restraint, and sentimental marriage while stating his opposition to tyrannical marriages in the North and patriarchal abuses in the plantation South."[40] As Pierson points out, the Republican gender vision dovetailed with the party's antislavery ethos. Slavery hurt black and white marriages: enslaved men and women could not marry legally, and when a white slaveholder raped an enslaved woman, he violated the sanctity of her union and of his own. Slavery also prevented enslaved women from exercising full control over their homes, instead forcing them to work alongside men. This progressive vision drew the support of woman's rights activists ranging from the radical Lucy Stone to the more moderate Harriet Beecher Stowe and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. To be sure, not all Republicans found these arguments about marriage and domesticity compelling. But for many, they provided an additional marker of their identity as progressive, antislavery voters.

A very few Republicans' occasional defense of woman's rights allowed Democrats to exaggerate the movement's influence over the Republican Party. Horace Greeley, the founder and editor of the influential Republican paper, the *New-York Tribune*, backed women's economic empowerment, if not their right to vote. A handbook of Democratic campaign pamphlets included some paragraphs describing Greeley's support for radical causes. "Horace Greeley has assisted at public meetings of blacks and whites in the City of New York," the pamphlet warned readers. "It is he who has co-operated with the advocates of woman's rights in the same city, where unsexed females have delighted in addressing mobs of men in strains of vulgar violence."[41] Greeley was a prominent newspaperman and one of the founders of the Republican Party. If he supported

[40] Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 116.
[41] Mich. W. Cluskey, ed., "Infidelity and Abolitionism. An Open Letter to the Friends of Religion, Morality, and the American Union," in *Buchanan and Breckinridge. The Democratic Hand-Book* (Washington, D.C.: R. A. Waters, 1856), 5.

woman's rights, it seemed reasonable that other Republicans might as well.

Democrats seized on the Republican Party's tenuous association with woman's rights activists to declare that the entire party was under the sway of the woman's rights movement. After printing the demands that a women's rights convention made on the Republican Party, a Democratic newspaper in Ohio mockingly asked "how [Republicans] can resist the demands of these 'strong-minded women.'" The women had called for the Republican Party support their cause. From there, the Democratic paper leapt to the conclusion that Republicans had incorporated the activists' "ridiculous . . . nonsense and fanaticism" into their "creed."[42] Never mind that the paper did not prove that the Republicans reciprocated women's rights activists' support. The mere association was powerful enough to damn the whole Republican Party in the eyes of Democrats.

Democrats even called out John Frémont by name, declaring that the standard-bearer of the Republican Party supported the woman's rights movement. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported that attendees at a Frémont meeting in New Hampshire had hung John and Jessie banners, including one that said "Jessie for the White House." "It is evident," the paper intoned, "that our opponent fully sympathises [*sic*] with the women's rights movement."[43] This intentionally misconstrues the banners' meaning: these Republican supporters seem to have been simply parroting back a version of the "give 'em Jessie" refrain that had circulated since the start of the campaign. Similarly, the *Richmond Enquirer* warned readers that "Frémont is run. . . . as the anti-marriage and anti-female virtue candidate."[44] The North was already "a vast magazine of explosive vices and corruptions," another *Enquirer* article reported. If Frémont won the election and woman's rights were imposed on

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[42] "The Black-Republican Party and the Strong-Minded Woman," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, November 29 1856, 4.
[43] "Women's Rights," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, August 2 1856, 2. Another *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* article punned that a women's rights convention had been called off after the women had become "palpabl[y] split" over Frémont's center part, condemning the women as silly and Frémont as feminine in one turn of phrase. See ""Take Your Time, Miss Lucy"," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 14 1856, 1.
[44] "Free Love and Fremont," *The Richmond Enquirer*, September 16 1856, 1.

conservative men, the ensuing divorces would threaten the very "fabric of [the] Union."[45] Northern and southern alike worried about the advance of the woman's rights movement. An advance in woman's rights would undermine men's control over their homes. It would also indicate the progress of radical social movements more generally—including abolitionism—that, together, would lead the country toward disunion. By fabricating the notion that Frémont supported woman's rights, Democratic papers fanned the flames of these fears and encouraged conservative men to vote the Democratic ticket.

While damning all Republicans as women's rights supporters, Democrats portrayed their party as the defender of an idealized, domestic femininity—the opposite of the "pantalooned Amazon[s]" who supported woman's rights.[46] Northern and southern Democratic newspapers alike glorified this vision of submissive womanhood during the 1856 campaign. One fictional story published in the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* in the fall of 1856 traced the vicissitudes of a couple's married life, from the first night home after their honeymoon, to the loss of their first-born son, to the marriage of their children. Though the marriage was marked by "agony" as much as "intense joy," the wife felt truly fulfilled by the "duties of married life."[47] Unlike woman's rights activists, this woman would not run out on her family or demand equality with her husband. Conservative readers would have felt satisfied that the woman, by embracing her role as a wife and mother, had guaranteed the happiness of her family and, in turn, the social stability of her community.

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[45] "No. 2: Will the Union Be Preserved? If Dissolved Can the South Maintain Herself?," *The Richmond Enquirer*, September 9 1856, 2. As Steven Hahn has written, "In the patriarchal household economy, relations of legal and customary dependency, not equality, linked all to the male head." Democrats would have considered women's rights activists' calls for equality subversive because women and children were supposed to depend on men, not relate to them as equals. Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850-1890* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 31. Rebecca Edwards' study of gender in post-Civil War partisanship affirms that Democrats believed Republicans would undermine men's control over their wives. She writes, "The logical end of Republicanism, its opponents warned, was that husbands would lose authority over wives. If any man needed further proof, he could look to the northern legislatures that were meddling with their marriage laws." See Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery*, 20.

[46] "Lady's Logic, or Miss Murray on Liberty," *The Richmond Enquirer*, July 4 1856, 1.

[47] "A Home Picture," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 2 1856, 1.

Democratic newspapers in the South also praised women who were domestic and unassuming. An obituary eulogized a Richmond-area woman as a loving wife and excellent homemaker. "She was. . .the cherished wife, the devoted mother," the obituary read. "Her rural home was remarkable for the most unbounded, generous, and refined hospitality to the many visitors who thronged it." In her loving relationship with her husband and her precise care for her home, the woman had developed "all the graces which beautify the female character."[48] Similarly, a book review in the same paper praised a female author as a "beautiful specimen of that modest, shrinking, feminine nature."[49]

Democrats claimed to be shocked by women's demands for equality and appalled by their presence in the public sphere, and they praised women for honoring their husbands and maintaining their homes. Democrats' actual beliefs about women in public life seem to have been more complicated. Though Democrats certainly did not support women's rights, they embraced women's participation in politics—within certain limits. Party newspapers published paeans to the women who appeared at Democratic campaign rallies. At one meeting in Providence, Rhode Island, "The young ladies on the platform sung the Star-spangled Banner, and Miss Shea, a beautiful young lady, sung a good song to the tune of 'Wait for the Wagon.'" The *Boston Post* article continued to describe a parade that followed the meeting: "The procession was a large and fine one, consisting in part of. . . thirty-one oxen drawing a car containing 300 ladies!"[50] Unlike Jessie Frémont or the woman's rights activists, these women did not speak in public. In an era when public speech was a distinctly masculine prerogative, this represented an important distinction that preserved the women's femininity. But they did sing, and by participating in the event, they indicated their enthusiastic

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[48] "Obituary," *The Richmond Enquirer*, October 3 1856, 2.
[49] "Lady's Logic, or Miss Murray on Liberty," 1.
[50] "The Mass Meeting of the Democracy in Providence," *Boston Post*, September 6, 1856, 2, Boston Athenaeum - Vershbow Special Collections.

support for the Democratic Party. It seems, then, that despite their praise for women's "shrinking" nature, Democrats embraced women's public activism, as long as that activism supported conservative causes.[51]

Free Love activists provided another reason for Democrats to unite against the Republican Party. The general population understood free love as the idea that adults should be free to end a marriage or other sexual relationship when they no longer felt affection for their partner. Members of utopian communities that practiced free love, such as the Oneida colony in upstate New York, subscribed to the even more radical notion that any adult should be free to have sex with any other consenting adult, without possessiveness or exclusivity. Members of these communities raised the resulting children communally.

As they did with their descriptions of the woman's rights movement, Democratic papers affirmed their readers' prejudice against free love by describing its supporters as unattractive and its demands as utterly radical. According to Cincinnati's *Daily Enquirer*, the men at "free-love meetings" in New York were "nasty, blear-eyed, sallow-faced, long-haired things" who "h[u]ng round the skirts of" "loose," "strong-minded women." The men and women alike were "lewd and dissolute."[52] By portraying the men as cuckolded and the women as independent, the *Enquirer* discredited free love as a movement. Weak men and strong women could not possibly offer any critique that might improve American society. Democratic papers also criticized Free Love doctrines themselves. The *Richmond Enquirer* accused Free Lovers of wanting to

> cut clear asunder every social, domestic, and religious tie that binds man to man, and keeps society together; to banish religion, law, order, female virtue, parental authority, and separate property, and to inaugurate no-government, the unrestricted 'sovereignty of the individual'

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[51] For similar articles, in which Democratic newspapers praised women for appearing at campaign rallies bearing signs that read "White Husbands or None," see "The Democracy of Preble County," *Boston Post*, September 11, 1856, 2, Boston Athenaeum - Vershbow Special Collections; "The Right Way to Talk," *The Richmond Enquirer*, September 30, 1856, 1.

[52] "A Chance for the Police," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, August 23 1856, 2.

and the unbridled gratification of every passion.[53]

The idea that people could enter and leave sexual relationships when they chose struck Democrats as a radical assertion of women's independence and a direct challenge to patriarchy—especially since women owed their husbands access to their bodies.[54] And collective child rearing threatened the family as the fundamental unit of society.[55] Significantly for southerners, Free Love also represented an implicit threat to slavery. Slaveholders had long argued that slavery was a familial institution. But if men lost power over their families, they also stood to lose control of their enslaved workers.

Democratic newspapers dramatically overstated the level of support for free love among members of the Republican Party, equating Free Lovers' support for the Republican Party with the Republican Party's support for Free Love. The *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* reported that "Mrs. Nichols, a prominent advocate of free love and a member of the free love clubs of New York, has taken the stump for Frémont," one article read.[56] Frémont did not support Free Love, but Nichols' support was sufficient to condemn him in the eyes of conservative northern voters. Indeed, these claims must have resonated with readers, because the paper received a letter to the editor from a Democrat incensed by Republican plans to undermine civil society by giving Americans too much of all kinds of freedoms, including "free love and a large number of other freedoms of appetite and action too numerous and unsuitable to mention."[57] This New York Democrat did not separate Free Love from any of the other freedoms Republicans called for: all were radical Republican policies that sought to undermine social order.

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[53] "The Black Republicans on Polygamy," *The Richmond Enquirer*, June 27 1856, 2.
[54] Indeed, Michael Pierson believes that the Free Love movement, not women's rights activists, represented "the era's most explicit threat to marriage as an institution." It was thus easy to unite around marriage as the "only bastion of legitimate sexual activity." See Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes*, 105.
[55] As Rebecca Edwards puts it, in mid-century politics, "good government depended on proper household order; tyranny or anarchy, as threats to the republic, appeared in the guise of sexual sin." See Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery*, 17.
[56] "Out for Fremont," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 23 1856, 3.
[57] "To the Editor of the Eagle," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 9 1856, 2.

In another salient example of this tactic, Democratic cartoonist Louis Maurer depicted a group of radicals lining up to offer Frémont their support. The group included a temperance advocate, a socialist, a woman's rights activist, a Catholic priest, and an advocate of free love. Maurer portrayed the free love activist as an old woman, with a long, hooked nose, pointy chin, spectacles, and poorly made, narrow hoops holding up her skirt—not the nineteenth century's image of feminine beauty. She asks Frémont to join the "next meeting of our Free Love association, where the shackles of marriage are not tolerated and perfect freedom exists in love matters." "You will be sure to Enjoy yourself," she continues, "for we are all *Freemounters*."[58] The bawdy pun made a serious point: Republicans were the party of gender radicalism. To Democratic editors and readers alike, it apparently did not matter that there was no evidence that Frémont or any Republican on the ticket supported the Free Love movement. The mere association of the two was enough to damn the Republican Party in the eyes of any Democrat who wished to preserve social and political order.

Democrats in the South overstated the relationship between the Free Love movement and the Republican Party, as well. The *Richmond Enquirer* scoffed that Frémont's "bad morals" made him "the appropriate leader of a party that. . . .from Oneida. . . to the free-love saloons of New York and Boston, makes open war on female virtue and filial obedience."[59] A similar article in the same paper accused the Republican Party of "making open war" on "morality and religion" and "attempting to inaugurate in their stead anarchy, agrarianism, infidelity, and licentiousness."[60] The paper even warned that the South would secede to protect its moral purity from Republican influence if Frémont were elected—not an uncommon threat among Democrats during the election of 1856.

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[58] Louis Maurer, *The Great Republican Reform Party, Calling on Their Candidate,* 1856. Nathaniel Currier. See appendix for image. The cartoon made a sufficient splash that two newspapers described it in depth to their readers. See "A Capital Political Caricature," *The Wilmington Daily Herald*, August 18, 1856, 2; "The Great Republican Reform Party Calling on Their Candidate," *Daily American Organ*, August 19, 1856, 1.

[59] "James Buchanan. The North, the South, and the Union.," *The Richmond Enquirer*, October 10 1856, 2.

[60] "The Effects of Disunion on the South," *The Richmond Enquirer*, August 29 1856, 2.

While the ensuing war would be terrible, the editorial read, "licentiousness, and agrarianism, and infidelity, and anarchy, are far worse."[61]

By contrast, Democrats pitched themselves as protectors of women's Christian morality. Democratic newspapers published short works that portrayed women as bastions of religious virtue. The author of one poem, which appeared in the *Richmond Enquirer*, dedicated his work to a certain Annie, of Charleston, South Carolina. The poem extolls the girl's "soul" which "seeks. . . pants. . . springs [and] searches for higher, better things" and "longs for angel's food—The luxury of doing good." The poet encouraged Annie to develop her natural religious inclination by following the "One who lived for thee."[62] Another poem shows a man fixating on his beloved's moral purity as he cries over her deathbed. "Her body was the Temple bright, In which her soul dwelt full of light," he remembered. But because she had been so virtuous, he was sure that even as he cried over her cold body, she "looks down on me from Heaven above."[63] These poems seem unrelated to the partisan fare that filled Democratic papers like the *Enquirer*. But the editorial decision to publish this poem tells us that Democratic newspapermen knew this vision of women's religiosity appealed to the rank and file's personal beliefs about women's place in society.

Democratic men valued women who were demure, religious, and moral. Even President Franklin Pierce paid what the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* called a "pretty compliment" to the women gathered at a political event. "We all know," he declared, "no man who listened to his wife ever went astray, and no young brother ever gave a listening ear to his sister. . . .without being the better for it." Indeed, "there is no good man who does not feel his heart made stronger through [women's]

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61 "The Evils and Dangers of the Times," *The Richmond Enquirer*, August 26 1856, 2.
62 "To Annie B*******, of Charleston, S.C.," *The Richmond Enquirer*, September 9 1856, 4.
63 "The Lily of Heaven," *The Richmond Enquirer*, September 30 1856, 4. This intense idolizing of women also appears in Southern men's diaries, with men sometimes allowing women's faith to become their own. Stephen Berry writes that men's "love of woman. . . did not replace organized religion but bled into it until the two were indistinguishable. Their wives became their conduits to God, and that was often as close to Him as they really wanted to be." See Berry, *All That Makes a Man*, 92.

influence."[64] Unlike woman's rights activists, who used their morality to justify their intrusion into the public sphere, Democratic women were content to restrict their influence to their homes and to their families. Democratic men embraced women's positive influence on the home because it did not fundamentally threaten men's control. Husbands granted their wives this small power, and they could just as easily take it away. Compared to Republican women, who supposedly demanded woman's rights and free love, and Republican men, who purportedly supported the women's demands, Democratic women were religious and submissive, and Democratic men embraced their role as patriarchs.

Abolition and Gender Disorder

Most powerfully, Democrats linked arguments about gender roles and morality to the central issue of the campaign: slavery. They decried abolitionism as both the cause and the most horrifying example of Republicans' gender radicalism. This accusation required the Democrats to claim that all Republicans were abolitionists—even though abolitionists were few in number compared to the Republicans, and the relationship between the two groups was highly ambivalent.[65] Once they had established that point, Democrats argued that Republicans' gender radicalism could not be separated from their determination to abolish slavery: Republican radicalism, whether in support of woman's rights, free love, or abolition, grew out of an excessive desire for individual freedom.[66]

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[64] "President Pierce," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 14 1856, 2.

[65] As Elizabeth Varon shows, William Lloyd Garrison himself was "profoundly ambivalent about the [Republican] party." Garrison believed no moral Union could coexist with slaveholders; Republicans believed in the perpetuity of the Union. But Garrison appreciated the rise of an antislavery political party, seeing it as an outgrowth of immediatist abolition and therefore as a step toward his desired ends of either abolition or disunion. See Varon, *Disunion!*, 277.

[66] Democrats were not the only ones to link slavery, abolition, and gender issues. Kristin Hoganson argued that Garrisonian abolitionists needed to prove their political legitimacy over objections that supporting women's rights made them womanish radicals. To do this, Hoganson writes that Garrisonians "drew on conventional middle-class gender beliefs to combat their own marginality as desexed freaks; prove black people's full humanity; and make their religious, economic, social, and moral arguments more compelling." By arguing that slavery desexed both slaves and owners, Garrisonians "shifted the tables so that the slave-holding South became the seat of gender radicalism." Kristin Hoganson, "Garrisonian Abolitionists and the Rhetoric of Gender, 1850-1860," *American Quarterly* 45(1993): 559, 60.

Frequently, Democrats castigated abolitionists themselves as gender-bending radicals. Brooklyn's *Daily Eagle* called abolitionists sacrilegious "nigger worshippers," lambasting them as "men who ought to be women, and women who ought to be men."[67] The *Washington Union* informed readers that Harriet Beecher Stowe's husband, Calvin Ellis Stowe, "is simply known now as the 'husband of Mrs. Beecher Stowe'"—a title that called out her mannishness and his emasculation.[68] The *Southern Banner*, Athens, Georgia's Democratic newspaper, raised the specters of biracialism and independent women in its report on an antislavery meeting in Chicago. African-Americans attended the meeting alongside socially prominent whites, and white men attended with their "wives and daughters." Worse, "fair white maidens" at the event cheered the blurring of "the distinction between the white and black races."[69] Stories that described mixed-race, mixed-sex meetings emphasized the radical nature of abolitionism. Abolitionists wanted freedom for slaves, freedom for women to participate in politics, and the freedom for white women to marry black men. The stories also worked to discredit abolitionism among the newspapers' readers. Abolitionists were not respectable men and women—fellow countrymen—who simply supported a movement to free slaves. Rather, they appear in these newspaper articles as radical, dangerous, and almost foreign. Democrats could not trust them or the party they supported.

In contrast, Democrats praised their own female partisans as active supporters of patriarchy and white supremacy. The *Richmond Enquirer* proudly reported that fifty-four women, dressed in pure white, attended a Democratic rally in Concord, Ohio. The women carried small white flags emblazoned with "BUCHANAN and BRECKINRIDGE," and the wagon they arrived in was hung with a pink canvass on which was printed the motto "WHITE HUSBANDS OR NONE." "That is the way to say it," the reporter editorialized. The rebuke against "the present disgusting attempts to elevate the

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[67] "Nigger Worship and Nigger Worshippers," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, September 9 1856, 2.
[68] "Our New York Correspondence," *Washington Union*, December 4, 1856, 3.
[69] "Almagamation Meeting on Sunday," *Southern Banner*, December 25 1856, 2.

negro to. . . equality" was "well-timed" and likely to put the "wild fanatics" in their place.[70] The event apparently made an impression on Democratic editors, who reprinted the story in their papers in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C.[71] Democrats' praise for this incident hints at how they understood women's role in sustaining white supremacy. The law could attempt to uphold racial purity and social boundaries by forbidding interracial marriage. But the case of Massachusetts, which had repealed its anti-miscegenation law in 1843, reminded Democrats that those laws required the people's continued support. If white women had sex with black men, cracks would form in the structures of white supremacy. Democratic papers praised the women of Concord because the women supported the racial hierarchy that Democratic voters wished to uphold.

Democrats also argued that abolitionism represented Republicans' broader tendency toward radicalism. According to Democrats, Republicans wanted to free everybody and everything—from slaves to women to land to religion—from legal restraints and social norms. One article in Richmond charged Republicans with "crush[ing] one species of property"—slaves—"and in the very abuse of freedom cry[ing] out for everything to be free—love, marriage, lands, houses, possessions in every form."[72] Republicans' supposed support for abolition represented just one more symptom of a disease that had spread throughout the party: the desire for individual freedom at the expense of society's conservative, stabilizing institutions. The *Charleston Mercury* expanded on this logic for its readers. "An extremist would assert that women and minors are enslaved because

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[70] "The Right Way to Talk," *The Richmond Enquirer*, September 30 1856, 1. A story published in the *Cincinnati Daily Enquirer* played on the horror of both racial amalgamation and Republicanism. Allegedly, an innkeeper did not believe a black man when he called at the inn, claiming that a white female lodger was his wife. The woman assured the innkeeper that the man was her husband, and the innkeeper was incredulous. But the tension is diffused when the woman says that marrying a black man would be far better than marrying a Republican—something she and the innkeeper both could agree on. "Truly a Hard Case," *The Cincinnati Daily Enquirer*, September 5 1856, 3.

[71] "The Right Way to Talk," *The Star of the North*, September 3, 1856, 2; "The Right Way to Talk," *Wilmington Journal*, October 3, 1856, 2; "Political Items," *Evening Star*, September 17, 1856, 2; "The Democracy of Preble County," 2.

[72] "The True State of the Case," *The Richmond Enquirer*, September 23 1856, 2.

they are excluded from the ballot box," the paper editorialized. "But who but a radical or madman would change this state of things for a mere abstraction?" That "abstraction"—the belief in human freedom and equality—also led Republicans to support abolition. "Again, in theory, the abstract idea of equal rights has been run into Abolitionism." "In short," the *Mercury* concluded, "all the radicalism which clogs the civilization of our day, is but the derivative of acknowledged rights, urged to an extreme."[73]

In another case, the *Richmond Enquirer* warned its readers that Republicans would assail everything "valuable, moral, or sacred" in the South's "domestic institutions" with their "multitudinous isms." According to the paper, a vote for Frémont was a vote for "an infidel and licentious world. . . a Free Love World."[74] Here, we see the dual meaning of the common phrase "domestic institutions." The *Enquirer* worried not only about an abolitionist attack on the single domestic institution of slavery, but also a free love attack on the domestic institution of marriage. Southerners believed that both slavery and marriage were familial institutions, best governed by the states. The *Enquirer* warned that if Frémont won the election, he would use the power of the federal government to abolish both institutions.[75]

Democrats contended that Republicans harbored a desire to free women from marriage and slaves from slavery. A month after the election, the *New York Herald* accused the Republican *New York Tribune* of overzealous support for "justice, freedom, and humanity," which the *Herald* maintained would result in "some such general blow up as a servile war or social war."[76] Despite never having been committed to the cause of free soil, *Herald* editor James Gordon Bennett had

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[73] "The Electoral Question," *Charleston Mercury*, May 29, 1856.
[74] "An Undivided and Conservative South," *The Richmond Enquirer*, June 24 1856, 1.
[75] In her study of gender in politics in the post-war years, Rebecca Edwards argues that the Civil War only intensified Democrats' belief that federal power too frequently intruded on private life and men's control. Abolitionism offended these Democrats because whether from the north or south, they "defined slavery as a household or family institution, [and] they viewed Emancipation and black male suffrage as threats to patriarchal as well as racial order." Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery*, 6.
[76] "The Tribune and Its Political Blunders," *New York Herald*, December 2, 1856.

endorsed Frémont during the campaign. Now, having "scorched [his] fingers badly when [he] took up the cry of 'Fremont and Freedom,'" as one Democratic paper put it, he had thrown his support back to the conservatives, damning Horace Greeley's *Tribune*—and by connection the Republican Party—as radical rabble-rousers whose program would bring "servile war" upon the South.[77]

In private, Democrats voiced these same concerns about Republican radicalism. In late September, as election day approached, a Massachusetts man wrote to Virginia Democratic representative Charles James Faulkner despairing that his "County, Congressional District, and State will all go for Frémont I think beyond a hope—Massachusetts is the hotbed of all the Isms of the day[,] and we must look beyond this state for help in this crisis."[78] For years, northern Democrats had forged compromises with their southern counterparts in effort to hold their party together. In the election of 1852, those compromises had paid off. Democrats ran on a platform that promised to "abide by and adhere to a faithful execution of the acts known as the compromise measures settled by the last Congress—'the act for reclaiming fugitives from service or labor' included."[79] Their unity had allowed them to triumph over the divided Whig Party. More recently, however, northern Democrats' concessions to the southern wing of the party had cost them dearly in the midterms. So, in 1856, Faulkner's correspondent still saw the alliance with southerners as a source of strength—as electoral votes that could prevent Republicans and their so-called "isms" from taking the White House.

Southern Democrats, for their part, presented slavery as a necessary conservative counterpoint to all of the interrelated forms of Republican radicalism. A conservative stance on slavery could safeguard the country against any number of radical doctrines. The *Richmond Enquirer*,

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[77] "Our New York Correspondence," 3.
[78] "Unknown to Charles James Faulkner," September 29, 1856, Family Papers, 1737-1954 (Mss1F2735aFA2), Virginia Historical Society.
[79] "1852 Democratic Party Platform," June 1, 1852, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29575.

Democrats argued that free society's radicalisms, including "infidelity. . . anti-marriage doctrines, [and] free-love doctrines," were "express assertions, that free society is neither natural, rightful, or even tolerable." "The absence of these evils in slave society," the article continued, "shows that it is the better system."[80] Another article in the same paper argued that a "united and conservative South"—that is, one that kept its slaves—would be "looked to as an. . . anchor of hope and security" by both "m[e]n of property" and every "Christian of the North."[81] Only the conservative, patriarchal institution of slavery could counterbalance Republican radicalism and save the country from moral ruin. This logic revealed shades of difference between the northern and southern solutions to northern radicalism. Northern Democrats believed beating back the Republican Party would defend conservative social norms. Southern Democrats believed that slavery would have the same effect. At least at the moment, however, electing James Buchanan and instituting popular sovereignty served both northern and southern Democrats' purposes.

Associating abolitionism with gender radicalism, whether by describing abolitionists as gender deviants or by relating radical gender movements to abolitionism, was a cagey tactic for uniting the Democrats against Frémont and Fillmore. In the South, lumping together the "multitudinous isms" allowed Democrats to make a cohesive agenda out of mastery. Republican gender radicalism and Republican race radicalism had to be stopped in order to preserve southern men's mastery over their women and their slaves. In the overwhelmingly white North, abolitionism did not threaten white men's status in the same way it did in the South. Women's rights and Free Love did threaten northern men's power, though, and so depicting abolitionism as part and parcel of those two "isms" helped northern men understand abolition as a threat even if they lived in a free state. It also helped northern conservatives see Republicans as a radical party, thus continuing the

[80] "The Strangest Thing in the World," *The Richmond Enquirer*, September 19 1856, 2.
[81] "An Undivided and Conservative South," 1.

long trend of decrying one's political enemies as disunionists. In short, radicalism was radicalism, no matter what conservative institution it threatened; and the unsexing of women threatened the identities of northern and southern men alike. Only a united, conservative Democratic Party could thwart Republicans' attempts to divide the country with their radical beliefs on gender and slavery.

Democratic Victory?

On November 4, 1856, James Buchanan defeated John C. Frémont handily, taking nineteen states to Frémont's eleven. The threat of John and Jessie Frémont occupying the White House, of the onward march of women's rights, of free love, and of abolitionism, and of disunion—all seemed to be halted by Buchanan's election. The *Democratic Review* predicted that "every scheme of disunion will soon perish from amongst us, and the old sentiment of fraternal amity be reestablished."[82] Democrats felt sure that Buchanan, an almost clinically cautious man, would pursue a conservative course, and that he would favor neither northern nor southern interests during his time in the White House. A New York Democrat composed a song rejoicing that Buchanan would "never betray/ Yankee hearts or their rights/ then for Jemmie hurrah!"[83]

Voters had not only chosen Buchanan—they had chosen popular sovereignty. This fact contributed to Democrats' ebullient faith in their country's future. When Stephen Douglas orchestrated the passage of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, he created a firestorm of controversy among freesoilers who believed the Missouri Compromise could not or should not be repealed. Buchanan's election on a popular sovereignty platform, however, seemed to show that a silent majority of centrist voters supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act. From where Democrats stood in November 1856, it seemed like an incredible victory: they had organized the western lands for a railroad and

[82] The *Democratic Review*, quoted in Varon, *Disunion!*, 287.
[83] Katy Luby, "Welcome Buchanan!," (New York: Horace Waters, 1857).

forever settled the vexing question of slavery in the territories, and the voters had approved.

It is easy to see why popular sovereignty won voters' support. In principle, it sounded wonderful. Let the voters decide! What could be more American, more democratic, or more practical than that? Of course, even in late 1856, worrying news traveled eastward from Kansas about violence between pro- and anti-slavery settlers there. But Democrats remained certain that popular sovereignty would prevail, and that a fair vote on slavery would bring peace and stability to Kansas and to the Union. The next year and a half would prove them wrong.

Chapter One: Appendix

"The Great Republican Reform Party, Calling on Their Candidate"

Chapter Two: Utah and Lecompton

In 1856, American newspapers turned their focus to the contest for the White House. Democratic, Republican, and American Party papers all featured the standard partisan fare. "Michigan for Buchanan!" Ohio's *McArthur Democrat* cried.[1] The *Buffalo Morning Express* praised the young men of Buffalo, who had just created a "Young men's Fremont club."[2] Shreveport, Louisiana's *South-Western* headed its news section with the declaration, "FOR PRESIDENT MILLARD FILLMORE, of New York."[3] And after James Buchanan claimed victory, the *Baltimore Sun* happily reported on electors around the country casting their votes for Buchanan and Breckinridge.[4]

Alongside these articles, however, appeared titillating reports on another topic entirely: Mormon polygamy. Two columns to the left of the proclamation of Michigan's support for Buchanan, the editor of the *McArthur Democrat* printed a small news piece informing readers that a man from Salk Lake City and his four wives had just checked into a local hotel.[5] In addition to carrying the news of the young men's Fremont club, the *Buffalo Morning Express* reported at length on the extrajudicial murder of a prominent Mormon man in Michigan. According to the paper, the man's "five wives, or concubines" had "been given by their parents to the will of the Prophet," and thus wished for their husband's death so they might escape from the polygamous marriage.[6] The *South-Western*, which so proudly declared itself for the American Party, printed on the same page rumors about polygamy in Utah. "One bishop married six wives—all sisters, and his own nieces." The paper continued on to attack the leader of the Latter-Day Saints: "Brigham Young recently built

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[1] "Michigan for Buchanan!," *The McArthur Democrat*, May 29, 1856, 3.
[2] "The Young Men," *Buffalo Morning Express*, July 2, 1856, 2.
[3] "For President," *The South-Western*, June 18, 1856, 2.
[4] "Additional California News," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 30, 1856, 1.
[5] "Among the Late Arrivals," *The McArthur Democrat*, May 29, 1856, 3.
[6] "Excitement at Beaver Islands, and Arrest of the Mormons by the Sheriff of Mackinaw," *Buffalo Morning Express*, July 2, 1856, 2.

a stone harem for his ninety wives, but they all revolted and wouldn't go into the cage. Ninety women were too much for one man."[7] On the same day that it described California's electors casting their votes for Buchanan, the *Baltimore Sun* published a much longer article detailing the precise number of wives held by Utah's prominent politicians. Tallying the husbands and wives in two columns, the paper concluded, "we have the whole number of females. . .amounting to 420; or, in other words, 40 men have 420 wives."[8]

At first glance, the Mormon issue may seem to be mere salacious distractions from the real news: a hotly-contested presidential election over the Kansas-Nebraska Act and the extension of slavery. And indeed, this is largely how scholars have treated it. Historians of antebellum politics have written almost nothing on the federal politics of Mormon polygamy. Eric Foner's classic work on the Republican Party makes no mention of polygamy or Mormons in Utah in his discussion of the party's formation, nor does Michael Pierson's newer work on Republicans' gender-cultural identity. Yet in 1856, Republicans deemed the Mormon issue sufficiently important to include in their first national platform. Works on the Democratic Party are similarly silent on Mormonism and politics. Inexplicably, even scholars of Mormon history and Mormon studies pay little attention to federal politics in this period or to the 1850s in general—even though that decade featured a war, a famous massacre, and the Republican Party's politicization of Mormon polygamy.[9]

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[7] "General Intelligence," *The South-Western*, June 18, 1856, 2.
[8] "Judge Drummond and the Mormons," *Baltimore Sun*, December 30, 1856, 2.
[9] Pierson argues, and I agree, that gender served as an easy yet important marker of party identity. For Republicans, this meant identifying men as "the champions of female morality, male restraint, and sentimental marriage while stating [their] opposition to tyrannical marriages in the North and patriarchal abuses in the South" (116). I would add that it also meant opposing polygamous marriages in the West. See Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970); Michael D. Pierson, *Free Hearts and Free Homes: Gender and American Antislavery Politics* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Of Leonard Arrington's two works on Mormon history, *Brigham Young: American Moses* comes closest to dealing with Mormonism and federal politics in the 1850s with its narrative of the Utah War, plus one paragraph each on the Republican and Democratic positions on popular sovereignty and polygamy. But Arrington argues that Democrats "became just as outspoken in denouncing Mormon marriage practices" (251). I would amend that statement to argue that Democrats did not like polygamy, but they did not want to be seen as interfering to stop it. See Leonard J. Arrington, *Brigham Young: American Moses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985). J. Spencer Fluhman offers one of the few book-length treatments of anti-Mormonism, yet he moves through the antebellum years quickly and offers only two paragraphs on popular

But the two issues—Mormon polygamy in Utah and slavery in Kansas—were, in fact, closely connected. Republicans' 1856 platform proclaimed "it is both the right and the imperative duty of Congress to prohibit in the Territories those twin relics of barbarism—Polygamy, and Slavery."[10] Republican nominee John C. Frémont and other down-ballot candidates asserted that the Democratic doctrine of popular sovereignty had created chaos and social immorality not only in Kansas, with its "domestic institution" of slavery, but also in Utah, with its "domestic institution" of polygamy.

Frémont lost the election. But by co-opting the southern description of slavery as a "domestic institution," Republicans had made a provocative argument. Northern and southern Democrats alike squirmed as Republicans demanded to know whether the Democratic doctrine of popular sovereignty meant that Democrats supported Mormon polygamy. Northern Democrats claimed that Mormon lawlessness, not Mormon polygamy, justified sending federal troops to Utah. Southern Democrats, who feared that intervention in Utah's "domestic institutions" could later justify the same in Kansas or even the South, scrambled to find reasons that the federal government should stay out of the Utah territory.

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sovereignty and the state. David T. Smith and Kathleen Flake likewise focus on the post-1879 era. See J. Spencer Fluhman, *"A Peculiar People": Anti-Mormonism and the Making of Religion in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 107–8; David T. Smith, *Religious Persecution and Political Order in the United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Kathleen Flake, *The Politics of American Religious Identity: The Seating of Senator Reed Smoot, Mormon Apostle* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004). One chapter of Sarah Barringer Gordon's *The Mormon Question* does deal with the relationship between the "domestic institutions" of polygamy and slavery. But our work differs in focus and therefore in findings. First, Gordon is most interested in polygamy as a moral and legal issue unto itself. I think it was an important gender issue, but as this chapter will show, I believe the reason polygamy became a powerful issue when it did was because Republicans connected it to popular sovereignty and slavery. Because of her focus on polygamy as a moral and legal issue, Gordon attends only briefly to southern resistance to anti-polygamy action, and looks not at all at the northern Democratic response. Second, though Gordon writes briefly on how southerners believed intervention in polygamy could justify intervention in slavery, she does not explain why northern Democrats resisted anti-polygamy laws. Yet if we put Republicans' focus on polygamy into its political contest--a presidential campaign focused on Kansas and popular sovereignty--understanding the northern Democrats' reaction appears to be crucial to our understanding of that election as a whole. See Sarah Barringer Gordon, *"The Twin Relic of Barbarism," in The Mormon Question: Polygamy and Constitutional Conflict in Nineteenth Century Americ*a (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002).

[10] "Republican Party Platform of 1856," June 18, 1856, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=29619.

The following year, northern Democrats watched in horror as voter intimidation and voting fraud in Kansas threw election after election to the minority pro-slavery faction in the territory, ultimately resulting in the fraudulent proslavery government in Kansas requesting admission to the Union under the Lecompton constitution. Southern Democrats were gleeful at the prospect of another slave state, and they won James Buchanan's support for the constitution's approval. But many northern Democrats, following the lead of Stephen Douglas, were determined to defend their beloved principle of popular sovereignty, so they reached for the same weapon Republicans had used in 1856: analogizing slavery and marriage. Southerners would never hinder a man's right to make laws regarding marriage, northern Douglas Democrats pointed out. So why, now, did southern Democrats and the Buchanan administration's northern allies reject the right of anti-Lecompton Kansans—the popular majority—to make their own laws regarding slavery?

Benefitting from the Buchanan administration's support, southern Democrats nonetheless won a compromise that sent the pro-slavery constitution—attached to significant carrots and sticks—back to the voters of Kansas for final approval. But Kansas voters roundly rejected the measure. Southern Democrats were left spinning. They had failed to add another slave state to the Union. But more than that, they felt they had been betrayed. Northern Democrats had sided with the Republicans to sink Lecompton. And to do so, they had turned southerners' argument about the familial, local nature of slavery against them. The whole episode revealed that in 1856, gendered language had failed to resolve the Democrats' profound disagreements over the purpose and practice of popular sovereignty.

In the 34th Congress, Republicans held 37 seats in the House of Representatives. As the Democrats held 158 seats, Republicans did not wield much influence. But Republicans had won 34 of those seats in the 1854 midterms, and Democrats had lost 75 of theirs. So in June 1856, when

Republicans nominated John C. Frémont to stand as their candidate for the presidency, public opinion was trending in the right direction for Republicans. In 1854, Republicans had won votes by promising to ban slavery's extension into the western territories—a view that appealed to free-soil Democrats, freeholding farmers, and abolitionists alike.

Democrats supported popular sovereignty because it seemed to them a fair and democratic way to denationalize the question of slavery's expansion into the territories. Republicans, on the other hand, opposed popular sovereignty because it might expand slavery and because they believed a small vanguard of settlers could not be trusted to represent the whole interest of the United States in the territories. Events in Kansas provided ample evidence for this claim. In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska Act had granted Kansans the right to regulate their domestic institutions in their own way. Kansas, which the Missouri Compromise had previously mandated become a free state, was now up for grabs. Chaos ensued. Proslavery Missourians quickly moved across state lines to establish homesteads in Kansas. Organizing under the auspices of the New England Emigrant Aid Company, antislavery Northeasterners followed. Midwesterners went, too; though not abolitionists, they dreamed of a free Kansas where they could farm their own land without competition from slaveholders. The competing factions ultimately established their own governments: the technically legitimate proslavery legislature at Lecompton, which had been elected amid violence and voting fraud, and the antislavery shadow legislature at Topeka. Republicans could not support a theory of government that led to the expansion of slavery by illegitimate minority rule.

In 1856, then, Republicans needed to convince voters that a free-soil policy would bring peace and prosperity to the West, and they needed to counter the Democratic position that slavery in the West should be decided by popular sovereignty. The Kansas-Nebraska Act had expressly mandated that the people of those territories be "perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic

institutions in their own way."[11] Pointing out that both slavery and marriage were domestic institutions, Republicans cast doubt on popular sovereignty by arguing that it prevented the federal government from interfering in slavery in Kansas as well as polygamy in Utah.

Americans' deep antipathy toward Mormons primed them to accept the Republicans' argument. Mormonism originated in the burned-over district of western New York during the Second Great Awakening. Joseph Smith, Jr. claimed that beginning in 1820, after praying over which denomination of Christianity he should join, he received a series of visions from God telling him not to join any of the existing denominations of Christianity, and instead that God would use his as a vessel to re-establish the true Christian church. In 1830, Smith published the *Book of Mormon*, a new body of Christian scripture which he claimed to have translated from a set of engraved golden plates given to him by the angel Moroni. Claiming status as a prophet, Smith rapidly amassed followers.

The same year that he published the *Book of Mormon*, Smith settled in Kirtland, Ohio. The Mormon population of the township grew from 10 percent in 1832 to nearly 50 percent in 1836. Meanwhile, the local non-Mormon press warned that Mormons planned to take control of the district by ballot; a mob of anti-Mormon Ohioans tarred and feathered Smith; and a separate mob nearly castrated Smith. With the increase in violence, many Mormons left for another Latter-Day Saint outpost, this one in Missouri. They fared no better there. In 1838, after a series of skirmishes between Mormons and the Missouri State Militia, Governor Lilburn Boggs issued an executive order that one scholar has described as "quasi-genocidal."[12] Executive Order 44 declared that Mormons had "made war upon the people of this state" and "must be exterminated or driven from the state if necessary for the public peace."[13] Mormons fled Missouri for Commerce, Illinois, which they

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[11] "An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas," in *Public Acts of the Thirthy-Third Congress of the United States* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, n.d.), 283, https://memory.loc.gov/ll/llsl/010/0300/03050283.tif.
[12] Smith, *Religious Persecution*, 44.
[13] Executive Order 44 quoted in Smith, 44.

purchased and renamed Nauvoo. Illinois legislators initially welcomed the influx of tax-paying immigrants. But by 1844, Nauvoo's population had reached 15,000 souls—rivaling that of Chicago—and its militia, the Nauvoo Legion, numbered over 5,000.

In Illinois, as in Ohio and Missouri, Mormons' growing political power distressed non-Mormons. But this time, another factor stretched tensions to the breaking point: polygamy. In 1844, Smith confided in other members of the Mormon hierarchy that he had received a revelation that all Mormon men would practice polygamy. Outraged, a group of Mormons broke from Smith and published a newspaper to expose his plans. The paper painted a picture of helpless women held captive against their will. "The harmless, inoffensive, and unsuspecting creatures," the paper warned, "are so devoted to the Prophet, and the cause of Jesus Christ, that they do not dream of the deep-laid and fatal scheme which prostrates happiness. . . that she should be [Smith's] Spiritual wife; for it was right anciently, and God will tolerate it again."[14] In the controversy that ensued, Smith declared martial law. The governor of Illinois considered the declaration an act of treason. Smith was awaiting trial in Carthage, Illinois, when an anti-Mormon mob stormed the jail and murdered Smith and his brother, Hyram.[15] Their prophet dead, and facing the prospect of further violence, the Mormons fled Illinois. Brigham Young, their new leader, hoped to find "a place on this earth that nobody else wants"—and in the Salt Lake Basin, he found it.[16] Removed from their persecutors, and supported by a pro-expansionist federal government, the Mormons quickly developed the area. Utah became a United States territory in 1850.

But even the 1,300 miles between Illinois and Utah could not prevent lurid stories about Mormon polygamy from trickling back east. In a typical article of this genre, the *New York Times*

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[14] Nauvoo Expositor, quoted in Smith, 60.
[15] For a survey of the history of the Latter-Day Saints between 1830 and 1848, see Smith, 44–63.
[16] Quoted in "Utah," *PBS: New Perspectives on the West* (blog), 2001, http://www.pbs.org/weta/thewest/places/states/utah/ut_salt.htm.

reprinted long portions a recently-released book on the Mormons in Utah. After claiming that Smith's licentiousness had led to the revelation of polygamy—he "gathered around him a gang of female dupes, he gave full sway to his passions; and to justify his caresses, put forth his new revelation on the subject of marriage"—the author detailed the expansion of polygamy in Utah and its ill effects. This included a description of the houses Mormon men supposedly built for their wives. "A man with half a dozen wives builds, if he can, a long, low dwelling, having six entrances from the outside, and when he takes in a new wife. . . adds another apartment. The object is to keep the women and babies. . . apart, and prevent those terrible cat-fights which sometimes occur." The author went on to explain that this rampant polygamy denigrated women and left children wanting for love and care. "A *wife*, in Utah, cannot live out half her days," the author informed readers. "In families where polygamy as not been introduced, she suffers an agony of apprehension on the subject" because "the man, from the moment he makes up his mind to bring one or more concubines into the family, becomes always neglectful, and in most cases abusive to his wife." "The children," meanwhile, were "subject to a frightful degree of sickness and mortality. This is the combined result of the gross sensuality of the parents, and want of care toward their offspring."[17]

Novelists also drew in readers with salacious tales of polygamy in Utah. The 1855 anti-Mormon novel *Boadicea the Mormon Wife: Life Scenes in Utah* described a Mormon girl trapped in a polygamous marriage in Utah. The novel's heroine, Boadicea, fell in love and married a dashing young Mormon man, Hubert, who promised to be faithful to his new bride. Soon after their marriage, a church leader tried to convince her to become his "spiritual wife." Boadicea refuses, but soon after, Hubert brings home a woman named Cephysia and announces that she will be his second wife. The novel continues thus: a church leader strangles Hubert (the leader is infatuated with Boadicea), Cephysia kills Boadicea's child with cyanide before committing suicide, and, in a

[17] "The Mormons in Utah," *New York Times*, June 30, 1854, 2.

scene that oddly foreshadows the 1857 Mountain Meadows Massacre, Mormon men dress up like Native Americans and massacre travelling settlers to steal their money. Ultimately, Boadicea escapes from Utah and moves back East.[18] The same year, Orvilla S. Belisle's *The Prophets; or, Mormonism Unveiled* portrayed a heroine trapped in a Mormon harem.[19] The reading public in the east devoured the anti-Mormon books: Metta Victor's 1856 *Mormon Wives: A Narrative of Facts Stranger Than Fiction* sold more than forty thousand copies in the 1850s.[20]

Utah had become a United States territory, and its growing population would soon qualify its people to apply for statehood. These facts rendered the polygamy issue more than just fodder for lurid stories. Could non-Mormons in the East allow polygamy to continue in an American territory? And could they admit to the Union a state whose people practiced polygamy? In the election of 1856, Republicans responded by arguing that the federal government maintained "sovereign powers over the Territories of the United States," and must use those powers to ban polygamy in Utah.[21] Given the public's voracious appetite for anti-Mormon literature, this position alone might win Republicans support. But then Republicans connected the issue of polygamy in Utah to the issue of slavery in Kansas: the federal government should prohibit both polygamy and slavery in the territories. In so doing, they co-opted the public's disgust for polygamy to support the party's foundational crusade against the expansion of slavery and its vision of a more powerful federal government.

In 1856, Republicans politicians and newspapers alerted voters to the danger of popular

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[18] Alfred Eva Bell, *Boadicea; The Mormon Wife. Life-Scenes in Utah* (Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York, and Buffalo: Arthur R. Orton, 1855).
[19] Orvilla S. Belisle, *The Prophets; Or, Mormonism Unveiled* (Philadelphia: Wm. White Smith, 1855), https://ia600303.us.archive.org/20/items/prophetsormormo00beligoog/prophetsormormo00beligoog.pdf.
[20] Metta Victoria Fuller Victor, *Mormon Wives; a Narrative of Facts Stranger Than Fiction* (New York: Derby & Jackson, 1856), https://books.google.com/books?id=IHUoAAAAYAAJ&pg=PR4#v=onepage&q&f=false; circulation information from Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *A House Full of Females: Plural Marriage and Women's Rights in Early Mormonism, 1835-1870* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2017), 337.
[21] "Republican Party Platform of 1856."

sovereignty by warning voters that if they accepted men's right to choose slavery in Kansas, they would also have to accept men's right to choose polygamy in Utah. Republican William Seward said as much in a speech before the Senate on April 9, 1856. "Will you . . .end the debate," he asked, "by binding Kansas with chains. . .? Even then you must give over Utah to slavery, to make it secure and permanent in Kansas; and you must give over Oregon and Washington to both polygamy and slavery, so as to guaranty equally one and the other of those peculiar domestic institutions in Utah."[22] The Kansas-Nebraska Act had abrogated the Missouri Compromise's ban on slavery north of the 36° 30' parallel, instead allowing voters in the territories "to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way."[23] By arguing that both slavery and polygamy were domestic institutions—which was to say familial, and therefore beyond the reach of the federal government—Seward asserted that the Kansas-Nebraska Act allowed slavery in Kansas and polygamy in Utah.

Republican newspapers echoed this argument. Over and over again, they attempted to discredit the Democrats' popular sovereignty solution for Kansas by claiming it would result in polygamy's codification in Utah. On March 20, the *Buffalo Daily Republic* reported on the Utah legislature's preparations to apply for admission to the Union. According to the paper, Brigham Young had issued a message asking for Congress to "recognize the principle of self-government." The *Republic* portrayed this as a request for the United States to apply the principle of popular sovereignty to Utah—and therefore to admit Utah under a constitution that allowed the practice of polygamy. Indeed, "nothing else can be understood by it," the *Republic* declared, "and it remains to be seen what ingenious 'dodge' will be resorted to by Senator Douglas." The paper implied that the Democrats—and their presumptive nominee—were in a bind. If they supported the principle of popular sovereignty, how could they reasonably deny Mormons the right to make their own laws

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[22] Quoted in "Interesting from Washington. The Immediate Admission of Kansas into the Union. Speech of Hon. William H. Seward," *The New York Times*, April 10, 1856, 2.
[23] "An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas," 283.

regarding polygamy? The *Republic* continued, "The utter absurdity of the doctrine of squatter sovereignty was never so fully exemplified as when its operation is attempted to be applied to the 'domestic institutions' of Mormonism." If the doctrine of popular sovereignty was just, then "there can be no reasonable objection to the universal application of its principles," the *Republic* concluded.[24] If Democrats truly believed in allowing settlers the right to determine their own domestic institutions, then they must stand by that principle, even when it allowed men to write polygamy into a state's laws.

A circular published in April by the Republican National Convention hammered home the failure of popular sovereignty. "Mr. Douglas's act for the Territories, which 'leaves the people perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way. . .' certainly authorizes the Mormon State to come into the Union with the Turkish system full blown, which makes slaves of all colors, and wives without number." As historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich has explained, Americans believed that Mormon polygamy rendered the Saints not just sexual deviants, but aliens. God might have allowed polygamy to exist among the ancient Jews, but no modern civilization could condone a practice that Americans believed belonged to the people of Turkey, Africa, and Asia.[25] Republicans saw polygamy as a form of servitude in which white women were forced to satisfy Mormon men's sexual appetites and then raise the resulting children without adequate support from their husbands. As a result, Republicans believed if they could forge consensus around the barbarism of polygamy, they could then deploy that force of public opinion against allowing popular sovereignty in Kansas. After all, popular sovereignty would allow polygamy and slavery to exist in American territories. The circular from the Republican National Convention concluded that if popular sovereignty continued as the law of the land, "We should have Negro

[24] "Utah Forming a State Constitution," *The Buffalo Daily Republic*, March 20, 1856, 2.
[25] Ulrich, *A House Full of Females*, 336–37.

Slavery forced on one Territory by a usurpation set up by the sword, and the right of the Mormons recognized in another to hold a multitude of the gentler sex in servitude."[26]

Though Republicans did not publicly court abolitionists, prominent abolitionist newspapers nonetheless used the same analogy between polygamy and slavery to bolster their readers' support for the Republican Party. On February 2, in response to a Democrat's speech in favor of popular sovereignty, *The Anti-Slavery Bugle* retorted, "If [the people] may establish Slavery, may they not also establish Polygamy, or any other Wrong?"[27] Even after the election, *The National Era* continued to attack popular sovereignty by linking it to the growth of polygamy in Utah. Knowing how readers despised the Mormons and their practice of polygamy, the paper asked, "If a handful of settlers in a large territory have the right to determine their domestic institutions. . .by what power, in what way, can these Utah settlers be reached?" The response? They could not be: popular sovereignty prevented the federal government from exercising power over the Mormons' domestic institutions. "Squatter sovereignty, being supreme. . .may establish the abomination," the newspaper finished.[28] Republicans made the same argument about popular sovereignty in Kansas. On March 13, 1856, at a meeting in Albany, abolitionist Gerrit Smith avowed, "This doctrine of Squatter Sovereignty is exceedingly absurd. The whole people own the territories, and the whole people should govern them. The United States government cannot abdicate its power to a handful of people."[29] Polygamy and slavery were immoral. Republicans believed a small "squatter" vanguard should not be allowed to establish either practice in the territories.

Republicans even used similar sexualized imagery to portray Mormons and proslavery "border ruffians" in Kansas. Though political cartoons lampooning Mormon polygamy did not

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[26] "Philadelphia National Convention," *The National Era*, April 24, 1856, 4.
[27] "A Trap to Catch Gudgeons," *The Anti-Slavery Bugle*, February 2, 1856, 1.
[28] "Utah and Popular Sovereignty," *The National Era*, April 30, 1857, 2.
[29] "Enthusiastic Kansas Meeting at Albany--Speech of Gerrit Smith," *The Liberator*, March 28, 1856, 1.

proliferate until the 1870s, anti-Mormon literature frequently portrayed innocent Mormon women as the victims of Mormon men's rapacious sexual appetites. Novels described Mormon men recruiting guileless women to the faith, or treating their wives, daughters, and concubines as mere property. Anti-Mormon novelists—most of whom had never met a Mormon, let alone traveled to Utah—drew these images straight from popular antislavery stereotypes of slaveholders: of the white slave procurer, and of the cruel, lustful southern slaveholder.[30] Republican political cartoons drew on the same stereotypes. Images like "The Cincinnati Platform, or the New Way to Make a State" and "Liberty, the Fair Maid of Kansas" dramatized proslavery men's metaphorical violation of the Kansas Territory by connecting it with the ostensibly real sexual threat those men posed to the freesoil women of Kansas. "The Cincinnati Platform" portrays a group of slaveholders and their shackled slaves marching into Kansas; in the foreground, a white woman with her dress torn off has either fainted or been killed by these marauding border ruffians. "Liberty, the Fair Maid of Kansas" shows a feminized Kansas begging to be spared from the lechery of northern Democrats, who licked their lips and leer at her.[31] Republican papers backed up these images by printing dubious reports of the rapes of free-state women in Kansas, thus encouraging northerners to vote Republican and reinforcing the notion that Democrats would do anything to silence anti-slaveryism. In both anti-Mormon novels and anti-Democratic cartoons, Republicans argued that popular sovereignty had placed control over the territories into the hands of men who were morally unfit to exercise that power.

In 1856, then, Republicans used Mormon polygamy to criticize popular sovereignty. They blamed the doctrine, and its Democratic supporters, for the federal government's inaction in Utah.

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[30] Leonard J. Arrington and Jon Haupt, "Intolerable Zion: The Image of Mormonism in Nineteenth Century American Literature," *Western Humanities Review* 22, no. 3 (Summer 1968): 245–48.

[31] For cartoons, see appendix. For further analysis, see Brie Swenson Arnold, "'To Inflame the Mind of the North': Slavery Politics and the Sexualized Violence of Bleeding Kansas," *Kansas History* 38, no. 1 (Spring 2015): 30–33.

Given Americans' voracious appetite for anti-Mormon, anti-polygamy literature, that criticism alone would have been incisive. It also bolstered the Republican Party's bona fides as the party that respected and elevated white women by promoting a kind of domestic feminism. But the critique of popular sovereignty in Utah took on extraordinary power because it underlined the Republican critique of popular sovereignty in Kansas. In Utah, as in Kansas, Democrats had territories determine their domestic institutions; in Utah, as in Kansas, this policy had resulted in the subjugation of women. This gendered attack on popular sovereignty strengthened the Republican's broader condemnation of popular sovereignty as a failed policy that had produced nothing but chaos and immorality in the western territories.

Despite the violence in Kansas, Democrats still believed in popular sovereignty. Their platform declared it "the only sound and safe solution of the 'slavery question.'"[32] But northern Democrats also recognized that popular sovereignty represented the only way they might appease southern slaveholders without sacrificing the party's increasingly tenuous hold on northern voters. In short, northern Democrats needed popular sovereignty to work. When Republicans blamed polygamy in Utah on popular sovereignty, then, northern Democrats found themselves in a predicament. Should they betray popular sovereignty in Kansas by supporting intervention in Utah? Or should they protect popular sovereignty by allowing polygamy to continue, despite its deep unpopularity among their voters?

Northern Democrats cast about to find a way around this question and harness the concept of "domestic institutions" to serve their own political agenda. The meaning of the terms "domestic relations" and "domestic institutions" evolved throughout the nineteenth century. At common law, slavery fell under the umbrella of domestic relations, which also included the relationships between

[32] "1856 Democratic Party Platform," June 2, 1856, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29576.

husband and wife and parents and children. So, although slaves lacked legal status, the law saw them as part of the master's family.[33] Since 1787, American jurisprudence recognized the power of the states to regulate those domestic relationships.[34] Slavery was a domestic institution inasmuch as it was, legally, a family relationship.

But in popular parlance, the frequency of use and meaning of the terms "domestic relations" and "domestic institutions" changed over time, depending on how prominent the slavery issue was in federal politics. In the early nineteenth century, "domestic institutions" rarely entered popular parlance, and "domestic relations" usually meant relationships among family members or among the states of the new nation.[35]

In the 1830s, abolitionist societies sprang up, while southerners asserted that slavery was a positive good. All of this made slavery an increasing part of public discourse. Accordingly, Americans spoke about the "domestic institution" of slavery more and more, and when they used the term "domestic relations," they often—though not always—used it to indicate slavery.[36] Yet even when they meant slavery, it seems they used the term "domestic relations" to emphasize the domestic—and therefore inviolable—character of the master-slave relationship. Arguing against interference with slavery, one paper editorialized, "it is a domestic relation subsisting between the master and the slave, which ought to be viewed as sacred and inviolable as any of the other domestic relations existing in society. The philanthropists. . .have therefore no more right to interfere with this

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[33] Lynn D. Wardle, "From Slavery to Same-Sex Marriage: Comity Versus Public Policy in Inter-Jurisdictional Recognition of Controversial Domestic Relations," *Brigham Young University Law Review* 2008, no. 6 (2008): 1865–66.
[34] Wardle, 1881.
[35] For two examples of "domestic relations" being used to describe family relations, see "Mr. Gaston's Speech," *The Carolina Federal Republican*, April 9, 1814, 1; "Obituary," *The North-Carolina Star*, November 11, 1814, 3; for two instances where "domestic relations" describes the relationship among the states, see "Report of the Committee of Senate. Appointed to Inquire into the Extent and Causes of the Present General Distress," *The Wyoming Herald*, March 10, 1820, 3; "The New Year," *The Democrat*, January 6, 1824, 2.
[36] For instances in which Americans used the term "domestic relations" to talk about slavery, see "The Legislature of South Carolina," *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette*, January 7, 1825; for instances of Americans using "domestic institutions" to describe slavery in this period, see "Colonization Society," *Pensacola Gazette*, May 15, 1830, 2; "An Incendiary Article," *The Liberator*, September 21, 1833, 3; For an example of "domestic relations" being used to talk about a man's family life, see "Proceedings in Relation to the Editor of the Telegraph," *The Adams Sentinel*, January 26, 1835, 3.

subject, than they have with the relations subsisting between husband and wife, or between parents and their children."[37]

In the 1850s, slavery's extension became the central question of federal politics—first with the lands won in the Mexican war, then in the Kansas-Nebraska territory. As a result, the use of "domestic institutions" and "domestic relations" to mean slavery continued. But even then, people continued to use the terms as a proxy for state rights: the defense of "domestic" control from federal intervention. They also continued to use it to refer to domestic versus foreign policy, family relationships, and so on. The Kansas-Nebraska Act's mandate that the people of those territories be "perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way," then, appeared in the context of a long and evolving usage of the term "domestic institutions."[38] Though by the 1850s Americans most often used that term to denote slavery, it had long meant family relationships and the laws that govern them, and that latter usage persisted throughout the 1850s.

Given this history, Democrats generally admitted that the term "domestic institutions" encompassed more than just slavery. In his 1855 State of the Union address, Franklin Pierce blamed northerners for meddling with the South's domestic institutions, while the South left the institutions of the North unmolested. Of northerners, he declared, "they engage in the offensive and hopeless undertaking of reforming the domestic institutions of other states, wholly beyond their control and authority." Meanwhile, "the people of the southern states confine their attention to their own affairs, not presuming officiously to intermeddle with the social institutions of the northern states."[39]

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[37] "Abolition in All Its Branches," *The Long-Island Star*, September 11, 1835, 2; another article on a court case dealing with whether a master had the right to beat his enslaved workers acknowledged that lawyers had argued in favor of that right on the grounds that slavery was a domestic relation. "This has indeed been assimilated at the bar to the other domestic relations; and arguments drawn from the well established principles which confer and restrain the authority of the parent over the child, the tutor over the pupil, the master over the apprentice," the article reported. See "At the Late Session of the Supreme Court of This State," *The National Gazette*, June 30, 1830, 1.
[38] "An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas," 283.
[39] Franklin Pierce, "Third Annual Message," December 31, 1855, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29496.

Pierce's reference to the "social institutions" of the North reveals that even before Republicans raised the issue in reference to polygamy, Democrats understood that term to encompass social practices beyond slavery.

Northern Democrats thus did not—could not—argue that marriage did not fall under the category of "domestic institutions" covered by the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Having to concede that point, their counterattacks were weak and jumbled. On June 12, 1856, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* tried to at once turn the issue into a question of religious freedom and discredit Mormonism as a religion. The constitution "should undoubtedly secure impunity for every form of faith and worship," the paper reasoned, "but whether it should cover Mormon polygamy, or Chinese idolatry and the worship of sticks and stones, is not so clear."[40] At another point, a Democratic congressman from Illinois tried to turn the polygamy-slavery analogy back on the Republicans, asking whether they thought that since "Washington, Jefferson, and Madison. . .were slaveholders," Republicans meant to "denounc[e] them as no better than Mohammedans."[41]At no point during the election of 1856 did Democrats mount a meaningful counteroffensive against the Republican claim that popular sovereignty promoted polygamy.

Democrat James Buchanan won the White House, but Democrats' troubles with Mormon polygamy and popular sovereignty continued past election day. In the 1850s, with Brigham Young as governor of Utah, the Mormons had enjoyed a brief period of peaceful relations with the federal government. But conflict soon returned. Mormons skirmished with non-Mormon soldiers. Rumors circulated that Mormons were conspiring with the Pahvant Indians against federal agents. Non-Mormon federal officials found it nearly impossible to exercise power due to local resistance, which

[40] "Offensive Language and Personal Responsibility," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, June 12, 1856, 2.
[41] "Congressional," *Washington Union*, December 18, 1856, 1.

allegedly included the destruction of federal offices. In May 1857, the Buchanan Administration responded to the unrest by declaring Utah "in a state of substantial rebellion" and ordering 2,500 troops to the territory to replace Young with a new governor.[42]

Coupled with the Republican discourse analogizing polygamy and slavery in the last election, the move left Illinois Senator Stephen Douglas scrambling to explain why the federal government's intervention in Utah did not create a precedent for intervening in Kansas. On June 12, in a major speech in Springfield, Illinois, Douglas explained that the federal government was sending troops to Utah to quell unrest among aliens, not to interfere with polygamy. "The Territory of Utah was organized under. . .the compromise measures of 1850, on the supposition that the inhabitants were American citizens," Douglas began. "It was conceded on all hands, and by all parties, that the peculiarities of their religious faith and ceremonies imposed no valid and constitutional objection to their reception into the Union, in conformity with the federal constitution." But over the past seven years, Douglas argued, "rumors and reports" had surfaced other issues with the inhabitants of the territory. "Nine-tenths of the inhabitants are aliens by birth, who have refused to become naturalized," Douglas averred. Moreover, "all the inhabitants, whether native or alien born, known as Mormons. . .are bound by horrid oaths and terrible penalties to recognize and maintain the authority of Brigham Young, and the government of which he is the head, as paramount to that of the United States." Finally, Douglas claimed, "The Mormon government, with Brigham Young at its head, is not forming alliances with the Indian tribes of Utah. . . to prosecute a system of robbery and murder upon American citizens." "Under this view of the subject," Douglas concluded, "I think it is the duty of the President. . .to remove Brigham Young and all his followers from office"—"to apply the knife and cut out this loathsome, disgusting ulcer."[43] Though the military expedition never made

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[42] I have drawn this summary of events from Smith, *Religious Persecution*, 65–66.

[43] Stephen A. Douglas, *Remarks of the Hon. Stephen A. Douglas, on Kansas, Utah, and the Dred Scott Decision, Delivered at Springfield, Illinois, June 12, 1857* (Chicago: Daily Times Book and Job Office, 1857), 12–13.

it to Salt Lake Valley, two years later, Douglas repeated this justification for the federal government's intervention. "Did. . .I propose to intervene. . .because of polygamy or Mormonism?" he asked a colleague on the Senate floor. No: "I showed that the information before us led us to believe that they were in a state of rebellion, denying the authority of the United States."[44]

As usual with Douglas, it is difficult to parse whether conscience or convenience moved him to take this position. David Smith points out that, in the early 1850s, Mormons practiced polygamy in Utah and nonetheless enjoyed good relations with the federal government; only when Mormons began to harass federal officials and non-Mormon settlers did the federal government step in. Smith argues that the Buchanan Administration intervened to protect the state's power, not to stamp out polygamy.[45] Hence, Douglas may have told the truth when he claimed he supported sending troops to Utah to enforce the federal government's power. But the argument also offered Douglas a convenient escape from a tricky situation: he needed to protect his principle of popular sovereignty, but he could not be seen as supporting Mormon polygamy. If readers of the *Buffalo Daily Republic* had been keeping an eye out for "what ingenious 'dodge' will be resorted to by Senator Douglas" on the Utah issue, they might have found it here.[46]

While northern Democrats worried about protecting the principle of popular sovereignty, southern Democrats cared about protecting slavery—both in the Kansas territory and in the South. Their constituents disliked Mormons and their polygamous practices just as much as northerners did: one scholar has described polygamy as a "dominant moral issue" of the nineteenth century.[47] But intervening in polygamy in Utah could ultimately justify intervening in slavery in Kansas, and southern Democrats wagered that their constituents cared more about protecting slavery than

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[44] "Great Debate in the U.S. Senate," *Mississippi Free Trader*, April 25, 1859, 1.
[45] Smith, *Religious Persecution*, 65–66.
[46] "Utah Forming a State Constitution," 2.
[47] Kimball Young, quoted in Smith, *Religious Persecution*, 68.

suppressing polygamy.

Many southern Democrats offered jumbled, weak attempts to dissociate the government's power over Mormon polygamy from its power over southern slavery. A reader of the *Baltimore Sun*, for instance, granted that the inhabitants of the territories could regulate their domestic institutions and that like slavery, polygamy was a domestic institution. But the man made the spurious claim that when the Kansas-Nebraska Act became law, Congress did not know that Mormons practiced polygamy. As a result, he argued, the law did not cover Mormon polygamy, and thus "it will be for Congress to determine whether they will tolerate the establishment of the domestic institution of polygamy."[48] Meanwhile, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune*'s special correspondent in Salt Lake City maintained that the Founders implicitly gave Congress the power to reject a state from applying for admission to the Union if the state did not have a social organization "in harmony with that existing at the time of the adoption of the Constitution."[49] Apparently, Congress could reject Utah's application to the Union on the grounds that the Founders would have been shocked by Mormon polygamy.

Occasionally, southern Democrats argued outright that the federal government did not have the right to intervene in men's marriages. On June 10, 1857, the *Washington Union*, a pro-Buchanan paper, asserted that the Executive had no authority "for interfering to regulate the marriage relation."[50] A month later, an editorial from the *Weekly Mississippian* echoed that principle. "The Government of the United States was not established, nor is it within the scope of its authority, to interfere with the. . .social and domestic institutions of the States or territories. It has no more right to interfere with the marital relations in Utah, than it has to suppress gambling or Sabbath breaking

[48] "Correspondence of the Sun," *The Baltimore Sun*, November 25, 1856, 4.
[49] "Affairs in Utah. Interesting from Salt Lake City," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, August 17, 1858, 2.
[50] "The Mormons," *Washington Union*, June 10, 1857, 2.

in Mississippi."[51] The fire-eating *Charleston Mercury*, always a leading defender of southern slavery, characterized Mormon polygamy as prostitution to prevent the federal government from getting involved. "Brigham calls all who are sealed to him wives, but they are only concubines. Now, is there any law of the United States making concubinage a crime?"[52] In part, the papers' arguments against federal interference with marriage, gambling, or prostitution reflect Democrats' longstanding inclination to keep the federal government out of white men's private affairs. The work of historian Nancy Cott shows that Democrats were on solid ground here. Cott writes that "the federal principles of the United States allowed each state to make its own rules on marriage and divorce."[53] But the papers' arguments also reveal southern Democrats' concern with protecting slavery. Southern Democrats could not accept federal intervention in Mormon polygamy without opening the door to interference with slavery in Kansas or the South.

A correspondent of the Richmond *South* said as much after Buchanan sent troops to Utah. "I do not approve of [the Mormons'] domestic institutions," the writer maintained. But "It is their business, not mine," he wrote. "As a Southern man, my sympathies are with the Mormons. . . Let the Mormons be crushed for their religion, for that is the real difficulty—and it may not be long before our negro masters, our traders in human chattels. . .may be crushed out to vindicate the glory of God."[54]

The Utah War ultimately fizzled out. Negotiations between the United States and the Latter-Day Saints resulted in a pardon for most Mormons involved in conflicts with the federal government, the transfer of Utah's governorship from Brigham Young to non-Mormon Alfred Cumming, and the peaceful entrance of the United States Army into Utah. The war's only major

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[51] "Does the Authority of the Federal Government Extend Over the Mormons?," *The Weekly Mississippian*, July 14, 1858, 3.
[52] Quoted in "The Mormons," 2.
[53] Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), 28.
[54] Quoted at length in "Polygamy and Slavery," *The National Era*, December 24, 1857, 2.

occurred in September 1857, when the Utah Territorial Militia slaughtered 120 members of a non-Mormon emigrant party. Still, the *Nashville Union and American* warned that southerners should not rejoice over the federal government's renewed control over Utah. "The war against Utah, and the ardor with which it is clamoured for by the mass of the country, is to the South an admonition of the danger attending the maintenance of their own domestic institutions," the *Union* warned. "Slavery is denounced with more fury at the North than polygamy, and slaveholders are held in greater abhorrence than Mormons. The arms of the Government can be turned. . .against one as well as against the other institution."[55]

During the election of 1856 and the Utah War, northern Democrats needed to protect the principle of popular sovereignty against Republicans' attacks. Southern Democrats, meanwhile, wanted to protect slavery from future federal intervention. Northern and southern Democrats offered diverse responses to the conflict in Utah, ranging from disclaiming a desire to interfere to justifying interference on grounds unrelated to polygamy.[56] All of their responses, however, show that they accepted the Republican argument that "domestic institutions" could include both marriage and slavery. If Democrats wished to style themselves as the party that respected men's rights as voters and as patriarchs, it seemed they needed to accept Mormon men's right to practice polygamy.

Republicans apparently took Democrats by surprise when they linked marriage to slavery to condemn popular sovereignty. In 1857, however, northern Democrats made their own connection

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[55] "A New Question," *Nashville Union and American*, January 31, 1858, 2.

[56] As with the Republicans and their position on popular sovereignty and polygamy, the standard texts on antebellum Democrats contain almost no information on the Democrats' response to Utah or their belife in the application of popular sovereignty to both the Utah and the Kansas territories. Even David Potter's encyclopedic work on antebellum politics does not mention the connection. See, for instance, Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983); Yonatan Eyal, *The Young America Movement and the Transformation of the Democratic Party, 1828-1861* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976).

between marriage and slavery to defend popular sovereignty against a new enemy: the Lecompton Constitution.

In February 1857, shortly before James Buchanan took the oath of office, the territorial legislature at Lecompton authorized an election in June for a constitutional convention that would set the territory on the path to statehood. The pro-slavery legislature pulled out all the stops to rig the election in favor of a proslavery constitutional convention. Legislators forbade voting by emigrants who arrived after March 15, making it more difficult for free-state supporters to arrive in time to vote. (Pro-slavery settlers from neighboring Missouri could make the move in plenty of time.) Census takers conspired with the legislature, failing to count many free-state counties entirely and leaving free staters off the voting rolls in others. In light they had taken to calling the "bogus census," free staters largely boycotted the election of delegates.[57] Only 2,200 of 9,000 registered voters went to the polls, and perhaps another ten thousand eligible voters had never been afforded the opportunity to register. In total, only about ten percent of the electorate voted for the sixty delegates selected. Most of those votes came from proslavery areas along the Missouri River, so a large majority of extreme proslavery men won election to the constitutional convention.[58]

Because the territorial legislature had rigged the election of delegates, whatever constitution they produced would have to be ratified in a fair election for the document to have any legitimacy. On October 5, however, Kansans went to the polls again to elect a new territorial legislature, this time returning large free-state majorities. The outcome indicated that Kansans would reject a pro-slavery constitution if given the chance. So, the delegates at the Lecompton convention offered voters the following: Kansans could not vote on the entire constitution, but they could choose between the constitution "with" or "with no" slavery. Since only the slavery clause provoked

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[57] Nicole Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas: Contested Liberty in the Civil War Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004), 141–42, 145.
[58] Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 300; Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, 147.

controversy, the proposal seemed to give voters a choice on the issue that mattered. In reality, however, it did not: the "with no" slavery option banned the importation of slaves, but did not affect the holding of slaves already in Kansas. As David Potter put it, "[Lecompton] delegates, acting in the name of popular sovereignty, had offered the voters a 'choice' which affirmed the inviolability of slavery no matter what option was taken."[59] The delegates had offered voters a distinction without a difference.

Though technically legal, the Lecompton Constitution did not represent the people of Kansas; Lecompton delegates nonetheless submitted their handiwork to the United States Congress to apply for Kansas' admission to the Union. Congressmen and the President now had to take sides on slavery in Kansas—exactly the outcome the Kansas-Nebraska Act had been designed to avoid. Southerners quickly made the Lecompton Constitution a test of northern Democrats' commitment to southern rights. Virginia Democrat R. M. T. Hunter issued a public letter declaring that his support of Buchanan was contingent on the president's acceptance of Lecompton. Some southern militants even threatened to secede if Congress denied Kansas admission as a slave state.[60] Buchanan—a Pennsylvanian who took pride in his strong personal and political relationships with southerners—took these sentiments into account. He also believed that the referendum on "with" or "with no" slavery offered voters plenty of choice, and had previously defended the legality of the Lecompton convention, desperately wanting to devolve the slavery issue back to the states. So, in his annual message on December 8, Buchanan declared, "Whether Kansas shall be a free or a slave State must eventually, under some authority, be decided by an election; and the question can never be more clearly or distinctly presented to the people than it is at the present moment."[61] He supported

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[59] Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 314.
[60] Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, 158.
[61] James Buchanan, "First Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union," December 8, 1857, http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=29498.

the admission of Kansas to the Union under the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution. What was more, he turned the issue into a test of party loyalty: to continue to enjoy the administration's good favor, all Democrats must support the Lecompton Constitution.

Many northern Democrats—including Stephen Douglas—balked at this demand. They refused to accept that the Lecompton Constitution—the product of fraud and subterfuge—reflected Douglas' "great principle" of popular sovereignty.[62] Though agnostic about the existence of slavery in Kansas, northern Democrats could not accept the suppression of men's free choice at the ballot box, which they saw as essential to republican liberty.[63] They also worried about their political futures. Supporting Lecompton would impose a fearful handicap on northern Democrats in the 1858 midterms. On December 3, Douglas met with Buchanan and told the president he would oppose Lecompton. Buchanan warned him not to defy the administration. The stage was set: Buchanan, southern Democrats, and some northern Democrats would support Lecompton. But, mirroring northern public opinion, Douglas and most other northern Democrats would break with their party's leader to try to send the constitution back to Kansas for a full, fair ratification vote.[64]

For many years, pro-slavery southerners had described slavery as domestic institution. By "domestic," southerners meant both familial and local—and therefore, beyond the reach of the federal government. In 1856, as we have seen, Republicans turned this argument back on Democrats, analogizing the domestic institution of slavery to the domestic institution of marriage to

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[62] Stephen Douglas, quoted in Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*, 160.

[63] Nicole Etcheson argues that the debates over and in Kansas were not about slavery and antislavery as much as they were about rights. For southerners, this meant the right to bring their property in slaves to Kansas. For northerners, this meant the right to vote freely and allow for the freedom of speech. See Etcheson, *Bleeding Kansas*.

[64] The results of the 1858 midterms and the 1860 presidential election demonstrate the clear anti-Lecompton mood among northern Democrats. In the 1858 midterms, Republicans hammered Democrats, largely due to the Democratic split over Lecompton; in 22 seats, anti-Lecompton Democrats ran against pro-Lecompton Democrats, and in eight cases, they won. Taken together, the Republicans and the anti-Lecompton Democrats reduced the number of pro-Lecompton Democratic congressmen from 53 to 26. By the election of 1860, Breckinridge (whom Buchanan supported) received only 8.1 percent of the vote in the North, compared to Douglas' 24.7 percent. Over half of Breckinridge's support came from Pennsylvania, where Pennsylvanian Buchanan had managed to retain some control over the state party. See Michael F. Holt, *The Election of 1860: A Campaign Fraught with Consequences* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017), 16, 194.

show that popular sovereignty had failed. In the winter of 1857-58, northern Democrats co-opted this analogy for their own ends: to force popular sovereignty to be carried out fairly by resubmitting the full Lecompton Constitution to the voters of Kansas. Slavery and marriage were indeed domestic institutions, northern Democrats argued. If southern Democrats accepted men's right to control one domestic institution—marriage—why would they not allow Kansans a fair vote on the other domestic institution—slavery?

Before the Lecompton Convention submitted its constitution to the United States Congress, Douglas did not elaborate on what he meant by "domestic institutions." In his June 1857 speech in Springfield, he used the term without defining it. "Give fair play to that principle of self-government which recognizes the right of the people of each State and Territory to form and regulate their own domestic institutions," Douglas promised, "and sectional strife will be forced to give way to. . .fraternal feeling."[65] Listeners would have assumed that when Douglas said "domestic institutions," he meant slavery. After all, that was the issue that divided Kansans.

But then the Lecompton Constitution arrived in Congress, and Douglas needed to justify his break from the Buchanan administration. On December 12, Douglas arose before the Senate to give his first major speech opposing the Lecompton Constitution. "Did we not," Douglas asked, "come before the country and say that we repealed the Missouri restriction for the purpose of. . .carrying out. . .the great principle of self-government, which left the people. . .free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way?" No Democrat could disagree with Douglas there. That point conceded, Douglas continued,

> We agree that [the people] may decide for themselves the relations between husband and wife, parent and child, guardian and ward; why should we not, then, allow them to decide for themselves the relations between master and servant? Why make an exception of the slavery question by taking it out of that great rule of self-government which applies to all the other

[65] Stephen A. Douglas, *Remarks on Kansas, Utah, and the Dred Scott Decision*, 4.

relations of life?"[66]

Douglas had pulled off a logical coup against southern Democrats. He accepted their argument that slavery was a family relation. But he then he used their ideas about other family relations—husband and wife, parent and child—to dispute their politics on the slavery question. Southern Democrats and their doughface allies believed that men should retain undisputed control over laws regarding family relations. Douglas pointed out that by refusing to resubmit Lecompton for a full up or down vote, southern Democrats were denying men in Kansas the right to control the family relation of slavery as they saw fit. This put southern Democrats in an awkward position. Either they would change their position to allow a fair vote on Lecompton, or they would be exposed as hypocrites, who supported men's authority over their families and their government only as long as those principles resulted in the expansion of slavery. As the Kansas debates continued, other anti-Lecompton Democrats seized on Douglas' argument. "There was not a man who would dare to say that domestic institutions did not include the relations of husband and wife, parent and child, as well as master and servant," declared anti-Lecompton Pennsylvania Representative William Montgomery in March 1858.[67]

The tactic also served Douglas' presidential aspirations. Douglas had hoped to receive the Democratic nomination for president in 1856, but had stepped aside to allow James Buchanan to lead the party. Looking toward 1860, Douglas wished to shore up his own credentials for the nomination. Douglas believed that allowing a legitimate vote in Kansas would bring peace and stability to Kansas, defang the slavery issue, undermine Republican support for federal intervention, and ultimately strengthen the Democratic Party. It would also bolster Douglas' credentials as a

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[66] *Speech of Hon. S. A. Douglas, of Illinois, Against the Admission of Kansas Under the Lecompton Constitution, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, March 22, 1858* (Washington, D.C.: n.p., 1858), 1; For similar language, see *Speech of Hon. S. A. Douglas, of Illinois, Against the Admission of Kansas Under the Lecompton Constitution, Delivered in the Senate of the United States, March 22, 1858*, 8, 16.

[67] "The Deficiency Bill," *Daily Delta*, March 27, 1858, 1.

reliable defender of white men's prerogatives. So, Douglas believed that defending a fair vote in Kansas was important unto itself, but it was also good politics for the ambitious politician.

On December 8, 1857, in his first State of the Union Address, Buchanan had acknowledged, "'Domestic institutions' are limited to the family. The relation between master and slave and a few others are 'domestic institutions.'" A good Democrat, Buchanan would not try to argue that slavery or the family belonged under the control of the federal government. But Buchanan believed the Kansas-Nebraska Act had only ever meant to give men the right to a direct vote on the slavery question. "There was no question. . . before the people of Kansas or the country, except that which relates to the 'domestic institution' of slavery," Buchanan asserted.[68]

Buchanan made a fair point. But it left him open to a counterattack by Douglas. In his December 12 speech, Douglas contended that Democrats had always meant for the "domestic institutions" language of the Kansas-Nebraska Act to be interpreted broadly. Recalling the presidential election of 1856, Douglas asked his audience in the Senate,

> Do you think we could have. . .carried the Presidential election last year. . .on the principle of extending the right of self-government to the negro question, but denying it as to all the relations affecting white men? No sir. We. . .carried the election in defense of that great principle, which allowed all white men to form and regulate their domestic institutions to suit themselves—institutions applicable to white men as well as black men. . .concerning all the relations of life, and not the mere paltry exception of the slavery question.[69]

It is impossible to divine which usage of "domestic institutions" Stephen Douglas and Franklin Pierce had in mind when writing the Kansas-Nebraska Act—whether they had been thinking of family relations in general or of slavery in particular. But given the term's diversity of uses, is easy to see how Douglas later claimed an expansive interpretation of "domestic institutions." That interpretation, moreover, dovetailed nicely with Democratic doctrine. Since the age of Jackson, the

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[68] James Buchanan, "First Annual Message to Congress on the State of the Union."
[69] "Speech of Senator Douglas-- Defence of Popular Sovereignty and the Will of the Majority," *The Press*, December 12, 1857, 1.

Democratic creed had emphasized the right of all white men to shape the world as they saw fit, with as little intervention from the state as possible. Here, Douglas marshalled support for "full submission" of Lecompton back to the people of Kansas by appealing that deep-rooted belief in white male independence. White men should be allowed to exercise their franchise on every issue—not just slavery.

As debates over Kansas' admission continued, other anti-Lecompton Democrats carried forward Douglas' claim that the "domestic institutions" of the Kansas-Nebraska Act meant all domestic institutions—not just slavery. The pro-Douglas *Press* reported, "Alluding to the President's message, [Pennsylvania Democrat John Hickman] said. . .this doctrine of popular sovereignty is not as popular as it was. It was formerly supposed to mean something giving the people power over all domestic institutions. But now, as thought by the President, it is to be sweated down to the contemptible dimensions as to whether they shall hold a negro in bonds or not."[70] On December 31, the *Press* published a letter purported to be from "one of the purest, most consistent, and most devoted Democrats in this State—a man who has *always been* Mr. Buchanan's *friend*, and has occupied many important public positions." Referencing the debates over the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the anonymous writer willingly admitted "that, in the controversy between the Democratic party and those opposed to them in regard to popular sovereignty, slavery was the question most prominently discussed." But the writer claimed that he believed nobody discussed other institutions "for the obvious reason that no one questioned the right of the people of the Territories to regulate every other 'domestic institution.'" He finished, "The very fact that the right to regulate every other institution was, by common consent, lodged with the people of each Territory (and therefore, not discussed,) is a strong argument in favor of the position that the whole Constitution ought to have

[70] "Thirty-Fifth Congress, First Session," *The Press*, January 29, 1858, 2.

been submitted to the people of Kansas."[71] This former friend of Buchanan sided with the anti-Lecompton Democrats because he believed that a popular sovereignty that did not allow men to vote on everything was not popular sovereignty at all. He, Douglas, and Pennsylvania Democrat Hickman portrayed Buchanan's vision of popular sovereignty as an insult to white manhood.

Douglas and other anti-Lecompton Democrats expanded the definition of "domestic institutions" even beyond family relations. They argued that the term also meant the institutions of the state, from banks, to courts, to the legislature. White men, they argued, must vote on those institutions, too. In his same December 12 speech in the Senate, Douglas asked why Kansans should not have a fair vote on slavery, when "we agree that the people may decide for themselves what shall be the elective franchise. . .what shall be the rule of taxation."[72] Pennsylvania Representative William Montgomery echoed this call. The *Daily Delta* reported that on the floor of the House, Montgomery "contended that a bank was as much an institution as slavery itself." Because it failed to allow men to vote on all domestic institutions—banks as well as slavery—the Lecompton Constitution was "illegal."[73]

The Press, a pro-Douglas paper published in Philadelphia, printed a letter to its editor whose writer agreed with Douglas and Montgomery's expansive definition of "domestic institutions." "Has it come to this, that there are no institutions in Kansas but freedom and slavery?" the writer asked. The writer continued, "If the people's agents could not speak authoritatively for them on the question of freedom or slavery, is not the presumption irresistible that there were other questions of constitutional law wherein they would fail to give satisfaction?"[74] The Democrat agreed with Douglas that "domestic institutions" covered all the institutions of state, not just the laws regarding

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[71] "The Voice of an Original Buchanan Man," *The Press*, December 31, 1857, 2.
[72] "Speech of Senator Douglas," 1.
[73] "The Deficiency Bill," 1.
[74] "The Voice of the People," *The Press*, December 12, 1857, 2.

slavery. But the private citizen went further than Douglas, a public man trying to win over moderate southerners, ever could: pointing to Kansas politicians' failure to fairly decide the slavery issue, he questioned whether those same men could fairly regulate any of the other domestic institutions of the state.

In 1854, northern and southern Democrats had united to repeal the Missouri Compromise and place slavery in the territories under local control. Northern Democrats had promised their constituents that the Kansas-Nebraska Act would restore true democracy to the territories. The Lecompton Constitution, however, did not represent the will of the majority, and the false choice of voting on the slave importation clause of the constitution would not allow voters to correct the issue. Northern Democrats thus rejected the constitution on principle—it was not democratic—and for practical purposes: they would lose the support of their constituents. Northern Democrats prevailed on their southern counterparts to allow Kansans a full up or down vote. Southern Democrats had long described slavery as a patriarchal, familial, and therefore local institution. If slavery was domestic in the sense of familial, northern Democrats now argued, should not local men have full and fair control over the institution—and indeed over all family relations? And if slavery was domestic in the sense of being a state institution, rather than a federal one, should not Kansans have the final say on the issue? Ultimately, northern Democrats believed that only a real vote would stand up under scrutiny and bring about a final settlement of the slavery issue.

As late as June 1857, most southern Democrats believed that Kansas would be admitted as a free state.[75] But the submission of the Lecompton Constitution to Congress had put a new slave state suddenly—surprisingly—within their reach. Southern Democrats could not allow Congress to send the constitution back to Kansans for a full ratification vote because recent election results in

[75] Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 302.

the state had made it apparent that Kansans would reject the constitution. On October 8, Kansans had elected an antislavery legislature. On December 21, an election called by the Lecompton convention took place. Because the election allowed no real choice, free-staters abstained; official returns showed 6,226 votes for the constitution with slavery and 569 for it without slavery. On January 4, 1858, there was more voting, this time called by the now-antislavery legislature. Pro-slavery voters abstained; returns showed 10,226 votes against Lecompton, 138 for it with slavery, and 24 for it without slavery.[76] Taken together, these elections demonstrated that a clear majority of Kansans opposed slavery and the Lecompton Constitution.

Worse, southern Democrats knew that if Kansans rejected Lecompton, Kansas might re-apply for admission to the Union as a free state. California's admission to the Union had thrown off the parity between slave and free states in the Senate; only the fact that California sent one pro-slavery and one anti-slavery senator to Washington brought the Senate back into balance. If Kansas entered as a free state, southerners would be out-voted on any measure relating to slavery. In sum, southerners stood to gain a slave state, but they also stood to lose control of the Senate.

When northern Democrats turned the pro-slavery argument about the domestic, local nature of slavery against their southern counterparts, southern Democrats were stunned; they struggled to mount a cohesive response. Most often, they simply called on the original meaning of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, arguing that when legislators had written "domestic institutions," they meant slavery. Given the term's increasing use in the late antebellum era to denote slavery, it was a fair argument to make. Tennessean Aaron V. Brown, who was serving as postmaster general under Buchanan, penned a letter to the editor of the pro-administration *Washington Union*. He wrote, "Nobody had ever doubted or questioned the right of the people of [Kansas] to decide the relations of husband and wife, guardian and ward, &c., in their own way. . .*The only matter in dispute* has been about the

[76] Election returns from Potter, 318.

question of admitting or excluding *slavery* from the Territories."[77] Douglas had accused southern Democrats of not trusting men with the power to legislate on family relationships. Brown assured readers that was not the case. He contended that the Kansas-Nebraska Act simply applied to slavery, not marriage, and therefore a vote on the constitution with or without slavery fulfilled the original purpose of the act. Henry Fitch, an Illinois district attorney and supporter of the Buchanan administration on the Lecompton question, agreed. "The right conferred of regulating their domestic institutions in their own way could scarcely be interpreted to suit the convenience of Judge Douglas, into a prohibition to manage their domestic institutions," he remarked in a July 1858 speech in Chicago.[78]

In response to Douglas' December 12 speech, the pro-Lecompton *Washington Union* made a similar argument. Again referring to the original meaning of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the *Union* claimed, "this term 'domestic institutions,' if judged technically, does not include the organization of legislative, executive, and judicial departments." Rather, the writer continued, "If we judge it by the popular standard, we find that, though not strictly accurate, it has been adopted into the political vocabulary with most expressive emphasis as referring to domestic slavery. . .That this was the idea prominent with those who passed the bill will hardly be denied by anyone conversant with the action of Congress on that occasion."[79] Anti-Lecompton Democrats had alleged that the "domestic institutions" of the Kansas-Nebraska Act covered the institutions of the state, as well as the institution of slavery. By writing that the restriction of "domestic institutions" to slavery was "not strictly accurate," the *Union* acknowledged that the term sometimes meant the institutions of state.

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[77] "Letter from Postmaster General Brown," *Washington Union*, December 31, 1857, 2.
[78] "Speech of Henry S. Fitch, Esq.," *Charleston Mercury*, July 31, 1858, 2.
[79] "Judge Douglas and the President's Message," *Washington Union*, December 16, 1857, 3; One source from a radical southern newspaper disagreed with Buchanan. "No tyro in politics, no one the least familiar with the political technology of the country and the times, can be ignorant that the terms quoted have been in common use for years to distinguish State from Federal institutions in general, and home from foreign matters in general." But the paper argued that the Kansas-Nebraska Act had not given the people the right to vote directly on any of their domestic institutions, anyway. See "The President and the Douglas-Walker Movement," *Daily Delta*, December 18, 1857, 2.

But the paper claimed that legislators held the popular meaning of the term—slavery—foremost in their minds when they wrote the act. Therefore, proper execution of the act only required a vote on slavery, not on the Lecompton Constitution as a whole.

At other times, pro-Lecompton Democrats fought back against Douglas and his followers by pointing to a different part of the "domestic institutions" clause of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. The act made the people of the territories free to "regulate their domestic institutions in their own way."[80] While Douglas and his followers harped on the meaning of "domestic institutions," pro-Lecompton Democrats focused on the words "in their own way." Democratic senator James Green of Missouri argued that Kansans had indeed regulated their domestic institutions in their own way—by delegating that power to the constitutional convention at Lecompton. Ignoring the rigged election of delegates to that convention, Green said, "The way they, the people, chose, was to leave it to the action of the Convention, which body was under no obligation to submit the Constitution, or any part of it, to the popular vote."[81] If Congress now rejected Lecompton, it would demonstrate a lack of trust in Kansans' ability to govern themselves.

Other Democrats piled on to this argument by characterizing the profound conflict in Kansas over the Lecompton Constitution as a domestic dispute. Indiana senator Graham Fitch addressed the ongoing political conflict in Kansas in a speech on December 22, 1857. "If any domestic differences occur between themselves and their servants, their representatives or delegates, the same doctrine of non-intervention" that formed the basis of the Kansas-Nebraska Act "prohibits us from interfering. Their domestic differences, like their 'domestic institutions,' must be settled by them 'in their own way.'"[82] On March 2, 1858, at a meeting of pro-Administration

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[80] "An Act to Organize the Territories of Nebraska and Kansas," 283.
[81] "Thirty-Fifth Congress, First Session," *The Press*, December 17, 1857, 2.
[82] "Debate in the Senate: Speech of Hon. G. N. Fitch, of Indiana, Delivered in the Senate Tuesday, Dec 22, 1857," *Washington Union*, December 30, 1857, 2.

Democrats in New York City, Representative James Hughes of Indiana used similar language to push for acceptance of the Lecompton Constitution. "Let Kansas become a State of the Union at once," he demanded, "and let her regulate her domestic institutions and settle her family quarrels in her own way, 'subject only to the constitution of the United States.'"[83] By equating the divide over Lecompton among Kansans to a mere family dispute, Fitch and Hughes tacitly acknowledged the voting fraud and bloodshed that had convulsed Kansas, and at the same time disclaimed the federal government's responsibility to demand a fair vote. Requiring Lecompton's ratification would be akin to one man inserting himself in another's family troubles.

Neither southern Democrats nor pro-Administration northern Democrats ever denied men's right to manage their families and their local governments as they saw fit. Nor did they contest Douglas Democrats' claim that "domestic institutions" could, in some other context, encompass the family or the institutions of state and local governance. But they also wanted to pass Lecompton, which meant forbidding men in Kansas from voting on the full constitution. To reconcile respecting white men's autonomy with denying them a vote, they held that the Kansas-Nebraska Act referred only to slavery and that requiring a full referendum would disrespect Kansans by implying they could not govern themselves.

The debate over Kansas' admission to the Union lasted from the late fall of 1857 through the spring of 1858. In both houses of Congress, Stephen Douglas helped form a coalition of Republicans and anti-Lecompton northern Democrats. In the Senate, that coalition was not powerful enough to stop southern Democrats and pro-Lecompton Northern Democrats. But in the House, the anti-Lecompton coalition had the strength to at least force a compromise. William

[83] "The Kansas Question: Speech of Hon. James Hughes, of Indiana, at a Democratic Meeting in Mozart Hall, New York, March 2, 1858," *Washington Union*, March 6, 1858, 3.

Hayden English, a Democratic representative from Indiana, worked with Georgia senator Alexander Stephens to develop a bill that offered a referendum: Kansans could accept or reject the whole Lecompton Constitution. But the English Bill attached carrots and sticks to Lecompton's passage. If Kansans accepted Lecompton, Kansas would immediately join the Union and be granted additional land (though less than the Lecompton convention had requested). If they rejected Lecompton, Kansas would have to wait for a few years before re-applying to the Union. Despite the incentives, Kansans rejected the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution by a ratio of six to one. Kansas would not become a state until January 1861.

Incensed at the loss of a potential slave state, southern Democrats blamed northern Democrats for Lecompton's failure. Northern Democrats rejected Lecompton because they saw that it did not represent the will of the people. Yet southern Democrats believed that their northern counterparts had sunk Lecompton because they did not want Kansas admitted as a slave state. They grumbled that northern Democrats had betrayed them, convincing them to support popular sovereignty while secretly plotting to bar any new slave states from entering the Union. When Douglas collaborated with Republicans in the battle over Lecompton, he contributed to southerners' impression that far from being reliable allies, northern Democrats might in fact be closeted Republicans.

In 1856, Democrats had agreed, at least in principle, on popular sovereignty and on white male independence. The Lecompton debate destroyed their consensus on popular sovereignty: northern Democrats wanted a fair vote, while southern Democrats only wanted slavery. Yet they still agreed on white male independence. In attempt to force the other side to concede on Lecompton, then, northern and southern Democrats seized on their shared vision of masculinity and weaponized it against the other side. The debacle thus not only bred ill-feeling between northern and southern Democrats. It also revealed that their gender tactics could divide as easily as they could

unite.

Chapter Two: Appendix

"Liberty, the Fair Maid of Kansas—In the Hands of the Border Ruffians"

"The Cincinnati Platform, or the Way to Make a New State in 1856"

Chapter Three: John Brown's Raid

On the morning of October 18, residents of Baltimore awoke to a startling headline in their local paper. "SLAVE INSURRECTION AT HARPERS FERRY. HEADED BY 250 ABOLITONISTS. The Citizens in a State of Terror—White Persons Imprisoned—Slaves Set Free."[1] On October 16, under the cover of night, abolitionist John Brown had led twenty-one men southwest across the Potomac from Maryland into Harpers Ferry, Virginia. The men hoped to free enslaved workers by inciting a rebellion against white slaveholders. The raiders easily executed the first part of their plan: cutting telegraph lines, arming a few dozen local black men, taking white hostages, and seizing control of the arsenal.

Brown had planned to take the weapons and retreat westward from Harpers Ferry to the Allegheny Mountains; from there, he would launch raids deeper into the South. But at that moment, he changed course. Abandoning his plan for guerilla warfare, Brown and his men hunkered down in the arsenal, hoping that more locals would rush to join him. They did not. Instead, on October 17, local militia surrounded the would-be liberators, who barricaded themselves in the arsenal. A day later, ninety United States Marines arrived from Washington. Brown realized his desperate position, but he refused to capitulate. The Marines stormed the building, rapidly overwhelming Brown and his men. On October 19, Brown was taken into custody; on October 25, he was tried for treason against the Commonwealth of Virginia, multiple first-degree murders, and inciting a slave insurrection. On November 2, Brown was convicted, and on December 2, 1859, Brown was hung to death in Charles Town, Virginia.[2]

Quixotic and poorly executed—the whole event lasted less than thirty-six hours—John

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[1] "Slave Insurrection at Harper's Ferry," *Baltimore Sun*, October 18, 1859, 1.

[2] For a fuller description of Brown's raid, as well as a brief summary of historians' changing evaluations of Brown and his militant abolitionism, see Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 326–30.

Brown's raid itself did not seriously threaten slavery in the South. Yet the affair unleashed a wave of hysteria among white southerners. In Virginia, enslaved workers composed nearly a third of the total population. In seven other southern states—Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina—the ratio of enslaved to free was even higher than in Virginia.[3] White southerners had watched with concern over the past decades as slaves rose up in Haiti, Barbados, Jamaica, Louisiana, and Virginia. Averring that their slaves were happy and well cared for, southern slaveholders blamed abolitionists for kindling discontent among their workers. Whether they indeed believed what they said or whether they recognized that denying human freedom bred unrest, southern legislators took no chances, passing increasingly restrictive slave codes in the 1830s.[4] White southerners knew they were, as one congressman put it, "stand[ing] on the very brink of a volcano."[5] The events of October 1859, then, were on the one hand unthinkable—a white man had led a slave insurrection—yet on the other, long expected and long feared.

Following the raid, Democrats had questions. If slavery was indeed a benign institution, not given to producing unhappiness or discontent, who or what else was to blame for this attack? Did more northern abolitionists lurk in southern towns, ready to strike? What did this attack say about life under a Republican Congress—and what did that foretell about a Republican president? The gender tactics that northern and southern Democrats had deployed in 1856 shaped how they answered these questions.

In the 1856 presidential election, northern Democrats claimed that a Republican government

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[3] *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Bicentennial Edition, Part 1* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1975), https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/histstats-colonial-1970.pdf.

[4] As Edward Rugemer has illustrated, southerners increasingly came to believe that abolitionist agitation, not the brutality of slavery and indigenous protest movements, fomented slave rebellion. In 1797, Jamaican planter and historian Bryan Edwards wrote a book arguing that the Amis des Noir, the French abolitionist society had catalyzed rebellion in Saint-Domingue. White southerners read Edwards' book, and then watched as rebellions in Barbados, Demerara (Guyana), Jamaica, and ultimately the American South seemed to confirm this thesis, with insurrections following times of abolitionist agitation. See Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009).

[5] "Thirty-Sixth Congress--First Session," *Baltimore Sun*, December 8, 1859, 4.

would abolish slavery and support women's rights. John Brown's raid presented northern Democrats with an opportunity to revive this accusation. They did not let it go to waste. From the moment news of the raid hit the wires all the way through November of 1860, northern Democrats contended that the raid was the natural result of Republicanism. Republicans preached antislavery, and now a northerner had attacked the South in attempt to incite a slave rebellion. Never mind that all but the most radical Republicans disavowed Brown's actions—Democrats drew a direct line between Republicans' hope that slavery would end eventually and Brown's move to abolish slavery immediately. Following the raid, northern Democrats also reprised their slurs against female abolitionists and the Republican Party. In 1856, Democrats linked the Republican Party not only to abolitionism but to women's rights. When women like Lydia Maria Child spoke out in support of John Brown, northern Democrats lambasted their behavior as symptomatic of the broader radicalism in the Republican Party.

In 1856, southern Democrats, too, had castigated Republicans as radicals on issues of gender and slavery. And since 1856, southern Democrats had continued to develop the tactic of linking Republicans with gender disorder and abolition. In 1857, for instance, the pro-southern periodical *DeBow's Review*, published two articles by George Fitzhugh, in which the proslavery ideologue described slavery as desirable and benevolent and warned against the radicalism of the Republican Party. "The democracy of the North, it is true, are conservative," Fitzhugh allowed. "But there Black Republicanism is ascendant, and that is radical and revolutionary in the extreme. . . All [the North's] discontent, and its political, moral, and religious heresies have grown out of abolition."[6] In 1858, James Henry Hammond accused Republicans of "making war upon us to our very hearthstones" by

[6] George Fitzhugh, "Southern Thought," in *The Ideology of Slavery: Proslavery Thought in the Antebellum South, 1830-1860*, ed. Drew Gilpin Faust (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 281.

agitating the slavery question.[7]

But between 1856 and 1859, something changed. Beginning in August 1858, states had held midterm elections for Congress. Republicans won in state after state. Not only did they hold onto their seats in typically Republican states like Massachusetts and Vermont, but they picked up seats in places that had leaned Democratic for years, flipping ten seats in Pennsylvania and five in New York. Taken together, the gains allowed Republicans to wrest control of the House from the Democratic stranglehold.

Watching these victories, many southern Democrats became convinced that Republicanism was no longer a fringe movement. They were correct. But combined with the false accusation from 1856—that Republicans planned a radical overthrow of the conservative social order—it was a dangerous conclusion to come to. If most northerners were Republicans, and all Republicans were radicals, then most northerners were radicals.

These assumptions set the stage for how southern Democrats perceived and reacted to John Brown's raid. While a few southern Democrats half-heartedly attributed the failed insurrection specifically to Republican doctrine, far more blamed northerners in general, claiming that northern hearts and minds burned with the fire of radical abolitionism. Southern Democrats also portrayed the attack as one against southern homes, women, and children; they argued that northerners did not understand southern slave society; and they worried that northern Democrats had not and therefore could not protect them from future incursions. Southern fire-eaters went one step further. They used the occasion to argue that because the Union could not provide total security for white southerners, the southern states should secede.

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[7] "Speech of Hon. James H. Hammond," March 4, 1858, http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/islandora/object/niu-lincoln%3A35455.

Suffering from their party's rout at Republican hands in the 1858-59 midterms, Democratic papers in the north seized on the news of John Brown's raid to beat back Republicans' advances. They argued that John Brown's raid represented the natural—even expected—result of Republican antislavery. On October 22, Ohio's Democratic *Portsmouth Daily Times* told readers that there was no such thing as moderate antislavery. "Sober, discreet, prudent, order-loving citizens—conservative 'republicans' in politics. . . hope to fetter and finally extinguish [slavery] by gradual and peaceful means," the paper began. "Yet we cannot but wonder at their position. . .Do they not know that the main-spring of the political anti-slavery movement is FANATICISM?" The paper claimed that the only difference between Republican politicians and John Brown was that the former were "men of speculation," while the latter was a "m[a]n of action."[8] Republicans had convinced northern voters that forbidding slavery in the western states would save those lands for free white farmers and, eventually, lead to slavery's peaceful decline. John Brown's raid gave Democrats an opening to argue otherwise. A party could not push for gradual abolition without inadvertently encouraging radicals to pursue immediate abolition. This argument created a hard divide: either you supported conservatism and peace—and the Democrats—or you supported John Brown. Northern Democrats hoped forcing this choice on northerners would stem the tide of voters fleeing their party in favor of Republican candidates.

In other cases, northern Democrats offered an even less nuanced analysis. Reprising an old argument from 1856, Democrats collapsed the broad spectrum of Republicanism into one simple claim: all Republicans were abolitionists. The vast majority of Republicans disavowed Brown's raid. Yet in a typical example, one Democratic paper portrayed Illinois Republican John Wentworth as a closeted abolitionist. After the raid, Wentworth had praised Brown's intentions. "His object was freedom; freedom to every person," Wentworth said. Though Wentworth went on to disavow

[8] "The Harper's Ferry Conspiracy," *Portsmouth Daily Times*, October 22, 1859, 2.

Brown's violent methods, the Democratic paper claimed that the disavowal was mere "pious horror" that masked his support for abolitionist-led insurrections.[9] Democratic editors saw the raid through the prism of William Seward's "Irrepressible Conflict" speech and Abraham Lincoln's "House Divided" speech, both of which had caused a stir the previous year. One claimed that Brown had made a "practical application of the 'irrepressible conflict' doctrine"; another affirmed that the raid was the "natural consequence. . .of the doctrine of 'irrepressible conflict' which [Republicans] are now urged to make the sum and substance of their faith."[10] Seward and Lincoln were moderate Republicans: though both men supported slavery's restriction, neither condoned immediate abolition or Brown's raid. But that did not stop the *Illinois State Register* from claiming that Brown had "act[ed] upon their teaching" as a "minion."[11] To northern Democrats, the raid seemed to offer new proof of Republican radicalism.[12]

To back up this bogus claim, northern Democrats pointed to the news that a few Republicans had provided financial and logistical support to John Brown in the months leading up to the raid. In this, they were partially correct. Six northern men, including one Republican politician, had indeed funded Brown's raid. They became known as the Secret Six. From the moment this news came out, Democratic papers followed it closely. On October 20, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* reported, "The Northern Abolitionists are implicated and are at the bottom of the Harpers Ferry conspiracy. They raised large sums of money to carry it forward to a successful termination. Gerrit Smith gave one hundred dollars, and Fred. Douglass ten dollars." These facts were partially correct: Smith was one of the Secret Six, but Douglass thought the raid was doomed to fail.[13] From

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[9] "Writhing of the Serpent," *Illinois State Register*, October 27, 1859.
[10] Quoted in Varon, *Disunion!*, 332.
[11] "Writhing of the Serpent."
[12] In fact, abolitionists had an ambivalent and changeable relationship with the Republican Party. See James M. McPherson, *The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964).
[13] David Blight writes, "Few prominent abolitionists were as enmeshed in Brown's Harpers Ferry conspiracy as Douglass, but in their famous final meeting at the stone quarry in Chambersburg, Pennsylvania, in August 1859,

this shaky ground, Democrats gleefully smeared the Republicans as lawless abolitionists bent on overthrowing slavery and destroying the Union. "Doubtless other leading abolitionists were concerned in [the raid]," the *Enquirer* claimed after naming Smith and Douglass.[14] The paper provided no evidence for this broad assertion. Yet it expanded the accusation eight days later, naming "Governor [Salmon P.] Chase, Senator [William] Seward, Governor [Ryland] Fletcher, of Vermont. . .and others" as co-conspirators to John Brown.[15] Democrats thus used the discovery that a very few, very radical Republicans had aided Brown to cultivate suspicion of the party as a whole. If those Republicans had been plotting insurrection, what might other members of the party be hiding? Could voters really trust even those Republicans who professed opposition to abolitionism?

As much as northern Democrats condemned Brown, one suspects that they secretly reveled in his timing. Brown invaded Virginia barely a year before voters would cast their ballots in the presidential election of 1860. Northern Democrats alleged that Republican midterm victories had emboldened Brown. As a Democratic paper in Cincinnati editorialized, "[Brown] must have taken courage from the late elections in Ohio and Pennsylvania, and supposed that he would have not only the moral, but the physical backing of these two great states." The paper leapt to add that a Republican victory in 1860 would lead to further violence. For one, "such a President, having his sympathies with the insurrectionists, would be slow to move in arresting their outrages." But additionally, "the very fact that there was a President with such sympathies would encourage insurrection all through the slave states."[16] Northern Democrats kept up this argument throughout

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Douglass counseled against the raid the old rebel was about to launch." See David W. Blight, *Frederick Douglass' Civil War: Keeping Faith in Jubilee* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989), 95.

[14] "The Abolitionists of the North Implicated in the Harper's Ferry Insurrection," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 20, 1859.

[15] "Important Disclosures--Seward and Chase--Harper's Ferry," *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 28, 1859.

[16] ""The Cloud in the Distance No Bigger Then a Man's Hand'; The First Battle of the 'Irrepressible Conflict,'" *Cincinnati Enquirer*, October 19, 1859.

the 1860 campaign, hoping it would help them gain back lost territory in the North.[17]

The campaign Democrats had run in 1856 thus colored the way they saw Brown's raid in 1859: as the product of Republican radicalism. The 1856 campaign also affected their perception of the men and women who supported Brown's efforts. In 1856, Democrats had decried abolitionism as one component of a Republican social program that also included women's rights and free love. Freeing women and slaves jeopardized men's social and economic power; therefore, men who supported this program must be feminine or disordered, while women who supported it must be manly and out of control.

Northern Democrats reprised these descriptions of male and female abolitionists in the weeks and months following Brown's raid. In an October 27 article titled "The Cowardly Desertion of Capt. Brown by his Former Patrons," the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* called out the members of the Secret Six for disavowing Brown after their support for him was discovered. "The Republican leaders," the paper opined, "now that their. . .agent. . .is likely to pay the forfeit of his crimes by his life, with unparalleled and cowardly treachery turn upon him and denounce him to the authorities."[18] In a similar article on November 3, the *Eagle* denounced Frederick Douglass as a "skulking and cowardly negro. . .who promised to stand by [Brown]. . .but now pronounce[s] him insane."[19] The *Eagle*'s reporting stretched the truth: the Secret Six did not denounce Brown, they simply claimed not to have known about his plans; and Douglass had in fact refused to support Brown even before the raid. Yet the *Eagle* portrayed these men as utter cowards in order to delegitimize abolitionism and the Republican Party. If the men who supported Brown were not real men—not willing to face the consequences of their political decisions—then their political views must not be worthy of

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[17] In 1860, the campaign biography of northern Democratic candidate Stephen A. Douglas asked readers to recall the raid, and then told them that such violence was the natural outgrowth of Republican ideology. See James W. Sheahan, *The Life of Stephen A. Douglas* (Harper and Brothers, 1860), 507.
[18] "The Cowardly Desertion of Capt. Brown by His Former Patrons," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, October 27, 1859, 2.
[19] "John Brown Was Sentenced," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 3, 1859, 2.

respect, either.[20]

Northern Democrats used the same tactic against the women who came out in support of Brown's raid, denigrating them as opinionated and manly. On December 2, the day of Brown's execution, male and female supporters in New York, Boston, and Philadelphia met to mourn his death. Of these assemblies, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* spat, "[The meetings] were chiefly confined to negroes, strong-minded women, and weak-minded females of the masculine gender."[21] The *Eagle* article implied that since only free blacks, mannish women, and feminine men supported abolition, abolition was not worth supporting. When Brown co-conspirator Edwin Coppock was hanged two weeks later and sent to be buried in Salem, Ohio, the local Democratic newspaper even attacked the mourners at his funeral. "These sympathizers held a grand pow-wow over the corpse," the *Daily Empire* sneered, "exposing it to admiring throngs of strong-minded women and their weak-minded husbands."[22]

Pennsylvania Democrat and former Representative Charles Jared Ingersoll piled on, penning a screed against the abolitionists who supported Brown. Ingersoll was the patriarch of a prominent Philadelphia family. Commercial and social ties linked Philadelphia to the South: the South purchased a large percentage of goods manufactured in the city, and many young southerners came to Philadelphia for their education. During the 1850s, Philadelphia's leading Democrats sought to conciliate the South. Ingersoll had been a Democrat since the age of Jackson; his son had married the daughter of a Tennessee senator; and as a former member of the House of Representatives, Ingersoll believed it was Pennsylvania's duty to broker compromise between the slaveholding South

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[20] Interestingly, neither northern nor southern Democrats castigated Brown in this way. While most Republican papers rushed to call Brown insane, Democratic papers offered him a grudging respect: at least he was willing to die for his beliefs. For instance, the same *Eagle* article that called Douglass cowardly described Brown as "a man of iron nerve and Roman firmness."

[21] "John Brown Suffered the Extreme Penalty," *The Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 3, 1859, 2.

[22] "Folly--Insanity--Blasphemy," *The Daily Empire*, January 16, 1860, 2.

and what he called "the slave-hating northeast."[23] Ingersoll's letter, which he mailed to the Republican *New York Times* for broad circulation, defamed all abolitionists as cowards. Other than Brown, Ingersoll wrote, the abolitionists were not willing to die for their cause. He proposed a solution: "a few clergymen hanged in their canonicals, with strong-minded women in short petticoats, would be spectacles, not indeed to be desired, but which might at least vouch for the[ir] sincerity."[24] That is: at minimum, hanging the abolitionists who wailed about Brown's execution would turn them into truer supporters of his cause. But one senses that Ingersoll appreciated that the hanging would, incidentally, also silence the abolitionists for good.

By questioning the masculinity of abolitionist men and the femininity of abolitionist women, northern Democrats hoped to accomplish a few things. First, they wanted to discredit abolitionism as a political ideology. They implied that any movement that received support from feminine men and masculine women could not be in the nation's best interest. This relied on a certain circular logic: the fact that these men and women supported abolition made them gender radicals, but the fact that they were gender radicals discredited abolitionism. Second, Democrats wanted to discredit the Republican Party. In 1856 and again in the wake of John Brown's raid, Democrats had claimed that all Republicans were either already abolitionists or would soon fall under their influence. Portraying those abolitionists as gender radicals, then, further undermined the credibility of the Republican Party. Finally, northern Democrats highlighted the abolitionists' gender-bending traits—the cowardice of the men and the short petticoats and strong opinions of the women—to paint a picture of the disordered, dysfunctional world that they claimed the Republican Party would usher in. Give Republicans power, Democrats implied, and these mannish women and womanly men will

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[23] Quoted in Irwin F. Greenberg, "Charles Ingersoll: The Aristocrat as Copperhead," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 93 (April 1969): 192 Charles Jared Ingersoll's son, Charles Ingersoll, became a prominent Copperhead Democrat during the Civil War.

[24] "From Hon. Charles Jared Ingersoll," *New York Times*, January 10, 1860, 5.

become the norm.

Of course, southern Democrats also railed against abolitionists. But there was a critical difference in the way southern Democrats saw these abolitionists—and indeed, the raid itself. Northern Democrats saw the 1858-59 midterms as a political problem. They needed to win back the seats they had lost. Northern Democrats did not understand the full effect of John Brown's raid on the southern psyche. Instead, northern Democrats' primary goal remained combatting Republican radicalism and regaining political control over the North—which they believed would best secure the Union.[25] But southern Democrats saw those same 1858-59 elections as a cultural problem. In 1856, northern and southern Democrats decried all Republicans as gender-bending radicals. Republicans now controlled the majority of the North's seats in Congress. Moreover, Douglas Democrats had broken with Buchanan over the Lecompton constitution, contributing to the southerners' growing sense that northern Democrats were not reliable allies. This led many southern Democrats to conclude that the majority of northerners—not just Republicans—were either radicals themselves or sympathetic to radical causes.

Following John Brown's raid, a few southern Democrats reprised the line from 1856, continuing to blame the Republican Party, rather than northerners in general, for abolitionist radicalism. Jefferson Martenet, a former Marylander living in San Francisco, wrote to his mother about the raid. "I fear this Harpers Ferry business will end in Civil war yet," he wrote. "The prominent Black Republican papers indirectly sanction Brown's cause. Only last week their organ in this city. . .said 'No matter how *good the cause*, Brown was wrong in periling human life *without* a

[25] In so arguing, I am disagreeing with historian Michael Todd Landis, who argues that northern Democrats smeared Republicans to draw themselves closer to southern Democrats--rather than, as I argue, to win elections in the North. I believe northern Democrats did not yet fully understand the extent of southern Democrats' sense of alienation from the national party and the Union. See Michael Todd Landis, *Northern Men with Southern Loyalties: The Democratic Party and the Sectional Crisis* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014), 216–17.

reasonable chance of success.' What more could they say in defense of insurrection and bloodshed?" he asked.[26] Published almost a full year after the raid, in the run-up to the 1860 gubernatorial election in Massachusetts, an article in the *Nashville Union and American* still blamed Republicans—and Republicans alone—for supporting John Brown's raid. "The Republicans of Massachusetts," the paper declared, "are no longer entitled to their old party designation. They. . . proclaim themselves JOHN BROWN Abolitionists, which is equivalent to saying that pikes and firebrands are better than votes for the purposes of government."[27] Martenet and the moderate *Nashville Union* were both still willing to see John Brown's raid as a specifically Republican problem, not a broad northern one.

But among southern Democrats, they were in the minority. Immediately following the raid, the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* rushed to blame the raid on northern fanaticism, publishing two articles to this end on October 25. Of Brown's men captured and killed at Harpers Ferry, one article read, "It is impossible to contemplate the inevitable fate which these deluded fanatics have brought upon themselves, without a sentiment of commiseration towards them." Readers should feel some sympathy for the captured marauders, since they were but "victims of that social and political error which a large proportion of the northern mind is indoctrinated and imbued."[28] Brown's men did not choose this path of their own free will. Rather, the radicalism that prevailed in the North had spread like an illness that infected men's minds rather than their bodies. This metaphor made radicalism seem all the more dangerous: once it entered a society, no one could control its spread. The other article, titled "Where is the Responsibility?", made the same point. The raid was "but the legitimate growth of the ultraisms which have been permitted to gain such an ascendancy over the minds of

[26] Jefferson Martenet to Catherine M. Richardson, December 14, 1859, Jefferson Martenet Correspondence, Huntington Library.
[27] "The John Brown Party," *Nashville Union and American*, September 8, 1860, 2.
[28] "The Harper's Ferry Affair," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, October 25, 1859.

the Northern people," the editor opined.[29] Democrats typically used "ultraisms," in the plural, to refer to abolitionism, women's rights, free love, Fourierism, and other radical social movements as a group. In this particular case, the use of "ultraisms" indicates that the editor saw John Brown's raid as the result of northern abolitionism yet also inextricable from northerners' broader desire for women's and economic freedom.

The *New Orleans Times-Picayune* tended toward militant secessionism. Virginia's governor Henry A. Wise did not. Wise harbored ambitions for the 1860 presidential race, so he could not be too extreme: by the winter of 1859-60, Wise still claimed to be a Unionist, but expressed concerns about a government that could not protect slaveholders from abolitionist meddling and now abolitionist invasion.[30] On December 5, 1859, in his message to a joint session of Virginia's House and Senate, Wise held northern society as a whole accountable for John Brown's raid. "For a series of years social and sectional differences have been growing up, unhappily, between the States of our Union and their people," Wise observed. "Abolition has seemed to madden whole masses of one entire section of the country. It enters into their religion, into their education, into their politics and prayers. . .into all classes of people, the most respectable and most lawless, into their pulpits and into their presses and school-houses, into their men, women and children of all ages, everywhere." That fanaticism, he said, "has raised contribution in churches to furnish arms and money to such criminals as [John Brown] to make a war for empire of settlement."[31]

Unlike northern Democrats, then, Wise did not blame the Republican Party for John Brown—he blamed the entire North. Nothing in Wise's papers reveals whether these remarks

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[29] "Where Is the Responsibility?," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, October 25, 1859; For similar, see "The True Lesson," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, October 30, 1859.
[30] For a fuller explanation of Wise's politics in the winter following John Brown's raid, see William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 195–200.
[31] *Governor's Biennial Messages to the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, December 5, 1859* (Richmond, VA: James E. Goode, 1859), 5.

represented Wise's genuine beliefs or a crass political calculation, but they are important either way. If Wise truly thought that most northerners supported Brown's raid, then we have an example of a prominent Virginian and lifelong public servant turning against the North. Alternatively, if Wise called out northern society to relieve political pressure from the more radically pro-slavery politicians in his state, then that indicates the growing power of pro-slavery conditional unionism in Virginia.

To prove that the majority of northerners supported abolitionism, southern Democrats pointed to public memorials and speeches devoted to Brown around the time of his capture and execution. On November 8, six days after Brown had been found guilty of treason against Virginia, multiple first-degree murders, and inciting an insurrection, transcendentalist writer Ralph Waldo Emerson gave a lecture at Tremont Temple in downtown Boston. The subject of the lecture was courage. After speaking on heroes of times past, Emerson asked his audience to "Look nearer. . .at that new saint, than whom none purer or more brave was ever led by love of man into conflict and death—a new saint, waiting yet his martyrdom and who. . .will make the gallows glorious, like the cross."[32] Emerson—a man who spent his life writing on the importance of non-conformity—did not represent the mean of northern thought on John Brown or abolition. Nonetheless, a Democratic paper in Jackson, Mississippi pointed to Emerson's speech as evidence that most northerners supported Brown—so many as to make the North feel foreign to southerners. "Such declarations as these from northern oracles, and the known complicity of so many leading men in the non-slaveholding States, in the movement of Brown, suggest the idea that the two sections are already arrayed as two hostile nations."[33]

Were the point not clear, an article in the *Baltimore Sun* titled "Is John Brown a Representative Man?" set out to prove that the majority of northerners supported Brown. "Day

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[32] Quoted in George Willis Cooke, *Ralph Waldo Emerson: His Life, Writings, and Philosophy*, 2nd ed. (Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2003), 140.
[33] "The Execution of Brown--The Hostile Camps," *Semi-Weekly Mississippian*, December 2, 1859, 2.

after day. . .week after week, we have the cumulative evidence, furnished voluntarily by the press and the pulpit, that John Brown is in fact the representative man of a very large class of the people of the North," the paper warned readers. Though the paper paid lip service to party politics, writing that the spirt of Brown "actuate[d] the whole republican party," the article on numerous occasions turned it into a sectional issue, blaming "this numerous class" at the North, claiming "it is no party question," and calling for unity in the South regardless of party affiliation.[34] Other publications pushed this conclusion further, claiming that not only did Brown enjoy broad support among northerners, but that other northerners stood ready to attack, as the radical *Charleston Mercury* put it, the "peace and security of the southern people."[35]

A letter from Virginia man to his uncle, a plantation owner, reveals the polarizing effect of this kind of political reporting. On the day John Brown was hanged, P.C. Massie wrote to William Massie, dismayed. "I have been greatly surprised at the sympathy manifested for him at the North," Massie wrote. "With but few exceptions both pulpit and press have united in expressions of praise and sympathy and in denunciation of the South." [36] This was categorically untrue. Most Republican papers had disavowed Brown, denouncing him as insane—even if they did claim his brief success revealed the inherent instability of southern slave society. The Republican *New York Tribune* dismissed the whole raid as having "never appeared to us, from the first, as consistent with soundness of mind."[37] Leading Republicans Abraham Lincoln and William Seward joined the papers

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[34] "Is John Brown a Representative Man?," *The Baltimore Sun*, November 28, 1859, 2.
[35] Quote from "The Insurrection," *Charleston Mercury*, October 21, 1859, http://history.furman.edu/editorials/see.py?sequence=jbmenu&location=%20John%20Brown%27s%20Raid%20on%20Harper%27s%20Ferry&ecode=sccmjb591021a; A tell-all account published in Baltimore claimed that Brown's raid was but the tip of a vast northern conspiracy, and it marked the vanguard of future insurrections. See *Startling Incidents and Developments of Osowotomy Brown's Insurrectory and Treasonable Movements at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, October 17, 1859, with a True and Accurate Account of the Whole Transaction by a Citizen of Harper's Ferry* (Baltimore: John W. Woods, 1859).
[36] "P. C. Massie to William Massie," December 2, 1859, William Massie Papers, 1747-1919, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.
[37] "John Brown's Insanity," *New York Tribune*, November 25, 1859; for similar, see "The Harper's Ferry Affair," *Daily Evening Transcript*, October 24, 1859, in which the reporter claims to have uncovered a long history of mental illness in Brown's family.

in denouncing Brown in an effort to repair their party's credibility with conservative northern unionists.[38] But since southern Democratic papers reported on Emerson's praise instead of moderate Republican denunciations, southern Democrats like the Massies concluded that in general, northerners supported Brown.

In sum, the vast majority of southern Democrats concluded that northern fanaticism had seeded John Brown's raid. After having convinced themselves in 1856 that all Republicans were fanatics, Republicans' midterm victories in 1858-59 seemed to indicate that the majority of northerners were fanatics. It became all too easy to reason that Brown represented the abolitionism that supposedly pervaded the North. It is impossible to tell whether Democratic newspaper editors and politicians in the South genuinely believed that the majority of northerners supported abolition. Radical newspapers like the *Charleston Mercury*, which had long kept up a drumbeat for secession, certainly had ulterior motives: convincing readers that most northerners supported Brown would prime the South for secession. And generally moderate southern Democrats like Virginia's Henry Wise could well have been trying to cater to the radical elements in the party who, following this northern invasion, wanted angry rhetoric, not mutual understanding and compromise. Indeed, the southern newspapers and politicians who claimed northerners supported Brown's raid either discredited or willfully ignored the many, many Republican papers and politicians who noisily disavowed Brown for months following his raid, possibly indicating that they saw political benefits to portraying Brown as a northern problem. Whatever their reasoning, the end result was the same: southern Democratic newspapers and politicians told their readers and constituents that the majority of northerners sympathized with Brown. They may have known better, but the rank-and-file might not have; those rank-and-file southern Democrats now had to wonder whether most northerners

[38] Lincoln did so in his now-famous speech at Cooper Union in New York City on February 27, 1860. For more on the Republican Party's response to Brown's raid, see Varon, *Disunion!*, 332–35.

thought it right to invade southern homes and steal southern men's property in slaves.

Southern Democrats denigrated northern women as symbols of the social disorder and fanaticism that they believed pervaded the North and led to John Brown's raid. Lydia Maria Child epitomized everything southern Democrats hated. Child was a Bostonian, a woman's rights activist, and an abolitionist—even serving as a member of the executive board of the American Anti-Slavery Society in the 1840s and 1850s. Southerners thus already had plenty of reason to despise Child, but when she wrote a public letter to Virginia governor Henry Wise, requesting permission to minister to Brown in prison, she became a special target of their ire. In October, following Brown's capture and imprisonment, Child wrote to Wise what she called a "plea of sisterly sympathy with a brave and suffering man," that she may travel to Virginia "for the purpose of nursing your prisoner." Though she believed that Christianity "justified men in fighting for freedom," she promised that she would not "seek to advance these opinions in any way. . .after your permission to visit Virginia has been obtained." This was to be a pilgrimage of mercy. On October 29, Wise acquiesced, albeit in a backhanded manner. "I could not permit an insult even to woman in her walk of charity among us, though it be one who whetted knives of butchery for our mothers, sisters, daughters, and babes," he wrote.[39] That is: Wise would follow the laws of chivalry, even if Brown had not.

When the correspondence between Wise and Child was made public in November, it unleashed a torrent of spiteful press from southern Democrats that continued for months after Brown's execution. The *Macon Telegraph* claimed that when Child's daughter fell ill while traveling in the South, Child would not respond to her letters or send money to pay for her care—even though

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[39] The American Anti-Slavery Society eventually published this correspondence, from which I here quote. See *Correspondence between Lydia Maria Child and Gov. Wise and Mrs. Mason, of Virginia* (Boston: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1860), 4, 5; Republican papers reprinted the correspondence, apparently believing that Child's sense of moral obligation bolstered the justice of their cause. See "Gov. Wise Catches a Tartar," *Janesville Daily Gazette*, November 24, 1859; "Lydia Maria Child's Reply to Gov. Wise," *Fremont Weekly Journal*, November 25, 1859.

Child had rushed to Virginia to minister to Brown. (Naturally, the paper reported that local southern gentlemen came to the daughter's aid.) As a result, the paper concluded, "Mrs. Child wanted to fly to the bedside of the wounded assassin, John Brown. . .not in truth to do a work of mercy, but to gain the notoriety of identifying her name with the Brown raid. But when true humanity. . .appeal to her on behalf of a sick daughter, they appealed in vain—because there was no eclat in nursing an afflicted child."[40] A similar article in the *Richmond Dispatch* reported that a number of women lay sick and in need of care in Lawrence, Massachusetts. "Where, oh where is Mrs. Lydia Maria Child?" the paper asked. "Can only murderers, horse thieves, and traitors stir her sympathies? Why is she not at the bedsides of these ill-fated sufferers? Is it because they are of her own sex? Or because it is their misfortune to be white instead of black?"[41]

Both newspaper articles follow the same storyline: a white, northern woman or women fell sick, and Child did not care to nurse them. This trope conveys two larger ideas about northern, abolitionist women. For one, it adds a gendered twist to the long-standing southern argument that abolitionists should help impoverished northern workers before they tried to free enslaved southern workers. In this portrayal, abolitionist Child is eager to meddle in southern homes—according to southerners, enslaved workers were part of an idyllic extended family—but is unwilling to take care of members of her own family.[42] This made abolitionism seem less like a political position and more like a grand moral failure—especially in an era when, as Barbara Welter and Nancy Cott have

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[40] "Modern Philanthropy Illustrated," *Macon Daily Telegraph*, April 28, 1860, 2.

[41] "Where Is Mrs. Child?," *Richmond Dispatch*, January 20, 1860, 1 The *Dispatch* had been a Whig paper until that party crumbled earlier in the decade. This article reveals why: southern Whigs could not abide their northern counterparts' growing support for antislavery ideology. Many former southern Whigs would support the Constitutional Union Party in the election of 1860; others went on to vote Democratic.

[42] Lacy K. Ford argues that this tendency to see slaves as members of an extended family developed in the years following the war of 1812, and especially during the Missouri debates of 1820 and 1821. During those debates, southern slaveholders used the language of paternalism to characterize the master-slave relationship. They insisted, as Ford puts it, "that when governed by paternalism, slavery became a domestic institution that recognized the humanity of slaves and treated them accordingly" (203). See Lacy K. Ford, *Deliver Us from Evil: The Slavery Question in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 173–203.

detailed, Americans idealized women's roles as wives and mothers.[43]

Second, both stories make Child seem like a traitor to her race and her sex. Brown had betrayed white southerners by attempting to free their slaves. By supporting Brown, Child participated in this betrayal. But Child had gone further. By failing to care for her daughter or for the white women of Massachusetts, Child had also betrayed members of her own sex. For southern Democrats, this second betrayal would have called Child's abolitionism into question. Could a woman who could not care about other white women possibly care about black men? If not, did she only support abolition for the public exposure it afforded her? In sum, then, these articles discredited Child, and indeed all female abolitionists, by describing them as failed mothers who preferred public life to family life.

Eliza Margaretta Chew Mason joined the papers in attacking Child. Mason was married to James Murray Mason, a Democratic Senator from Virginia. On November 11, she opened fire in a letter to Child. Mason began, "Do you read your Bible, Mrs. Child? If you do, read there, 'Woe unto you, hypocrites,' and take to yourself with two-fold damnation that terrible sentence." According to Mason, Child's support for Brown was hypocritical first because Brown's "aim and intention was to incite the horrors of a servile war—to condemn women of your own race. . .to see their husbands and fathers murdered, their children butchered, the ground strewed with the brains of their babes."[44] This was the same accusation that the newspapers had made: that Child betrayed members of her race and her sex.

Then, Mason accused Child of a second hypocrisy: that Child supported abolition, but did

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[43] In 1977, Barbara Welter identified what she called the "cult of true womanhood." The attributes of true womanhood, by which a woman judged herself and was judged by others, included four virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. Cott argued that this cult was indigenous to New England, and differed from the southern ideal of being a "lady." Yet the judgement southerners heaped on Child shows the basic similarity between these two ideals: in both scenarios, women should remain within the home and obey their husbands. See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860," *American Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1966): 151–74; Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977).

[44] Eliza Margaretta Chew Mason, in *Correspondence between Lydia Maria Child and Gov. Wise and Mrs. Mason, of Virginia*, 16.

not love the enslaved. "Now, compare yourself with those your 'sympathy' would devote to such ruthless ruin," Mason seethed, "and say. . .would YOU stand by the bedside of an old negro, dying of a hopeless disease, to alleviate his sufferings as far as human aid could?"[45] Mason reported that southern women did all of this and more, demonstrating their true sympathy for these supposed members of their extended family. Unlike Child, who incited violence and grasped for public recognition, "we"—that is, wives of slaveholders—"endeavor to do our duty in that state of life it has pleased God to place us."[46] Of course, this was untrue. As historian Thavolia Gymph has shown, white plantation mistresses were just as violent as white plantation masters.[47] But Mason nonetheless draws a sharp contrast between abolitionist women and slaveholders' wives—and by connection, between northern and southern women and indeed northern and southern society. Child did charity because she wanted recognition; Mason did charity because it was her Christian duty. To Mason, this difference represented the difference between northern and southern women in general: northern women sought roles outside the home, while southern women were content with their role inside the home, one that, if carried out, strengthened the bonds among races and stabilized society.[48]

To southern women, Child represented a broader problem with northern women: they desired public recognition. In the wake of Child's public intervention in the Brown affair, southern women wrote to friends, politicians, and Democratic newspapers to criticize northern women's apparent desire for political power. In a January 26, 1860 letter to her local paper, a North Carolina

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[45] Mason, in *Correspondence between Lydia Maria Child and Gov. Wise and Mrs. Mason, of Virginia*, 16.
[46] *Correspondence between Lydia Maria Child and Gov. Wise and Mrs. Mason, of Virginia*, 17.
[47] Glymph states simply, "White women wielded the power of slave ownership" (4). Obviously, this violence also flagrantly contradicted the notion that that white women were pious and gentle. See Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
[48] Though her correspondence with Child is the best preserved, Mason was not the only southern woman who wrote to Child. Another Virginia woman, identified in an Ohio Republican newspaper as Mrs. Marm, wrote to Child to say that no southern lady should read any of her works after she demonstrated sympathy for John Brown. See "Mrs. Marm," *Ashtabula Weekly Telegraph*, December 31, 1859, 2.

woman who only identified herself as "Lilian" asserted that women should not be involved in politics. But first, apparently aware of the irony of writing to a public outlet to decry women who inserted themselves in public life, she began, "I once thought I would never again contribute a line to a newspaper, or write one thought that should have birth in a mind deemed inferior (I mean in comparison with the others sex)." She continued, "I would not have you infer. . .that I have anything to do with politics. . .or that I am a champion of women's rights!" But the number of women becoming involved in public life was too troublesome to ignore, and she had to speak up. The rest of her letter disparaged "some women of our land"—undoubtedly northern women—who were active in politics. "I would not have her voice which should ever be attuned to sweetness, heard in the tumult of angry debate and the fanatical wrangling of the day. I should grieve to see that gentleness which should ever be her crowning grace sullied by being brought into contact with such rude elements," the woman wrote.[49]

Portia Baldwin of Winchester, Virginia, followed a similar formula when she picked up her pen on December 17, 1859. Baldwin was writing to her governor, Henry Wise. She petitioned him to help the widow of Heywood Shepherd, an innocent black man shot in the course of Brown's raid. Baldwin knew Shepherd because she taught his children in Sunday school; she assured Wise that Shepherd "was a worthy and industrious man." Could Wise offer financial assistance to Shepherd's widow and children? Like Lilian, Baldwin thought her cause merited her intervention. Also like Lilian, Baldwin did not want to be perceived as involving herself in public matters—even though she was. So, she pleaded with Wise to keep her role private. "As I do not covet the reputation of the strong-minded women of the North, yet I hope I have some of the good sense of the South, I must request that my name may not appear in any form in this matter," Baldwin wrote.[50]

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[49] "Correspondence of the Daily Progress," *Newbern Daily Progress*, February 1, 1860, 2.
[50] Portia L. Baldwin, "Portia L. Baldwin to Henry A. Wise," December 17, 1859, Mss1W7547bFA2, Virginia Historical Society; Again, southerners believed Child represented a broader problem with northern women. One man wrote to his

Southern women believed Child represented a profound flaw in northern society: that too many women there coveted political power**.** How did southern women come to this conclusion? On the one hand, southern domestic novelists had long described differences between northern and southern society and even northern and southern women.[51] But those early novels did not bear the same sharp edge as these barbs against Child and her northern sisters. Perhaps, then, we should look to the Democratic Party. In 1856, Democrats had lambasted Republican women as too eager for public influence. After Brown's raid and Child's letter, then, southern women put these two things together, combining the long-standing tropes about sectional difference with Democrats' harsh criticism of Republican women. The mixture southern women created was potent. Not only did it decry northern women in general as strong minded—that, male southern Democrats had done, too. It additionally praised southern women as the purer, more feminine opposite of northern women. Where Child nursed Brown to gain fame, southern women nursed their slaves because they were good Christians. Where northern women advocated loudly for abolition, southern women worked quietly to help the victims of Brown's raid. These conservative southern women raised the stakes for southern Democrats. They brought into focus an image of the enemy, and they elevated themselves as a cause worth fighting to protect.[52]

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mother reasoning that an acquaintance in South Carolina was not making friends easily because his mother was a "strong-minded" Yankee woman. See "Jefferson Martenet to Catherine M. Richardson," January 3, 1860, Jefferson Martenet Correspondence, Huntington Library.

[51] Elizabeth Moss has shown that as early as the 1830s, southern women presented through their fiction a vision of the "true" South. Novelists like Caroline Gilman, Caroline Hentz, and Maria McIntosh wrote about an ordered and stable South, governed by noblesse oblige, and contrasted it with a competitive and individualistic North. Moss writes that these novels both "buil[t] on existing stereotypes" yet "unconsciously widened the chasm they had intended to bridge" (60). See Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

[52] Stephen Berry argues that for southern men elevated women as near-deities to whom they could offer up their efforts. "Men believed that women were supposed to bear witness to male becoming, to cheer men to greatness," Berry writes (85). Berry argues that this forced women into subservient roles that made their worlds smaller and less significant. In terms of the personal relationships between southern men and women, I do not disagree with Berry. But in terms of the politics, the above research shows that women were sometimes complicit in this quest for southern male greatness, themselves providing men with an image of southern womanhood that was worth fighting for. See Stephen W. Berry, *All That Makes a Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

To southern Democrats, northerners' praise for Brown indicated that the majority of northerners supported violent insurrection: invading white southern homes, stealing men's property, raping their wives, and killing their children. Unsurprisingly, the militant *DeBow's Review* leapt at the chance to articulate this argument against the North, publishing a long letter from former president John Tyler. Tyler, a Virginian, claimed, "Citizens of the North in close correspondence with many of the most prominent and influential political leaders of that section. . .in September, 1859 unfurled the black banner of abolition. . .and invited the slaves throughout the South to rebellion and a feast of blood and rapine."[53] The *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, also a secession-leaning paper, described Brown's raid as having as his purpose "the desecration of households, robbery, murder, and arson, and a horrid concourse of kindred crimes."[54] A few weeks later, on December 1, the *Times-Picayune* reprised this point, emphasizing the horrific consequences for women had Brown been successful. "Not content with running off a few negroes from their masters, John Brown and his party of marauders were willing to cause a general insurrection," the paper reported. Such an insurrection would "overturn the whole social compact, which protects life [and] guards female innocence"—that is, white women's bodies from black men's supposed hypersexuality.[55] A sensationalist account of Brown's raid, published in Baltimore in the waning months of 1859, used the same language. "The late and tragical occurrences at Harpers Ferry," the book began, "startled many firesides from the feelings of security in which they have heretofore tranquilly reposed, to the most terrible apprehensions." Brown had hoped to "invade and violate the rights of the Southern States, kindle a servile war, and spread rapine, pillage, and bloodshed among their people."[56] Taken together,

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[53] John Tyler, "The Secession of the South," *DeBow's Review*, April 1860, 380, Virginia Historical Society.
[54] "Pardon for John Brown," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, November 16, 1859.
[55] "Letter from New York," *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, December 1, 1859, 6.
[56] *Startling Incidents*, 1, 39.

publications like these the rise of the Republican Party and its alleged links to Brown into an issue that directly threatened southern women and southern homes, along with southern men's wealth and property in slaves.

Southern Democrats warned that more insurrections—more violence against white women—might lay ahead. On January 23, 1860, Representative William Barksdale of Mississippi rose to give a speech in the House. Pointing to Radical Republican Owen Lovejoy, Barksdale bellowed, "I say, then, to him, that he has taught treason, rebellion, and insurrection. . .Yes, sir, his doctrine leads to treason and rapine and to all the horrors of a servile and civil war."[57] Such a speech could only have stoked fear among his constituents reading this speech in their local paper. Other sources also told them they had reason to hold their wives a bit closer. The same sensationalist account that had detailed the "late and tragical occurrences at Harpers Ferry" also included a list of other cities where, investigators had reportedly uncovered other plots. "In a trunk supposed to have belonged to Capt. Brown, was found seven. . .maps," the account warned, darkly, "which would seem to indicate that the points of attack and the course of the insurrectionary movement through the South, had already been carefully determined upon by this well-organized and confident league of traitors."[58]

And who should southern men blame for this rape and murder? Even moderate southern Democrats contended that northern Democrats would be somehow responsible. Georgia's *Federal Union* declared on November 1, "Honest and conscientious men at the north" must "now see the necessity of putting down a party whose principles, if carried out, can lead only to civil war, murder,

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[57] Quoted in "Speech of Hon. Wm. Barksdale, of Mississippi, In the House of Representatives, Jan., 23, '60," *Semi-Weekly Mississippian*, April 17, 1860, 3.

[58] *Startling Incidents*, 70; Paranoid, southerners also worried about a rumored attempt by abolitionists to free Brown from prison. On November 22, less than two weeks before Brown's scheduled execution, sixteen-year-old Hope Massie wrote to his father, Piedmont planter William Massie, "There is a great excitement over here about the abolitionists trying to rescue Brown." Of course, they did not, nor was any such plan afoot. See "Hope Massie to William Massie," November 22, 1859, William Massie Papers, Box 2E492, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

and rapine."[59] A relatively moderate paper, the editors at the *Federal Union* did not yet claim that the majority of northerners supported Brown. Yet they nonetheless placed responsibility for stopping future incursions—future "rapine"—squarely on the shoulders of northern men, including northern Democrats. If northern Democrats could not quash the Republican Party, and if an abolitionist then incited an insurrection, then northern Democrats would have failed to protect southern men's property and southern women's honor.

This appeal to protect white women was powerful for two reasons. First, and most obviously, contemporary mores and laws dictated that a woman's body belonged to her husband. She owed him her body, and he owed her protection. The rape of a woman indicated the failure of the man to provide protection—which in turn marked a failure of male authority and honor. Second, the appeal to protect white women related back, as most things did in the South, to slavery. The condition of slavery followed the mother: if the mother was free, the child was free; if the mother was a slave, the child was a slave. The rape of a white woman by a black man therefore threatened not only the white race—white women should bear white children—but also the institution of slavery, because the union might beget a free black child.[60] This is why white men issued and responded to calls to protect white women.

What did white southern women think of this? Twenty-year-old Amanda Edmonds lived less than forty miles south of Harpers Ferry, on her family's plantation in Fauquier county, Virginia. She claimed in her diary a month after the raid that she had passed the whole night of the raid—of which she at that point had no knowledge—consumed by a "feeling of utter dread," only to awake and find out about the violence. Edmonds inveighed against Brown and his accomplices. "Rascals!" she exclaimed. "To free the slaves of the South, that our dear old State should be made a free State

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[59] "The Abolition Insurrection at Harper's Ferry--The Irrepressible Conflict Begun," *Federal Union*, November 1, 1859.
[60] For more on interracial relationships both before and after the Civil War, see Martha Hodes, *White Women, Black Men: Illicit Sex in the Nineteenth-Century South* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997).

O! The idea is overbearing." Against the enslaved men who set fire to a neighbor's wheat weeks after the raid, she spat, "I could see the fire kindled and [the enslaved] shringed and burnt untill the last drop of blood was dried within them and every bone moulder to ashes." So, when Brown dropped to his death on December 2, 1859, Edmonds was elated. After his execution, she wrote in her diary, "This day will long, long be remembered, as the one that witnessed Old Ossawattamie the villain—murderer, robber, and destroyer of our Virgin peace, swinging from the gallows." She later added, "What an awfully sublime, a glorious, a charmed scene. I almost wish I was a man so I could have been there to look upon it."[61] Many other women felt similarly. One man confided in his friend that his wife "has had several hearty crying spells because she cannot be there, to lend a helping hand, in her way, such as I hear the ladies have so cheerfully done…to the comfort of the soldiers."[62]

Chappelear felt fear for reasons real and imagined. She lived in a state where enslaved men and women accounted for thirty-one percent of the population.[63] Her economic well-being and her way of life depended on their continued oppression. She had been primed to fear their uprising. She also lived in a society that saw black men as potential sexual predators. As Elizabeth Fox-Genovese has explained, white proslavery propaganda characterized male slaves as either "Bucks" or "Sambos." Whereas the Sambo was naturally docile and subservient, a Buck evoked virility and sexual aggression. Implicitly, this represented a threat to white women. Fox-Genovese notes the irony in this fear, since "the main interracial sexual threat was that of white predators against black women."[64] That threat amplified the fear of rebellion: once liberated, Sambos might remain loyal,

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[61] Amanda Virginia Edmonds Chappelear, "Amanda Virginia Edmonds Chappelear Diary," n.d., Virginia Historical Society.
[62] Gallaher, "Gallaher to Andrew <. . .>," November 26, 1859, John Brown Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[63] *Historical Statistics of the United States: Colonial Times to 1970, Bicentennial Edition, Part 1.*
[64] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 291; Kathleen Brown has explained how the hypersexualization of black men began in the late seventeenth century, when Virginia's lawmakers and courts began to regulate female sexuality. In 1662, Virginia's

but Bucks would rape vulnerable white women. Chappelear's fear of slave insurrection indicates that she and white southern women like her did not merely act passively, as symbols for southern men to trot out when they spoke about Brown's raid. As a woman, Chappelear could not herself burn the rebellious slaves, nor could she attend John Brown's hanging—but she certainly thirsted for revenge. In the wake of John Brown's raid, white southern women became more militant in their critique of northern society and their support for southern secession. One newspaper reported that a group of women in Virginia formed their own southern rights association following Brown's raid.[65] As Elizabeth Varon has explained, the raid "accelerated an ongoing process of political reorientation, in which women cast off old political allegiances and came to embrace the cause of southern nationalism."[66]

Occasionally, northern Democrats tried to encourage their constituents to sympathize with southerners on this point. John Brown had disrupted the peace of southern homes; his success would have unleashed rape and murder on white southern women and children. Caleb Cushing, a New England Democrat with deep southern sympathies, deployed this language in a December 8 speech at a "Union Meeting" in Boston. Cushing had started his career as an antislavery Whig. By 1859, he had thrown his support to saving the Union, at the expense of his former antislavery beliefs. At Faneuil Hall, Cushing asked listeners to imagine "In the dead of the night, the husband reposing in the beloved arms of his wife, with their dear little children around them." Into this domestic scene—"the fancied repose of their common security under the laws of their country"—

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colonial assembly doubled the fines for interracial fornication; in 1691, it outlawed interracial marriage. Together, these secured the sexual rights of white men to white women, while black men could be harshly punished for rape. This, in turn, created a sense of black men as rapists. See Kathleen M. Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race and Power in Colonial Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 196; Eugene D. Genovese points out that the idea of black male hypersexuality only fully formed after emancipation. See Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 422, 461–62.

[65] "Pen and Scissors," *Cincinnati Daily Press*, December 3, 1859, 1.

[66] Elizabeth R. Varon, *We Mean to Be Counted: White Women and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 139.

"they are aroused from their slumbers by the treacherous approach of armed murderers."[67] Cushing parroted the southern line on Brown's raid: that a breakdown in law and order had threatened, and would continue to threaten, white southern families. Since Cushing was a doughface, one imagines he hoped this language would draw northern Democrats closer to their southern counterparts.

Yet northern Democrats simply did not use this language as frequently as southern Democrats did—and when they did, they often used it to argue against abolitionist and pro-slavery extremism, rather than for further protections for slavery. Philadelphia's *Public Ledger*, for instance, warned, "The conflict at Harpers ferry is a foretaste of what may be expected when the contest becomes general between two sections of the country, a point to which extreme opinions would rapidly drive us." If, the paper told readers, "the good, sober sense of the people does not interpose in time. . .the reality will be. . .smoking houses and fields bathed in blood."[68] The language about burning homes and violated women would have shocked northern readers as much as it had southern ones. The *Ledger* wielded that power to northern Democrats' purpose: claiming the political middle ground between northern abolitionists and southern fire-eaters, whom northern Democrats considered equally dangerous. Yet this rhetoric was fairly rare at the North. Language about rape and murder simply played better in the South, where it exploited deep fears and reflected years of pro-slavery propaganda. The difference in rhetoric reflected the increasing divergence between northern Democrats' anti-abolitionism and southern Democrats' overt pro-slavery views.

New Yorker Ann Stephens chimed in. More accustomed to being in the spotlight—Stephens was a well-known novelist and contributor to *Godey's Lady's Book*—Stephens smartly

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[67] "The Conservative Movement--The Great Union Demonstration at Boston," *The Baltimore Sun*, December 10, 1859, 1; As the election of 1860 neared, a Democratic paper in Pennsylvania tried a similar approach, publishing a drawing of a large dagger, that it claimed to be the actual size of that carried by Brown at Harpers Ferry. See "Black Republican Argument" (Pennsylvania Statesman, October 20, 1860), http://elections.harpweek.com/1860/cartoon-1860-large.asp?UniqueID=14&Year=1860; For more on Cushing's Faneuil Hall speech, see John M. Belohlavek, *Broken Glass: Caleb Cushing and the Shattering of the Union* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2005), 300–302.

[68] "The Insurrection at Harper's Ferry," *Public Ledger*, October 19, 1859, 2.

deployed her sex to deride Brown and express support for the Union. On December 2, Victor Hugo had penned a letter to the editor of the *London Star* praising John Brown as "heroic" and his sons, who were killed in the raid, as "sacred martyrs." On December 27, Stephens responded to in a public letter to the editors of the *New York Express*. She first spent nearly two pages excusing her intervention in public life. She had "hop[e]d that some more able person—some statesman or author of his own strength—would answer Victor Hugo. . .but so far. . .our statesmen are too busy, and our authors remain silent." So, she reasoned, since "the honor of our country belongs alike to its men and its women. . .when that is assailed, its defence is proper to either." From there on, though, Stephens' argument mirrors that of Cushing and of the *Ledger*. She decried Brown as a "great criminal"; she called on readers to think of white southerners, "thousands of my own countrywomen, gentle, good, and lovely, given up a prey to wild insurrection"; she described Republicans as a "small party" of "extremists"; and she vaunted the "hol[y] work" of "soften[ing] the bitterness of sectional strife. . .into one great national brotherhood."[69] Stephens letter thus offers a perfect summary of northern Democrats' response to Brown's raid: Brown was a criminal, emboldened and indeed supported by the Republican Party, to wage war on southern men's property and southern women's honor. Only the Democratic Party could defend the Union against this type of extremism.

Among southern Democrats, John Brown's raised, once again and yet more pressingly than ever before, the question of slavery's security in the Union. Despite the violence, and despite their belief that more and more northerners supported abolition, many southern Democrats nonetheless still believed that northerners simply misunderstood the institution of slavery—that if they knew it as southerners did, they would not support its abolition. In a November 11 letter to her son,

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[69] *Victor Hugo's Letter on John Brown, with Mrs. Ann S. Stephens' Reply* (New York: Irwin P. Beadle & Co., 1860), 8, 4, 5, 13, 21, 4; At least one Democratic paper clearly appreciated Stephens' support, reprinting her letter in their paper. See "To Victor Hugo," *Newbern Weekly Progress*, January 10, 1860, 1.

Baltimorian Catherine Martenet Richardson reported that she had just finished reading Caroline Lee Hentz's *The Planter's Northern Bride*. Hentz wrote the novel in response to Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The book's protagonist, Eulalia, is the daughter of a New England abolitionist. When she marries a southern slaveholder, she initially condemns his use of slaves. After she sees how well her husband treats his slaves, however, she warms to the institution, and indeed even intervenes to stop a plot by a group of local abolitionists to incite a slave rebellion.[70] The plot gives life to all the themes common in so-called "anti-Tom" literature: Eulalia and her husband make great sacrifices for their slaves' happiness, and when a northern abolitionist convinces one of them, Crissy, to run away, she finds herself unhappy and uncared for in the North. The book spoke to Richardson, who had, despite having immigrated from Germany in her youth, clearly adopted the prejudices of her new home. She wrote to her son, "All those crazy people who are against the South ought to read it. If it had been written for the Harpers Ferry affairs it could not be more like it. Tis excellent—you would be delighted with it."[71] Richardson believed that if all the northerners who thought slavery immoral could live with the institution as Eulalia had, they would experience the same change of heart.

In her letter to Virginia governor Henry Wise, Portia Baldwin expressed a similar sentiment. After requesting assistance for a widow made by the raid, Baldwin sighed, "now if the North will but come to their senses, and be quiet we may yet be a happy people."[72] For Baldwin as for Richardson, slavery was not the problem—northern agitation against slavery was. If slavery was a positive good, the only reason slaves might wish for freedom was because abolitionists had convinced them they

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[70] See Caroline Lee Hentz, *The Planter's Northern Bride* (Philadelphia: T.D. Peterson, 1854), http://utc.iath.virginia.edu/proslav/hentzhp.html.
[71] "Catherine M. Richardson to Jefferson Martenet," November 17, 1859, Jefferson Martenet Correspondence, The Huntington Library.
[72] Portia L. Baldwin, "Portia L. Baldwin to Henry A. Wise."

should.[73] Brown's raid provided southerners with another example of northern intervention in the southern institution**.** Nonetheless, these women saw an easy fix: if northerners accepted slavery for the positive good that it was, or even simply minded their own business, the Union could continue on in peace.

Charlotte, North Carolina's *Evening Bulletin* affirmed this point. The Union could recover from the blow of Brown's raid if northern Democrats could recapture power in the northern states. In an article titled "Action Wanted, and Not Sympathy," the *Bulletin* called on these "dormant voters" in the North to take action. "Let their voice penetrate the villages, the inland towns, and the ignorant masses there, who are influenced by fanatical priests, demagogues, and strong-minded women, who sanctify murder and canonize Brown." And at the ballot box, "let their deeds, also, be felt in such reaction as will give future security to the South"—that is, by voting Democratic.[74] This article, along with the letters from Richardson and Baldwin, represents the views of moderate southern Democrats following Brown's raid. Southern Democrats believed that the majority of the North had gone Republican, and, therefore, abolitionist. That created the environment for John Brown's raid. They held northern Democrats partly responsible, too, because they had failed to stem the tide of Republicanism. But moderate southern Democrats still hoped that northerners had only gone temporarily insane. If northern Democrats regained power and influence, southerners imagined, they could convince the free states that slavery was a positive good—or at least, that slavery was none of their business.

Brown's raid shook other southern Democrats' faith in a far deeper way, making them

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[73] Elizabeth Varon points out that Virginians had been making this argument since the 1830s. At that juncture, southerners had not yet solidified behind the positive good argument for slavery; many Virginians, for instance, hoped they could diversify their state's economy to create an all-white Virginia, free of both slaves and free blacks. Yet in 1831, they blamed "abolitionist agitation" for Nathaniel Turner's rebellion—showing the beginning of the transition to the positive good argument. See Varon, *Disunion!*, 78–85.

[74] "Action Wanted, and Not Sympathy," *The Evening Bulletin*, December 15, 1859, 2.

question whether the Union could their property in slaves and their families from northern abolitionists. If the Union's laws had not protected the South from Brown, why should southerners expect anything different in the future? On December 5, in his final message as governor to the Virginia state legislature, Democrat Henry Wise reported on his communication with President James Buchanan. Wise had written to Buchanan asking what the federal government could do to protect Virginia, and other southern states, from future incursions by northern abolitionists. Both men were Democrats. Yet Wise was disgusted with Buchanan's response. "He seems to think that the constitution and laws of the United States do not provide authority for the President to interpose to '*repel invasion*,'" Wise told Virginia's legislators. "I differ from this opinion. Neither the framers of the constitution nor the Congress of 1795 were guilty so gross an omission in their provisions for the national safety." After quoting extensively from the Constitution to prove his point, Wise reasoned, "If I am right in my views of our guarantee of protection" and "he, the executive of the United States, does not concur with me, [he] will not enforce the protection we need." "On the other hand," Wise continued, "if he is right. . .we cannot legally claim that the United States shall keep the peace." He finished, "In either case. . .We must rely on ourselves, and fight for peace!"[75]

Wise represented one side of a growing debate in his state. On the one side stood Wise and his fellow Democrats, who believed that Virginia should mobilize to protect slavery—even if that meant preparing to secede. For Wise, Harpers Ferry threw into relief a supposed battle between masters in Border counties and non-slaveholding whites who did not fully support slavery. On the

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[75] *Governor's Biennial Messages to the General Assembly of the State of Virginia, December 5, 1859*, 17–18, 23. Here, because it suited his purposes, Wise cried for federal intervention in a state's domestic affairs. Yet southerners decried any move by the federal government to intervene in slavery, which they claimed fell under the purview of the states. Similarly, abolitionists believed the federal government should abolish slavery, yet cried state's rights when northern states passed personal liberty laws protecting residents from having to cooperate with returning fugitive slaves to their southern owners. In short: both sides called on federal power when they stood to benefit from it, and decried federal intervention when they did not.

other side, however, stood a strong Unionist opposition, descended from former Whigs. These men tried to pave a third way between the fanatics of Massachusetts and the fanatics of South Carolina. John Brown raided Harpers Ferry in the middle of this ongoing political battle; Virginia's Democrats capitalized on the fear and drama to sway public opinion in their favor, at least temporarily.[76]

In a letter to his uncle, a slaveholder, Virginian P.C. Massie echoed Wise's concern about the Union's ability to protect southerners and their families from abolitionist-led insurrections. Because of the sympathy northerners had shown for Brown, the man wrote, "it is clear that our reliance must not be on their sense of justice but upon our own ability to resist."[77] Brown's raid pushed Virginians to wonder if they would be able to protect Virginia's borders, and Virginia's women, better on their own.

And at this, the fire-eaters rejoiced. John Brown's raid gave life and visceral power to what fire-eaters had argued for decades: that the Union did not and would not protect slavery, and that the South should therefore secede.[78] Most southern Democrats had previously dismissed the fire-eaters as fringe radicals; now, the fire-eaters' ideas appeared to be not so radical after all. The *Charleston Mercury*, a fire-eating paper from radical South Carolina, happily encouraged Virginians' concerns about the Union. Virginia had once been a stronghold of Unionism, the paper wrote. But "the Harpers Ferry *emeute*, like a slap in the face, appears to have wakened her up to some consciousness of her rights and dignity." Then the *Mercury* played to Virginians' pride: "the contempt in which she was held, implied by such an invasion—the scorn heaped on her by the whole northern press—the imputations of cowardice and weakness. . .have shown Virginia. . .she ought to be with

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[76] See Link, *Roots of Secession*, 191–94.
[77] "P. C. Massie to William Massie."
[78] As Eric Walther writes, "By the time the first state seceded in 1860 many southerners"—that is, the fire-eaters—"had spent over thirty years preparing their people to deal with the sectional crisis and lead them out of the Union. They indoctrinated the people with arguments for state sovereignty, issued warnings about hostile sectional majorities, and argued for the necessity of perpetuating and protecting slavery." The only way to do this, they believed, was by seceding from the Union. See Eric H. Walther, *The Fire-Eaters* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 8.

the South."[79]

In the months following Brown's raid, fire-eaters not only rejoiced—they mobilized. Secessionists from the Deep South seized on southerners' anger and fear to encourage them to mobilize for secession—and even war. The raid was "a prelude to what must and will recur again and again, as the progress of sectional hate. . .advances," the *Charleston Mercury* warned. Southerners needed to put an end to their "tame and passive policy," which the paper argued had "allow[ed] slavery to be carried out of the border states."[80] If they were to be men—to protect their property and their honor—southern men would have to become more aggressive in their political demands. That might mean, the *Mercury* told readers in another article, that southerners should demand to rule themselves. The "ignominious toleration and concession by the South, with the lights of the present"—that is, of Brown's raid—"reflected on them, show to the most bigoted Unionist that there is no peace for the South in the Union. . .The South must control her own destinies or perish."[81]

The pro-secession *DeBow's Review* agreed. John Brown's raid—the attack of a "notorious horse-thief and murderer"—had demonstrated one, inescapable fact: meddling, modernizing northerners would not let the South alone until they established "a government without. . .a principle of conservatism, and. . .a society without a patriarchal institution, or an element of subordination." By "patriarchal institution," *DeBow's* meant slavery. And indeed, conservatism, slavery, and subordination were the building blocks of southern slave society. Without slavery and without subordination (of blacks to whites, and of women to men), southern society as it existed in

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[79] "Virginia," *Charleston Mercury*, November 28, 1859; For similar, see "The Plan of Insurrection," *Charleston Mercury*, November 1, 1859, http://history.furman.edu/editorials/see.py?sequence=jbmenu&location=%20John%20Brown%27s%20Raid%20on%20Harper%27s%20Ferry&ecode=sccmjb591101a.

[80] "The Harper's Ferry Insurrection," *Charleston Mercury*, October 19, 1859.

[81] "The Plan of Insurrection."

1860 would crumble. "For these results," the author averred, "there is but one mode of escape. . .*Secession and a new Confederation.*"[82]

One southern Democrat, Richard Thompson Archer, followed these calls for secession to their logical conclusion. Archer, a Mississippi cotton planter, ruled a domain that included more than 13,000 acres of land and over 500 enslaved workers. He was one of the wealthiest men in the South. On December 8, he drafted a letter to the editors of a newspaper. ""The irrepressible conflict' has begun, the South is invaded," Archer wrote. "It is time for all patriots to be united, to be under military organization, to be advancing to the conflict determined to . . .die in defense of the God given right to own the African. If young men are slow to prepare for the conflict, to volunteer in the service of the South, it is time for old men to set them an example."[83] Archer then called for volunteers for a cavalry troop that he planned to raise. Archer's land and slaves were in Mississippi—far from the free states and their abolitionists. Yet Brown's raid, and the southern Democratic press's response to the raid, had worked in tandem to convince Democrats across the South that their land, their property in slaves, their wives, and their "patriarchal tenure," as Governor Wise once put it, were all now at stake.[84] Archer believed that southern men must be willing to secede and to fight to protect their stable, patriarchal slave society.

With their campaign tactics in 1856, Democrats planted the seeds of a profound conflict within their party. Northern and southern Democrats' responses to John Brown's raid demonstrate that those seeds had taken root. Pulling straight from the 1856 playbook, northern Democrats blamed the raid on Republicans; they also connected female abolitionists' support for Brown with

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[82] John Tyler, "The Secession of the South," 380, 367, 368.
[83] "Richard Thompson Archer to the Editors of the Sun," December 8, 1859, Richard Thompson Archer Family Papers, Box 2E647, Folder 5, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.
[84] As reported by a Republican paper. See "The Patriarchal Tenure," *Chicago Press and Tribune*, October 26, 1859.

gender disorder in the Republican Party. But for southern Democrats, Brown's raid was a watershed moment. It proved what the rhetoric from 1856 and the Republicans' midterm victories had made them suspect: all Republicans were radicals, most northerners were Republicans, and therefore most northerners were radicals—radicals who now clearly wished to threaten southern slavery and southern homes with their violent abolitionist raids.

For the Democratic Party, the timing of the raid could not have been worse. With the party's presidential nominating convention set to meet in the spring, southern Democrats' deepening sense of alienation made compromise on a candidate and a platform truly ambitious goals—ones that would ultimately prove to be out of reach.

Chapter Four: Election of 1860

In April 1860, as Democrats began to travel to their national convention in Charleston, the specter of disunion once again hung over the country. John Brown's raid caused more southerners to ponder secession than ever before. "The Harpers Ferry invasion has advanced the cause of disunion more than any other event," reported the *Richmond Enquirer*. But then again, American politicians had been prophesizing and threatening disunion for generations.[1] Although John Brown's Raid had shed blood, even that was not new: clashes between pro- and anti-slavery settlers in Kansas had introduced violence into the conflict over slavery during the preceding decade. Despite the conflict between northerners and southerners, the Democratic Party had held together. Nothing they could see indicated that this year should be any different.

Yet different it was. In 1860, northern and southern Democrats nominated and ran separate candidates, splitting the vote and ultimately handing the election to Republican Abraham Lincoln. The Democratic Party collapsed over slavery, as the party's discourse descended into a welter of accusations and counter accusations, in an atmosphere of mutual suspicion and betrayal.

Democrats expressed alienation from each other in highly gendered political language. That language, about the social and cultural incompatibility of North and South, made Democrats' disagreements seem more profound and compromise seem dangerous. This chapter demonstrates how northern and southern Democrats deployed gendered rhetoric against each other in the election of 1860.

Northern Democrats wanted a popular sovereignty platform and a northern nominee, and they needed to fend off the rising Republican Party. So, northern Democrats condemned Republicans as dangerous radicals on gender issues and slavery alike. In the South—the upper

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[1] Elizabeth Varon demonstrates that almost since the founding, politicians of all parties had used disunion rhetoric as a prophecy, a threat, an accusation, a process, and a program. Quote from Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 329.

South, in particular—northern Democrats had to contend with both the southern Democrats and the Constitutional Union Party. To win moderate votes there, northern Democrats adapted the tactic they had used against Republicans in the North, decrying fire-eaters as gender radicals of a different sort. According to northern Democrats, southerners had become intoxicated with the power of ruling their plantations, and now planned to subjugate their northern brethren as they had subjugated their slaves. In both sections, northern Democrats avowed that compromise with any extremist party would be an insult to their manhood, and that popular sovereignty by male voters was the only manly solution to the slavery question.

Southern moderates and southern fire-eaters, however, wanted a pro-slavery platform and a southern nominee. Southern Democrats expressed a vision of two different societies. Using the line that they had deployed against Republicans in 1856, southern Democrats claimed that northerners supported women's rights, free love, miscegenation, and abolitionism. They attributed the popularity of these heresies to the lack of slavery, and therefore a widespread effeminacy, in the North. Southerners, on the other hand, did not support those "isms." They enjoyed a stable, patriarchal society, which southern Democrats attributed to the presence of slavery. To protect this society, southern Democrats insisted on both a pro-slavery platform and a southern nominee for president. Lest any man fall out of line, southern Democratic newspapers praised the manliness of southern men who refused to compromise with northerners and castigated those who worried about splitting the party in two.

Fatefully, secession-minded fire-eaters took this argument one step further. They believed that if Abraham Lincoln were elected president (a likely outcome after northern and southern Democrats nominated separate candidates in June), the South should secede immediately. They claimed that a Republican presidency would lead inevitably to slave insurrection and racial equality, both of which, they claimed, would result in the rape of white women by black men. Would not

even the most Union-loving southern man secede to protect his family from such horrors?

Northern Democrats arrived at the Charleston Convention unsettled by the progress Republicans had made in the North during the previous five years. In 1856, James Buchanan had won the presidency with 174 electoral votes to John C. Frémont's 114. Buchanan won every southern state, but Frémont had taken eleven of the sixteen northern states. Had Frémont also won Pennsylvania and either Illinois or Indiana, he would have won the election. In 1856, Democrats escaped this fate in part because Buchanan called Pennsylvania home. Northern Democrats had to wonder: what might have happened if they had nominated a southern man?

Republicans had hit on a message that resonated with moderate northern voters. As Eric Foner has explained, the Republican Party's ideology emphasized the dignity of free labor. Republicans believed hard work improved men's social and economic condition. It also benefitted society as a whole: as men worked hard, they produced economic growth, which lifted everyone up. If a man could not find a good job in the eastern cities, he should be free to move west to work the land there—without having to compete with slave labor. Republican newspaperman Horace Greely famously exhorted readers to "Go West, young man, and grow up with the country." Altogether, this system of free labor and free soil would free men to fulfill their complete potential: no man was doomed to remain a laborer forever.[2]

So, despite their loss, the election of 1856 emboldened Republicans. Their message had gained traction in the North. If they could win just two more large states in the next election, they could take the White House. Democrats knew Republicans were organizing. On Election Day in 1856, the *New York Herald* reported that Republicans in Jersey City had resolved to "re-organize for

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[2] This summary of Republican ideology is based on the first chapter of Eric Foner's work on the party. See Eric Foner, "Free Labor: The Republicans and Northern Society," in *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party Before the Civil War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 11–39.

future contests upon an effective plan for strengthening the party and diffusing [their] principles."[3] With their commitment to organizing and their popular message, Republicans made huge gains in the 1858-59 midterm congressional elections. By picking up 26 seats—all of them in the North—Republicans took control of the House of Representatives for the first time. Democrats, meanwhile, lost 35 seats—24 of them in the North. For the first time since 1848 the Democrats lost control of the House.

Northern Democrats, therefore, had good reason to fear the Republican threat going into the election of 1860. The Republican message resonated with northern voters. John Frémont had come surprisingly close to winning the election in 1856. Republicans had organized and taken the House in 1858-59. Northern Democrats needed to bring moderate and conservative northerners back into the party. They sought to paint the Republicans as dangerous radicals, and themselves as sound conservatives. To accomplish these goals, northern Democrats reprised their argument from 1856: a Republican president would use the federal government to institute a radical social program of women's rights, free love, and abolition.

Cartoonist Louis Maurer depicted a motley crew of social radicals—including a free love advocate, a woman's rights activist, a free black abolitionist, and a socialist—lining up to support Abraham Lincoln, the Republican nominee. Lincoln sits astride a rail borne by Horace Greeley, the reformist editor of the *New York Tribune*. Lincoln's supposed supporters follow the pair as they try to barge into an insane asylum. The cartoon encapsulated the Democratic argument: Republicans wanted to free everyone from the social norms that made for a stable society and a country.[4]

In the cartoon, a woman's rights activist declares, "I want woman's rights enforced, and man reduced in subjection to her authority." Give control to Lincoln, the cartoon implied, and he would

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[3] "New Jersey: Republican Re-Organization," *New York Herald*, November 4, 1856, 5.
[4] See appendix for image.

impose a radical women's rights agenda on the country. Maurer drew the woman as short and thin, with a long, pointy nose. In so doing, Maurer dismisses her message: only unattractive, mannish, disordered shrews support women's rights.

This description tapped a strong vein in Democratic campaign rhetoric. As they had in 1856, Democrats again associated the Republicans with the nascent movement for women's suffrage. Editor James Gordon Bennett of the *New York Herald* reiterated that the Republican Party supported women's rights and thereby destabilized society. A *Herald* article published in August slurred the Republican Party as the "Woman's Rights Party."[5] Another *Herald* writer charged, "The whole structure of the black republican party. . . is that 'slavery is an evil and a crime.' On this basis, the party has been built up, and around it have been gathered other ideas belonging to the same school, and inculcating the same exaggerated notion of individual rights, such as Fourierism, [and] woman's rights."[6] In the late eighteenth century, French thinker François Marie Charles Fourier had argued the economic and social structures of the modern world inhibited people from pursuing their God-given individual passions; he proposed founding utopian socialist collectives in the countryside, which would eliminate wage labor and prescribed gender roles. According to Democrats, however, giving women political and economic power would create conflict and confusion between men and women, destabilizing society. But women's rights also demonstrated a general Republican attitude in favor of social freedom, which Democrats worried would inevitably extend to include freedom for African Americans. Democrats insisted that civic rights be restricted to white men; opening them up to blacks would tear down every other restriction on those rights.

Bennett was intensely racist and unscrupulous—prone to publishing personal conversations,

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[5] "The Famous Gurney Letter," *New York Herald*, August 13, 1860, 2.
[6] "Lincoln's Radicalism Proved," *New York Herald*, September 6, 1860, 6; For similar, see "The Presidential Contest," *New York Herald*, May 21, 1860, 4, which claims that Republicans would turn "government into a great promoter of religious and moral reform, of woman's rights. . .and the displacement of the family by social phalanxes."

breaking promises, and switching political allegiances. Yet his *New York Herald* had the largest subscription of any American newspaper of its time; one historian has described it as a "potent agency in shaping public opinion."[7] When Bennett said that Republicans would enforce women's rights and antislavery, then, there was a good chance that many northerners would believe it.

In the Maury cartoon, two free love advocates, a woman and a man, march behind Lincoln. The woman, though linking arms with the man, looks at Lincoln and exclaims, "Oh! What a beautiful man he is. I feel a 'passional attraction' every time I see his lovely face." She is short, squat, and mannish, while Lincoln appears apelike in his homeliness. Meanwhile, the man announces, "I represent the free love element, and expect to have free license to carry out its principles." He has long, flowing, feminine hair. Together, their appearance—her masculinity and his femininity—make a mockery of female equality. The cartoon alleges that real men favored the Democrats.

Throughout the campaign season, northern Democratic newspapers mocked the Republican Party and its voters for allegedly supporting free love and thereby destabilizing marriage. In May 1860, a Democrat from the *Wisconsin Daily Patriot* attended the Republican National Convention in Chicago. He reported that the convention was full of "the same gaunt philosophers who suggest bran bread and free love."[8] The *New York Herald* printed extracts from a sensational, but allegedly real, letter written by a woman who left her husband and children for another man. The woman explained that she had long felt a "passionate desire to be freed from all restraint, moral or physical." Once she became infatuated with another man, the "chaste name of wife" seemed to her a mere "social fiction," and she decided to leave her husband. Democrats claimed that this letter, circulated by American printers, stood as "a free love manifesto for the campaign."[9] In fact, only a few fringe

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[7] David Herbert Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered: Essays on the Civil War Era* (New York: Vintage Books, 1947), 74; Harold Holzer details Bennett's political changeability and his opposition to Lincoln in 1860 in Harold Holzer, *Lincoln and the Power of the Press* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2014), 246–48.
[8] "Chicago Convention," *Wisconsin Daily Patriot*, May 24, 1860, 2.
[9] "The Famous Gurney Letter," 2.

radicals, and no Republican leaders, supported the tiny free love movement. No matter. Democrats expected that the association would scare voters—all men, in 1860—away from the Republican ticket.

But the matter went deeper. The *Herald* also described the woman's letter as "Mr. Seward's Higher Law for Discontented Wives." In 1850, on the floor of the Senate, William Seward had claimed that though the Constitution permitted slavery where it already existed, a "higher law"—divine moral law—demanded the restriction of slavery's expansion into the western territories.[10] Democrats decried Seward's position as a slippery slope to anarchy. Seward's doctrine seemed to defy the rule of human law, including the Federal Constitution. According to Democrats, Republicans applied a similar logic to marriages, inviting wives to leave husbands, regardless of their marriage vows and the state laws that restricted divorce. To Democrats, the "higher law" represented a breaking down of social and legal order that would destabilize the country.

The central issue in the election of 1860, as it had been for the past decade, remained what to do about slavery in the territories. Republican victories indicated that northern voters favored prohibiting slavery in the west. But they did not seek abolition in the southern states, recognizing that as a constitutional impossibility. Northern Democrats, however, argued that Republicans were closet abolitionists ready to destroy the Federal Constitution. The Democratic cartoon also showed a free black man marching in support of Lincoln. He proclaims, "De white man hab no rights dat cullud pussons am bound to spect. I want dat understood." The cartoon told readers that Lincoln would not merely restrict slavery in the west—he would also abolish slavery and grant freedmen social and civic equality with white men.

Moreover, Democrats warned that freeing the slaves would lead to "amalgamation," or

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[10] George E. Baker, ed., "William Henry Seward's Higher Law Speech," in *The Works of William H. Seward*, vol. 1 (New York: Redfield, 1853), 23, http://history.furman.edu/~benson/docs/seward.htm.

interracial sex. In Ohio, where the Republican Party had made inroads over the preceding four years, Democratic newspapers claimed that amalgamation was on the rise, and blamed the insidious influence of the Republican Party. The *Daily Ohio Statesman* reported that Madison, Ohio, was "thrown into great excitement by the elopement of a white woman and a full blooded negro." The woman in question was "of more than ordinary intelligence and very fair appearance," and she left her young child behind with her husband. Both of these factors—her beauty and intelligence and the now-motherless white child—made her decision seem especially damaging to the white race. Critically, however, the *Statesman* did not blame the woman for her decision. Rather, her husband's politics had led her to elope. "An abolition sentiment and an abolition literature has prevailed in the farmer's house for years. This elopement," the paper concluded, "is the legitimate result."[11] This storyline—a white woman leaves her white, Republican husband for a black man—proliferated in northern Democratic papers during this election.[12] Democratic papers told voters: when a Republican leads a family, it results in race mixing and the family falls apart. If a Republican man led the country, then, race mixing would become law, and the country would fall apart.

Northern Democrats accused Republicans of supporting women's rights, free love, and abolition to improve the party's chances in the North. But winning northern support was only half of the problem. Northern Democrats also needed to look southward. Before the Democratic National Convention in April 1860, southern fire-eaters had threatened to walk out if the party's platform did not demand slavery's unlimited expansion into all federal territories. If the fire-eaters walked out, they would split the Democratic Party in two. To northern Democrats, however, the fire-eaters' position on slavery seemed extreme, and their threat to tear the party apart seemed

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[11] "Amalgamation in Lake County," *The Daily Ohio Statesman*, May 29, 1860, 2.
[12] See also "Another Judson Affair," *Wisconsin Daily Patriot*, April 30, 1860, 1; for a reported case involving a black woman and a white man, see "One of the Cases of Amalgamation in Oberlin," *The Daily Ohio Statesman*, November 10, 1860, 2; Other articles simply claimed that the Republican party supported amalgamation. See "Union Now and Forever! Tremendous Uprising of the People," *New York Herald*, October 24, 1860, 3.

absurd.

The city of Charleston was uncomfortable during the third week of April 1860, when 253 Democratic delegates arrived hoping for southern hospitality. Instead, they found rooms in the city of 43,000 already booked; the owners of the few that remained available demanded extortionist rates.[13] The weather made the cramped quarters truly miserable. On April 23, newspapers recorded that the temperature hit 84 degrees in the shade—a recording surely compounded by the stifling, muggy humidity of the Deep South.[14] And northern delegates also could not help but notice the so-called "House of Correction" on Magazine Street, a jail that included a "whipping-room" with double-thick walls, filled with sand, to muffle the screams of the enslaved men and women punished there.[15]

The party faced two major hurdles at the convention. First, they had to decide on a platform. Northern Democrats wanted to renew the popular sovereignty platform which the party had run on in 1856. But the political ground that made a popular sovereignty platform work in 1856 had shifted by 1860. Southern Democrats now rejected the old platform, demanding instead planks that guaranteed slavery's expansion and a federal slave code. Second, Democrats needed to pick a nominee. Stephen Douglas stood out as the natural choice for northern Democrats, yet his central role in making Kansas a free state made him anathema to southern delegates.

Democrats met their first hurdle in the Committee on Resolutions, which was in charge of

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[13] "Population of the 100 Largest Urban Places: 1860" (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1998), https://www.census.gov/population/www/documentation/twps0027/tab09.txt; Historian Douglas Egerton writes that the "few hotels had clearly colluded in advance," since all demanded five dollars per day. One Illinoisan decried the rates as a plot to keep Douglas' supporters, who were traveling from the North and required lodging, away from the convention. See Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election That Brought on the Civil War* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 64.

[14] Temperature according to "Charleston Convention. Proceedings of the First Day.," *The New York Times*, April 24, 1860. The same article reported that already, on the first day of the convention, "the weather was hot; and members were cross."

[15] Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election That Brought on the Civil War* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 64.

crafting the party's platform. On April 25, the third day of the convention, that committee began its work. Northern Democrats argued that any change to the 1856 popular sovereignty platform, known as the Cincinnati Platform (after the city in which it was drafted), violated the small-government principles of Jacksonian democracy. Fire-eaters in the committee, however, insisted that the federal government should protect all property—including property in slaves. Unable to compromise, the committee submitted two platforms to the general convention: a Majority Report, recommending the pro-slavery platform, and a Minority Report, recommending the popular sovereignty platform.

Northern Democrats refused to capitulate to southern fire-eaters because they believed the Democratic Party was the only truly national party. Until 1852, the Whig Party and the Democratic Party thrived in both the North and the South. The knowledge that victory required nationwide support moved representatives from both parties to take a moderate position on the slavery issue. In his fourth debate with Abraham Lincoln in 1858, Stephen Douglas remembered how Whigs and Democrats forged the compromise of 1850. "The Democrats and Whigs gathered around, forgetting differences, and only animated by one common, patriotic sentiment to devise means and measures by which we could defeat the mad and revolutionary scheme of Northern Abolitionists and Southern disunionists. We did devise those means. . .and they gave peace and quiet to the country."[16] But by the time Douglas debated Lincoln, the Whigs had crumbled. The Republicans, who took the Whigs' place, drew their support uniquely from northern free states. Only the Democrats enjoyed support in the North and the South.[17]

Likewise, northern Democrats believed that popular sovereignty was the only national,

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[16] "Fourth Debate: Charleston, Illinois," September 18, 1858, https://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/debate4.htm.

[17] Jean Baker argues that Democrats did not merely represent national views, but that, at least in the North, the Democratic Party built and bolstered young men's commitment to the nation. See Jean H. Baker, *Affairs of Party: The Political Culture of Northern Democrats in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1983).

unifying position on slavery. Republicans' prohibition on slavery could only ever appeal to northerners; fire-eaters' insistence on slavery's expansion could only ever appeal to southerners. Popular sovereignty, on the other hand, could add slave states in the southwest and free states in the northwest—which seemed to Democrats a perfect compromise. Democrats equated popular sovereignty with Union, and they equated any other position with disunion. When fire-eaters threatened to walk out of the convention at Charleston over the slavery plank of the platform, Stephen Douglas bellowed, "Secession from the Democratic Party means secession from the federal union."[18]

Northern Democrats also worried about close races in their own districts. Over the preceding five years, northern voters had been leaving the party in droves, sick of what they saw as their representatives' capitulation to southern slaveholders' interests. Northern Democrats resented the southern leadership for demanding the concessions that begot these heavy losses. They knew the Democratic Party could not win the presidency running on a pro-slavery platform. "We are not in a condition to carry another ounce of Southern weight," Illinois Representative James W. Singleton wrote to Douglas.[19] Nor would northern constituents swallow a radical southern nominee. H. C. Page, a newspaper editor from Dansville, New York, wrote as much to Virginian R.M.T. Hunter, who would be attending the convention. Located about fifty miles south of Rochester, Danville was "a Democratic outpost in the enemy's country, standing on the very threshold where Black Republicanism runs riot." Page hoped the convention would nominate Hunter. But if it did not, he wished most of all that "the man to be named at Charleston should be one we can elect."[20]

On Saturday, April 27, the platform committee submitted its dueling popular sovereignty

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[18] Quoted in Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 772.
[19] "James W. Singleton to Stephen Douglas," February 20, 1859, Stephen A. Douglas Papers, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago.
[20] H.C. Page, "H.C. Page to R.M.T. Hunter," March 5, 1860, Hunter Family Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

and pro-slavery platforms to the general convention. Infamous fire-eater William Yancey, who since the 1840s had been scheming to induce secession, saw his chance. Standing at the podium, Yancey gave a marathon speech in favor of the pro-slavery Majority Report. He argued that Democrats were losing elections in the North not because of their connection to pro-slavery southerners, but because they were "pandering. . .to anti-slavery sentiments." Turning to southern grievances, Yancey claimed that "the South, with her institutions, [was] unsafe in the Union."[21] On Monday, April 29, the delegates reconvened to vote on the platform. Assembled in the Institute Hall, the delegates (sixty percent of whom hailed from the North) voted 165 to 138 to accept the popular sovereignty platform instead of the pro-slavery one. Immediately, Leroy Walker of Alabama took to the floor and called on his fellow Alabamians to walk out. They did, and, egged on by the Charlestonians who had packed the galleries, all or portions of the Mississippi, South Carolina, Florida, Texas, Delaware, Georgia, and Arkansas delegations followed them. As the exodus took place, Yancey "smil[ed] as a bridegroom"—events had gone just the way he had hoped. Women descended from the galleries and placed roses on their seats in a gesture of appreciation for the delegates' departure.[22] Three blocks away, at St. Andrew's Hall on Broad Street, these southern delegates waited, anticipating conciliatory action from the northern delegates. None came. A Democratic paper in Wisconsin praised the Democrats who remained at the convention for resisting reconciliation. Northern Democrats, the paper editorialized, had "back-bone enough to rebuke and put down all such insolence.[23]

Yet even the mostly-northern contingent that remained in the Institute Hall could not settle on convention's second question: the choice of a nominee. The rules still required that the nominee

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[21] Account of Yancey's speech from Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors*, 73–74.
[22] Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors: Stephen Douglas, Abraham Lincoln, and the Election That Brought on the Civil War* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2010), 77.
[23] "Political," *Wisconsin Patriot*, May 17, 1860, 7.

receive two-thirds of the original number of delegates—202 votes. On May 1, the northern Democrats took their first ballot. Douglas received 145½ votes. In 56 more ballots over that day and the next, Douglas never won the required 202 votes. On May 3, delegates realized the convention was deadlocked. Many began to leave; those who remained voted to reconvene in Baltimore on June 18. They hoped that the states whose delegates had seceded from the convention might send different, more moderate delegates to Baltimore.

Concerned about the possibility that southern delegates might capitulated to northern demands, southern newspapers used this period to denigrate compromise as emasculating and praise intransigence as manly. On May 12, New Orleans' *Daily Delta* praised the manhood of southern delegates who refused to compromise with their northern counterparts at Charleston. "The delegates of the South to the Charleston Convention proudly and nobly sustained the manhood of our section," the paper opined, "by refusing to recognize the right of a dominant section to exclude them from equal enjoyment of the common territory of the Union."[24] The *Macon Daily Telegraph* offered similar praise to Georgia's delegation, describing the bolters as "most honorable men." But as Democrats planned to reconvene in Baltimore, the *Telegraph* warned the men "would stultify themselves by a return to Baltimore. It would be a wound upon their honor. . . We know some of them well, and hesitate not to say their manhood and chivalry revolt at such condescending obsequiousness."[25]

Another chance for compromise arose at the end of May, when southern Democrats wrangled over whether to attend at the next national convention in Baltimore or depart for a separate, southern convention in Richmond. Again, those opposed to compromise ratcheted up their masculine language. The editor at Montgomery, Alabama's *Daily Confederation* claimed that

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[24] "The Meeting To-Night," *Daily Delta*, May 12, 1860, 4.
[25] "Senator Toombs' Position," *Macon Daily Telegraph*, May 10, 1860, 2.

southern Democrats' manhood depended on skipping the Baltimore convention and heading instead for Richmond. "Will you trust to the courage of men in a *revolution* who have turned pale and backed down from their braggart menaces on a mere *party issue*?" the paper asked. "The cowardly crew who are whining 'compromise,' 'Democracy,' 'National Convention,' and 'Baltimore'" but "yearning to go to Richmond. . .*yet afraid to do it*; what is to be hoped from these men?" By calling compromise cowardly retreat, the editor of the *Confederation* limited the options for southern delegates who still wanted a united Democratic Party. The paper admitted that appealing to southerners' masculinity was a conscious and ongoing political strategy. In the past, the editor explained, "We have tried by every appeal and taunt that could touch their manhood and pride to induce them to do it. . .yet no sooner do we find an opportunity to pick up their gage of battle. . .than they begin to whimper like spanked children, and to back square out of the issue."[26] On June 7, South Carolina state senator John Townsend gave a speech that made the same point. The attempt to compromise in Charleston—such as it was—had been an "insult to our *manhood*," as if it "could be driven from its propriety, by *fear of consequences* and the power of numbers."[27] With the Baltimore convention about to begin, Townsend thus urged southern Democrats to split the party in two. Real men stood on principle, even if they had to stand alone. That language equating intransigence with masculinity peaked during the six weeks between Charleston and Baltimore was no coincidence. Extreme southern Democrats abhorred the idea of further compromise. They used gendered language to discourage moderates from making amends with the northern wing of the party.

On June 18, Democrats met again in Baltimore. Caleb Cushing again served as chair of the convention. Despite hailing from Massachusetts, Cushing—along with a minority of other northern

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[26] "[Illegible]," *The Daily Confederation*, May 30, 1860, 2.
[27] John Townsend, "The South Alone, Should Govern the South: And African Slavery Should Be Controlled by Those Only, Who Are Friendly to It." (Steam-power presses of Evans & Cogswell, 1860), 6, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Democrats—had supported Buchanan in his push for the Lecompton constitution.[28] Though sympathetic to the seceding southerners, he ruled that only those present when the Charleston Convention had adjourned could take their seats in Baltimore. Those delegates then voted to bar from entry the Florida and Alabama delegations, which had seceded from the Charleston Convention. On these grounds, the southern delegates from other states who had been admitted in Baltimore walked out in solidarity with the Floridians and Alabamians, adjourning to a separate building.

Free to choose their own nominee, the southern bolters nominated the sitting Vice President of the United States: John C. Breckinridge. Breckinridge was, according to his biographer, "tall, dignified, and courtly."[29] Like many Democrats of his generation, Breckinridge had long idolized Andrew Jackson. Though his father and grandfather had pledged allegiance to the Whigs, the young Breckinridge hesitated to commit to the party. He felt uncomfortable with northern Whigs' attacks on slavery, which had become increasingly common by the time Breckinridge entered politics during the 1840s. When he left his parents' home, he fell in with a group of young Democrats who idolized Jackson.[30] Their enthusiasm inspired him. He remained with the party for the rest of his life.

Breckinridge's nomination came as a surprise—not least to Breckinridge himself. But the breakup of the Charleston and Baltimore conventions, the fire-eaters' desire to split the opposition to Lincoln, and Breckinridge's ambition worked together to land the southern Democratic nomination in squarely in his lap. Breckinridge had expressed interest in leading a united Democratic Party before the Charleston convention; when the convention fell apart, he assumed his southern

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[28] Election results indicate that these men were standing against a clear anti-Lecompton mood in the North. In the 1858 midterms, eight anti-Lecompton candidates challenged pro-Lecompton incumbents and won. Michael F. Holt, *The Election of 1860: A Campaign Fraught with Consequences* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2017).
[29] William C. Davis, *Breckinridge: Statesman, Soldier, Symbol* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974), 157.
[30] According to his biographer, William Davis, Breckinridge met these men when he spent a summer in Iowa, away from his family, at age 21. See William C. Davis, 27.

friends would not continue to push for his nomination. He assumed wrong. On June 23, the seceding southern convention at Baltimore nominated him unanimously. Breckinridge did not want the nomination of a half-party. But on June 25, Jefferson Davis wooed Breckinridge over dinner. According to Davis, Breckinridge had only to accept the nomination to cause Douglas to withdraw his candidacy; this would re-unite Democrats and ensure Lincoln's defeat in November. Breckinridge's more radical supporters, like Georgian Robert Toombs, never believed Douglas would withdraw; they wanted to split the party to hand the election to Lincoln and thereby justify southern secession.[31]

Unsurprisingly, the northern delegates who remained at the Institute Hall in Baltimore nominated Stephen A. Douglas. The forty-seven-year-old Illinoisan had served in Congress, as a representative and then as a senator, for seventeen years. There, the ambitious Douglas had made his mark. As chairman of the Senate's Committee on Territories, Douglas had participated in every major political debate over slavery in the 1850s. He ushered the 1850 Compromise measures through the Senate, seemingly resolving the debate over slavery's expansion. In 1854, he re-opened the slavery issue with the Kansas-Nebraska Act. In the winter of 1857-1858, he rallied the opposition to the fraudulent Lecompton Constitution, which would have admitted Kansas as a slave state. Throughout the decade, Douglas championed popular sovereignty, hoping that devolving power to the territories would end the national debate over slavery that had repeatedly threatened the Union.

To be "linked with all the great movements of national political life," as one historian has

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[31] William C. Davis, 224–26; Another Breckinridge biographer believes that Breckinridge "thought of his acceptance as a necessary preliminary to the withdrawal of his candidacy, as well as Bell's and Douglas's, in order to concentrate the opposition to Lincoln on a single candidate." See Frank H. Heck, *Proud Kentuckian: John C. Breckinridge, 1821-1875* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1976), 85. Either interpretation shows that Breckinridge accepted the nomination with the hope of uniting the Democratic Party--whether under himself or someone else--rather than simply running to lose.

described Douglas, would have required immense energy.[32] Douglas had it in spades. He was boisterous, pugnacious, and tireless. "Every inch of him has its own alertness and motion," a woman who knew him wrote. The combination of his figure—"short, stout, and thick"—and his energy earned him the nickname "The Little Giant."[33] Although only the most generous observers described Douglas as handsome, no one could deny his eligibility for marriage. By 1860, Douglas had in fact been married twice—both times to southerners. The first, Martha Martin, Douglas had married in 1847. Martin was from a prominent North Carolina political and slaveholding family. Martin's father, Colonel Robert Martin, owned an 800-acre plantation on North Carolina's Dan River and a large cotton plantation on the Pearl River in Mississippi. In 1853, Martha died after giving birth to her third child. By the time Douglas accepted the nomination in Baltimore in 1860, he had married again—this time to Adele Cutts, a Washington belle twenty-two years his junior. Descended from a prominent Catholic family in Maryland, Cutts exuded refinement in a way that the Westerner Douglas did not. She proved a good influence on Douglas, whose care for his appearance had diminished in inverse proportion to his drinking following his first wife's death.[34]

Though Douglas' appearance had improved by 1860, one aspect of his marriage to Martin continued to haunt him: his inheritance of the Martins' Pearl River plantation. On April 7, 1847, Robert Martin offered Douglas the Pearl River plantation as a wedding present. Douglas represented a free state in Congress; owning a plantation and slaves would put him in an awkward position. He declined Martin's offer, claiming, "I declined to accept, not because I had any sympathy with abolitionists or the abolition movement, but for the reason that, being a northern man by birth. . . it

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[32] Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 123.
[33] Quoted in Robert W. Johannsen, 207.
[34] One observer wrote of Douglas, "Now his face is clean shaved, his collar stands stiff and glossy, his linen looks decidedly respectable, he wears his hair much shorter than usual, and, to crown all, he appears in a new suit of black, a neat-fitting frock, instead of the shabby old dress coat, and looks about ten years younger than ever." Quoted in Robert W. Johannsen, 542.

was impossible for me to know, understand, and provide for the wants, comforts and happiness of those people."[35] Upon his father-in-law's death, Douglas nonetheless found it in himself to accept Pearl River as an inheritance.

Republicans nonetheless raised the issue of Douglas' plantation throughout the 1850s. In 1855, Senator Benjamin Wade, a Republican and an abolitionist stood on the Senate floor and accused Douglas of mercenary motives in supporting the Kansas-Nebraska Act. "Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also," Wade warned.[36] Douglas shot back, "I implore my enemies, who so ruthlessly invade the domestic sanctuary, to do me the favor to believe that I have no wish, no aspiration, to be considered purer or better than [Martha] who was, or they who are, slaveholders."[37] In 1860 Douglas' authorized campaign biography claimed that the plantation issue had totally blown over, yet the author took the time to recount and dispel the previous accusations. And in a dig at holier-than-thou Republicans, the biographer asked readers, "How many of those who have denounced him as a slaveholder, as being the 'owner of human beings'. . .would have resisted the offer that he declined"?[38]

The Republicans' charge—that Douglas owned and profited from a southern plantation whose enslaved workers were treated inhumanely—as well as Douglas' response, demanding that his family be left alone, elucidate how both parties saw the relationship between the personal and the political. Republicans held onto the reforming impulse of the Whigs from whom they descended.[39] Many Republicans believed the government should encourage moral behavior. Douglas'

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[35] James W. Sheahan, *The Life of Stephen A. Douglas* (Harper and Brothers, 1860), 438.
[36] Benjamin Wade, quoted in Martin H. Quitt, *Stephen A. Douglas and Antebellum Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 189.
[37] Stephen A. Douglas, "Execution of United States Laws. Speech of Hon. S. A. Douglas, of Illinois, Friday, February 23, 1855," in *Appendix to the Congressional Globe for the Second Session, Thirty-Third Congress, Containing Speeches, Important State Papers, Laws, Etc.*, vol. 31 (Washington, D.C.: John C. Rives, 1855), 330.
[38] James W. Sheahan, *The Life of Stephen A. Douglas*, 437.
[39] Daniel Walker Howe argues that the Whigs had a coherent political culture that focused simultaneously on innovation and social control and self-control. He argues that Republicans reflected this Whiggish impulse for social reform. See Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

slaveholding troubled Republicans because it belied a personal immorality that they worried would seep into public life. Douglas and his biographer responded by demanding Republicans keep out of Douglas' family life and judge not. Democrats since Andrew Jackson had rejected reform movements on the premise that men should not control other men's private behavior—and certainly not with the full force of the state behind them.[40] In sum, the same spirit that led Douglas Democrats to oppose women's rights and abolitionism also led them to resist questions about Douglas' slaveholding.

Douglas and his supporters frequently referred to the doctrine of popular sovereignty as "non-intervention," a turn of phrase that conveyed their faith in men's ability to govern themselves. At a Douglas rally, Herschel Johnson, Douglas' pick for vice president, praised the "doctrine of non-intervention, as it was in 1856"—that is, as in the Kansas-Nebraska Act.[41] The chorus of another Douglas campaign song went, "Our favorite choice are Douglas and Johnson/Our principles, popular sovereignty, non-intervention."[42] Republicans wished to impose their radical ideas about gender and slavery on the rest of the country. Southern Democrats wanted to impose their ideas about slavery on the territories. By promising not to intervene in the territories, only Douglas Democrats stayed true to the Jacksonian vision of negative liberties—of allowing men to rule themselves. A campaign song in 1860 described America under a Douglas presidency, in which there would be "boys, high hymning through the air/ Hosannas unto manhood's independence everywhere!"[43] For Douglas Democrats, the ability to vote on slavery was a masculine prerogative.

Even after the northern and southern Democrats had nominated separate candidates,

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[40] Daniel Walker Howe writes that Whigs "synthesized innovation with the maintenance of control. . . It was precisely this emphasis on controlling others that the Jacksonians objected to in Whig reforms." Democrats opposed these moves. See Howe, 300.

[41] "The Douglas Barbecue. Twenty to Thirty Thousand People in Jones' Wood," *New York Herald*, September 13, 1860, 3.

[42] "Cheer Up, My Lively Lads," in *The Democratic Campaign Songster: Douglas and Johnson Melodies* (P.J. Cozans, 1860).

[43] "The Douglas Campaign Rolling," in *The Democratic Campaign Songster: Douglas and Johnson Melodies* (P.J. Cozans, 1860).

Douglas' supporters kept up the drumbeat against compromise. Democratic newspapers in the North continued to praise northern men for standing up to southern party leaders. Just before the Democrats were to reconvene in Baltimore, the *Wisconsin Patriot* lauded Douglas for a speech he gave in support of popular sovereignty. "There is a bravery, an energy, and an unflinching back-bone," the paper read, "an unyielding firmness. . .to his friends, to his principles, and to his country. He stands as immoveable as a pillar of granite."[44] All of this praise—bravery, backbone, firmness—implied that Douglas' unwillingness to compromise made him a real man.

Democrats hoped this language would appeal to all conservative voters in the North—not just lifelong Democrats. In the early 1850s, the Whig Party collapsed over slavery: northern Whigs supported free soil, while southern Whigs supported slavery's extension. By 1860, many Whig voters had yet to find a new political party. The crumbling Know-Nothing Party had also left its supporters without a home. And Free-Soil Democrats also found themselves adrift. Under Andrew Jackson, their party had gone to war with the "Money Power"—a vague collection of individuals and institutions that used the national bank to elevate themselves at the expense of farmers and laborers. Free-Soil Democrats saw the "Slave Power" as the new incarnation of the Money Power, as Southern planters profited off the backs of poor whites and slave labor.[45] They wanted to see their party confront this elite, southern special interest that wanted to take western land away from honest white farmers. By lionizing Douglas' bravery and "unflinching backbone" at the convention, the *Patriot* article hoped to pick up votes from these political orphans, who all shared a general conservatism and a hatred for the Slave Power.

Newspapers used gendered language to coerce men as much as they did to praise and encourage them. During the debate over whether to seat the seceding southern delegates at the

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[44] "Judge Douglas' Last Speech," *Wisconsin Patriot*, June 16, 1860, 5.
[45] On the Jacksonian roots of antislavery, see Jonathan H. Earle, *Jacksonian Antislavery and the Politics of Free Soil, 1824-1854* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004).

Baltimore convention, a Wisconsin Democratic newspaper warned that if the seceding southerners took their seats, "the convention will surrender both honor and manhood."[46] By associating intransigence with masculinity, the paper limited the political options for northern delegates who may have wanted to seat the delegates and work together. For many northern Democrats, this language reinforced their feeling that southern Democrats had pushed them around for too long. An Oregonian declared that Joseph Lane, the pro-slavery Oregonian whom southern Democrats nominated for Vice President, had as senator "managed Oregon as though he held it politically as his own property. A body of sturdy democrats like the Oregonians cannot be managed like a plantation of Southern laborers."[47] By 1860, northern Democrats felt disinclined to compromise with radical southerners. Gendered language reinforced that sentiment, contributing to the failure of attempts at compromise during and after the party's split at the Charleston convention.

Northern Democratic leaders needed to discourage northern men from voting Republican and prevent northern Democrats from giving in to fire-eaters' demands. But to achieve their goal of keeping the party together, northern Democrats also needed to convince southern moderates not to side with the fire-eaters, either at the convention or when they cast their ballots in November. Before the convention, Democrats did not think this would be a hard sell. Though irritated by the fire-eaters' relentless rabble rousing, northern Democrats had long dismissed these radical southerners as a very loud minority. If they wanted to leave the party, so be it. Mistakenly, northern Democrats believed that most southern Democrats would swallow popular sovereignty for the sake of party and national unity. In March, the *New York Herald* confidently predicted, "There will be no difficulty. . .about the platform. That is already settled substantially."[48] But difficulty there was. After the Democrats adopted a popular sovereignty platform, southerners walked out. Six weeks later,

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[46] "Political," 7.
[47] "Our Oregon Correspondence," *New York Herald*, April 6, 1860, 2.
[48] "The Democratic Candidates for the Presidency," *New York Herald*, March 3, 1860, 6.

when Democrats refused to seat the Alabama and Louisiana delegations, southerners walked out again—and this time nominated their own candidate. Twice, then, moderates had stood with fire-eaters to choose slavery over party. In so doing, moderate southerners very clearly demonstrated they would rather risk throwing the election to a Republican than agree to a popular sovereignty platform.

One northern Democratic paper dismissed slavery in the territories as "only an abstraction."[49] Unable to fathom how half of their party valued that abstraction over the Union, northern Democrats continued to blame the fire-eaters for dividing the party. On May 23, 1860, a few weeks after the Charleston convention, a speaker at a pro-Douglas rally in New York downplayed the party's split by asserting that many of the bolters had been "toiling for years to swing their portion of the country out of the Union."[50] On June 2, just before the Baltimore Convention, the *Wisconsin Daily Patriot* also blamed the fire-eaters splitting the party. "The fire-eaters have sought in their opposition to Mr. Douglas. . .a distraction of the country." Though the moderates went along with the fire-eaters in Charleston, the paper predicted that "the more conservative men of the South now see their error." Going forward, the paper proclaimed its "hope for the union and success of the Democracy" under Douglas' candidacy.[51] Once "the country, the masses, the yeomanry everywhere get an opportunity to indicate *their* choice," the paper predicted, "Democratic opponents of [Douglas] will not be heard of."[52] Northern Democrats thought that if they could simply discredit southern extremists, moderate southerners would flock back to the national Democratic ticket. Even after northern and southern Democrats nominated their own candidates, a cartoon published in the *Campaign Plain Dealer* portrayed the pro-southern New

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[49] "The Presidential Contest," 4.
[50] "The Presidential Campaign---Overwhelming Douglas Demonstration," *New York Herald*, May 23, 1860, 3.
[51] "As They Sow, So Shall They Reap," *Wisconsin Daily Patriot*, June 2, 1860, 2.
[52] "Voice of Iowa," *Wisconsin Daily Patriot*, May 11, 1860, 2.

Englander Caleb Cushing as a demon, presiding over a group of southern delegates who cry "NIGGERS OR NOTHING" and "DISSOLVE THE UNION."[53] With his skull-like head and long wings, Cushing and his followers appear as monstrous anomalies who did not represent the majority of southern Democrats.

Northern Democrats tried coax southern moderates back into the national party by arguing that Republican fanatics and Democratic fire-eaters made up two sides of the same extremist coin—and that Douglas was therefore the only truly conservative candidate. According to the *Wisconsin Daily Patriot*, "[Douglas] says to both these fire-eaters and the fanatical Abolitionists, stand off, and let the *people* make their own laws." The paper continued, "These factional isms both agree on one point, and that is, that Congress should determine law for the Territories." Though the article does not mention women's rights or free love specifically, historian Michael Conlin has explained that Democrats used the term "isms" to describe any movement, from free love to abolition to temperance to women's rights, that threatened established hierarchies.[54] According to northern Democrats, Lincoln would use the federal government to impose this modernizing social program on the people. Breckinridge would use the federal government to impose slavery on the territories. Douglas, on the other hand, represented a conservative middle ground: men would be free to decide how to live and what to do about slavery.

Douglas' supporters, however, misunderstood the political feeling among even moderate southerners. In the four years since 1856, events in Kansas had profoundly altered the way southerners saw the politics of slavery and Union. Moderate southerners' support for popular

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[53] "The Baltimore Bolter's Convention," *Campaign Plain Dealer*, July 14, 1860, http://elections.harpweek.com/1860/cartoon-1860-large.asp?UniqueID=26&Year=1860.
[54] Michael F. Conlin, "The Dangerous Isms and the Fanatical Ists: Antebellum Conservatives in the South and the North Confront the Modernity Conspiracy," *The Journal of the Civil War Era* 4, no. 2 (June 2014): 205–33.

sovereignty evaporated as a result of northern Democrats' refusal to support the pro-slavery Lecompton constitution for Kansas. Senator Jefferson Davis of Mississippi lamented that popular sovereignty had proven "a siren's song. . .a thing shadowy and fleeting, changing its color as often as the chameleon." His colleague from Virginia, James Mason, said of Stephen Douglas and popular sovereignty, "You promised us bread, and you have given us a stone; you promised us a fish, and you have given us a serpent; we thought you had given us a substantial right, and you have given us the most evanescent shadow and delusion."[55] Moderate southerners had hoped popular sovereignty would preserve both slavery and the Union. When it failed to protect slavery in this one case, they concluded that Douglas and the northerners had sabotaged the process—and that they would do so again, if given the chance. Going forward, moderate southerners would insist on a southern nominee and a platform that guaranteed slavery's expansion.

For southern extremists, Congress' rejection of the Lecompton Constitution confirmed their long-held beliefs: the Union would not protect slavery, and therefore the South should secede. In December 1857, the *Charleston Herald*—a relatively moderate paper—denounced Douglas for his role in killing Lecompton. "That Douglas has shown himself a traitor to the South," it declared, "there remains no longer room to doubt."[56] Fire-eaters agreed. William Lowndes Yancey dashed off a letter to his friend James S. Slaughter to promote a pro-secession League of United Southerners. "No National Party can save us," he told Slaughter, "no Sectional Party can do it." Unlike moderate southerners, who believed a southern-led Democratic Party could save slavery, Yancey and his fellow extremists believed that only secession could protect the institution. Fire-eaters moved to nominate a southerner in 1860 because they hoped it would split the Democratic Party in two, launching a Republican into the White House and thereby justifying southern secession.

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[55] Davis and Mason quoted in Eric H. Walther, *The Shattering of the Union: America in the 1850s* (Lanham, MD: SR Books, 2004), 140.
[56] Douglas R. Egerton, *Year of Meteors*, 42.

In sum, then, southern moderates and fire-eaters entered the Democratic National Convention in Charleston with the same goal for different reasons. Moderates and fire-eaters wanted a pro-slavery platform and a southern nominee—moderates because they wanted to protect slavery but remain in the Union, fire-eaters because they wanted to split the party to elect a Republican and justify secession. So both groups alleged that most northerners supported women's rights, that many supported free love, and that a significant minority tolerated interracial relationships. All of these ideas were anathema to southerners. But even more importantly, these radicalisms symbolized what southerners saw as the real problem with the North: its freedom. Southern Democrats constructed a vision of two profoundly different societies: a chaotic northern one filled with liberated women, emasculated men, and free blacks, and a stable southern one built of orderly families and obedient slaves.

Throughout the election, Democratic newspapers in the South emphasized northern support for women's rights. A correspondent for the *Weekly Houston Telegraph* reported on a women's rights convention he had recently attended at the Cooper Institute in New York City. The insulted at length the men and women in attendance. He described the "ugly old women" who entered the convention hall, and he sneered that even if the women succeeded in liberalizing divorce laws, "there are very few of those I saw who will ever be blessed with any one having an 'affinity' for them. Ugly is a very mild term to apply to all their countenances." He reserved his deepest disgust for the men who supported these women. "It was humiliating," he wrote, "to see *men* upon the stage with those poor deluded, antiquated dilapidated females, taking part with them in abusing and ridiculing the male sex."

In 1856, Democrats had leveled similar insults at Republican men. But now, in 1860, southern Democrats claimed that most northerners—not just Republicans, and not just New Englanders—had fallen victim to women's rights mania. The *Telegraph*'s correspondent told readers

that "the Hall in the Cooper Institute is a very large one, capable of holding several thousand people, and I had not been in it more than half an hour before it was filled."[57] Reading this, Houston's might have concluded that thousands of New Yorkers supported women's equality. Newspapers in Stockton, California and New Orleans published similar hysterical descriptions of the women's rights movement in the North, exaggerating the women's demands and the extent of the support they received.[58] These stories resonated with southern Democrats in part because they heard a version of them four years earlier, but also because they contained a kernel of truth. Mary Beth Norton has explained that before the Revolution, northern and southern women alike lived under strict patriarchies. But by the turn of the nineteenth century, "the long-term trends were moving in opposite directions. In the North, the props of patriarchal power were gradually crumbling; in the South, those same props were in the process of being constructed." Slavery, she notes, made patriarchy "the norm."[59] So, although the *Telegraph*'s correspondent at the Cooper Institute had grossly exaggerated northern support for women's rights, the story reflected real and growing differences between northern and southern society.

One southern Democratic senator saw evidence of northern gender disorder in Stephen Douglas' relationship with his wife, Adele Cutts Douglas. Adele was young (22 years Stephen's junior), beautiful, and well-connected. Adele supported her husband's career wholeheartedly, hosting parties for the political elite in their new Washington mansion. Our southern Democrat could not

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[57] "Letter from New York," *Weekly Houston Telegraph*, May 29, 1860, 1.
[58] See, for instance, "Woman's Rights Conventions," *San Joaquin Republican*, June 23, 1860, 2 which reported the following on the convention at the Cooper Institute: "Among the resolutions adopted by these strong minded women and weak minded men who associate with them. . .was a series repudiating the present obligations of the marriage contract and denouncing our divorce laws as unjust to women. . .When our laws are altered in accordance with the wishes of these fanatics, Free Love will indeed prevail without any restraint, and it will indeed not only be a wise child that will know its own father, but a wise man who will know his children."; The Daily Delta, an extreme southern organ, claimed that in the North, any man who "will not submit to be led by demagogues and masculine women" is expelled from his community--implying broad support for women's rights. "Northern Slavery," *Daily Delta*, April 18, 1860, 4.
[59] Mary Beth Norton, "The Evolution of White Women's Experience in Early America," *The American Historical Review* 89, no. 3 (June 1984): 613.

abide Adele—a woman—brushing shoulders with the political elite. On May 18, 1860, the man wrote to his wife describing "Mrs D's arts to win favour for her husband," including "what crowds of people were entertained at their grand house amid. . .the fumes of whiskey." But an unfeminine edge hid just behind her hospitality. "She carries in her pocket," the man wrote, "a little social guillotine which takes off unhesitatingly all stubborn heads. I do not believe that Sallust in describing the profligate and infamous intrigues of Cataline. . .contains anything more audacious than the machinations of the demagogue Douglas assisted by his haughty and imperious wife."[60] Though Adele threw the parties in her own home—the private sphere—the southerner still found her behavior unseemly for a woman, who should recuse herself from all political activity (as, apparently, the writer's own wife did, as he wrote to her from Washington, D.C.).

Eleven days later, the man relayed an even more shocking story to his wife: Adele had gone to observe the Senate in session when husband Stephen was absent from the chamber. According to the man, Louisiana Democrat Judah P. Benjamin gave a speech that "utterly demolished Douglas upon his question of Squatter Sovereignty"—the demeaning term for popular sovereignty. "So overwhelming was it," he went on, that "it drove his. . .wife out of the hall, who in defiance of all rule persisted in remaining to hear the speech when her husband was lying drunk at home being unable to meet the issue with Benjamin."[61] Though the letter writer might have forgiven Adele for supporting her husband, he could not forgive her for being a thinking woman, independent of Stephen. Her behavior also reflected poorly on Stephen, emasculating him as the tool of a politically ambitious woman. Altogether, this revealed serious gender disorder inside the Douglas home—the home of the northern Democrats' preferred candidate. But the Douglas' relationship might have worried the southerner for an additional reason. With her keen interest in politics, Adele

[60] "Unknown to Wife," May 18, 1860, William Chestnut Manning Family papers, South Caroliniana Library.
[61] "Unknown to Wife," May 29, 1860, William Chestnut Manning Family papers, South Caroliniana Library.

corroborated what southerners had been reading about northern women: that they were mannish, and that they sought too much power. In 1856, Democrats took Republican candidate John and Jessie Frémont's relatively egalitarian relationship as an example of gender disorder in the Republican Party. In 1860, this southern Democrat could take Stephen and Adele's relationship as evidence of gender disorder throughout the entire North.

Democratic newspapers in the South also claimed that northerners supported miscegenation. Democrats north and south had long leveled this accusation against Republicans. In the one of his debates during the 1858 Senate race in Illinois, Douglas alleged that Lincoln supported miscegenation. "Vote for Mr. Lincoln," he told the crowd gathered in Freeport, Illinois, "if you. . .think that the negro ought to be on a social equality with your wives and daughters, and ride in a carriage with your wife."[62] In 1860, southern Democrats went further, claiming that northern society in general—not just Republicans—tolerated amalgamation. This was patently false. But by slipping back and forth between the words "northern" and "Republican," southern Democrats associated all northerners with the most extreme Republicans, who supported racial equality. An article published on June 30, 1860 in Washington, D.C.'s pro-Breckinridge *Constitution* provides a good example of this technique. The article begins by nothing that "we do not remember to have seen any condemnation by. . . the republican party organs of the disgusting amalgamation cases which have been continually occurring." But then the article tells readers about the rights granted to free blacks "in various parts of the North" in general. "It is certainly not against the laws of many of the States for negroes to hold office, vote, or marry white wives; and in such States, theoretically speaking, negro equality is already established."[63] Whether intentional or not, using "Republican" and "North" interchangeably conflated the two, making it seem that the (caricatured) position of the Republican

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[62] Stephen Douglas, as reprinted at "Second Debate: Freeport, Illinois," *National Park Service, Lincoln Home National Historic Site* (blog), August 27, 1858, https://www.nps.gov/liho/learn/historyculture/debate2.htm.
[63] "Black-Republican (Negro) Equality," *The Constitution*, June 30, 1860, 2.

Party reflected northerners' attitudes as a whole.

Democratic newspapers also claimed that northerners traveled south to preach miscegenation to enslaved workers. One menacing letter published in Austin's *Gazette* told of a family who had hired a white laborer—"an immigrant" from the North—to work alongside the enslaved workers on the family's farm. Soon after his arrival, "the negroes with whom he communed were becoming insolent and insubordinate." Suspicious, the family eavesdropped on the northerner's conversations with the enslaved men. One family member heard the white man "lecturing them on their rights to freedom, and the happiness of the negro in the free States,—their honorable position in society by amalgamation,—that the negro could marry pretty white women, and that white women—ladies—loved negro gents."[64]

In reality, both northern and southern Democrats feared "amalgamation." Exclusive sexual access to white women made Democrats everywhere feel like men. But by 1860, more some southern Democrats wondered if the northern members of their party really shared this value. Were these "immigrants" to the South outliers, or, as the *Constitution* suggested, did they represent northern public opinion as a whole? If the latter, southern Democrats could not accept any northerner—even a northern Democrat—as their leader. Better to split the party in two to be able to vote for a southern man who they could be sure shared their values.

Women's rights, free love, amalgamation—all of these accusations connected back to the critical issue: slavery. As we have seen, northern Democrats argued that popular sovereignty trusted men in the territories to make their own laws on slavery. Southern Democrats also briefly tested out a masculine argument for their position on slavery's expansion. On May 8, North Carolina Democrat Thomas L. Clingman delivered a speech in the Senate to this end. If a man "enters the Territory with his wife, child, horse, and slave. These are taken away from him by force, and he is

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[64] "Texas Items," *The Weekly Telegraph*, May 29, 1860, 1.

himself imprisoned"—that would be wrong. Therefore, "It is obvious," Clingman reasoned, "that there should be laws to protect his own liberty and also his right to the possession of his wife, child, horse, and slave. Hence, it follows, that there must be power in Congress to legislate on the subject of slavery."[65] Clingman shared Stephen Douglas' assumption that men legally covered their wives and slaves. But the southerner differed from Douglas in that he believed the federal government should be able to impose that patriarchal order on the territories.

Yet southern Democrats infrequently made this case for slavery in the territories. Far more often, they focused on the perceived threat to slavery where it already existed. Southerners had long believed slavery needed to expand westward to survive.[66] If elected, Lincoln and the Republicans planned to prohibit slavery in the territories; free states would soon outnumber slave states, and their representatives could abolish slavery in the South. Southerners also worried about slave insurrection—especially in the wake of John Brown's raid. Despite mainstream Republicans' strident disavowals of Brown's actions, southern Democrats blamed the Republican Party for the raid and concluded that Lincoln's election would result in further unrest.[67] Whether by restricting slavery's expansion or by inciting slave insurrections, southern Democrats agreed: the election of a Republican threatened southern slavery.

To stoke the fear of abolition, southern Democrats added that abolishing slavery would initiate woman's rights, free love, and the end of patriarchy. During the campaign, one pamphlet published in Nashville told readers that "while the free States of New England have been overrun by

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[65] "Speech of Hon. Thomas L. Clingman of North Carolina," *The Weekly Standard*, May 23, 1860, 4.
[66] They so believed for two reasons. First, if free states outnumbered slave states in the Senate, they could ultimately ban slavery. Second, as Michael Holt has explained, "even slaveholders who had no intention of moving west believed they had an economic stake in the slavery extension issue. Slaves. . .represented a substantial capital investment by their white owners. The price of slaves on slave markets determined the value of those assets, and demand set the price. Thus anything that threatened future demand, as exclusion of slaveholders from the West may have done, could reduce the value of slaveholders' investments." See Michael Holt, *The Fate of Their Country* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2004), 32.
[67] For examples of southern editorials blaming Republicans, northerners, and abolitionists for John Brown's raid, see William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), 180.

fanatics who display their absurd and pernicious principles under the forms of. . . 'abolitionism,' 'atheism,' 'free love-ism,' 'womans' rights-ism,' and many others equally detestable, they are absolutely unknown in the slave States." Why? Echoing the ideas in James Henry Hammond's "Mudsill" speech two years earlier, the pamphlet claimed that slavery elevated white men's economic position and social status. As a result, "the populations from which proselytes to such doctrines are usually obtained, do not there exist, and there are no materials out of which the. . .fanatical leaders can construct a party."[68] Abolition would create a discontented class of white men and women who would fall victim to the women's rights and free love movements that supposedly pervaded the North.[69] This bolstered the argument that slavery benefitted all white men—not just the twenty-five percent who owned slaves—potentially appealing to more men than did Clingman's argument about slavery's expansion.

On September 27, in a speech in Norfolk, Virginia, Virginia's former governor Henry A. Wise reaffirmed that both slavery and family hung in the balance in this election. On August 25, Stephen Douglas had swung through Norfolk on a campaign stop. In his speech there, Douglas insisted that the election of Lincoln alone would not justify southern secession, and that the president should resist any state or states' attempt to secede.[70] A month later, in a nearly four-hour speech in front of 3,000 people, Wise responded.[71] If Douglas and Lincoln were willing to coerce the South to remain in the Union, then "we are no longer divided on mere questions of administrative

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[68] James Williams, "Letters on Slavery from the Old World. Written during the Canvass for the Presidency of the United States in 1860." (Southern Methodist Pub. House, 1861), 120–21, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[69] Though I disagree with Michael Conlin's broader thesis—that social conservatism held the Democratic Party and the United States together—he offers extensive evidence demonstrating that southern men believed "the essential conservatism of slavery protected the South—and thus at least half of the United States—from these dangerous isms." See Michael F. Conlin, "The Dangerous Isms and the Fanatical Ists: Antebellum Conservatives in the South and the North Confront the Modernity Conspiracy," 218–19.
[70] For a description of Douglas' Norfolk speech and a summary of southern responses to the so-called "Norfolk Doctrine," see Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 788–89.
[71] The Baltimore Sun reported the speech lasted for four hours and was witnessed by 3,000 people; the Semi-Weekly Standard reported it lasted for three and a half hours. See "Governor Wise," *Semi-Weekly Standard*, October 31, 1860, 3; "First Campaign Speech of Governor Wise, of Virginia," *The Baltimore Sun*, September 29, 1860, 1.

policy," Wise said. Rather, "the issue goes to the vitals of society and concerns our homes and our firesides. The contest is not political; it is a social and a moral contest."[72] Wise intimated that supporting Breckinridge was the only way to guarantee the survival of slavery and patriarchy alike.

Wise's language had deep cultural roots. For decades, southern women had been crafting novels that examined the differences between northern free society and southern slave society. In particular, these writers focused on the role of women and the structure of the family in both sections—and usually found the system in the South superior. Because of her background—born in Boston, living as a married woman in Charleston—novelist Caroline Gilman was particularly attuned to differences between the sections. Published in 1834, Gilman's *Recollections of a New England Housekeeper* described the life of Clarissa Grey Packard. The daughter of an upper-middle class Boston family, Packard marries a rising lawyer, but then struggles to manage their house. She can hardly keep up with the latest household trends, and her servants argue among themselves, quit in fits of whimsy, and steal from the family. In 1838's *Recollections of a Southern Matron*, Gilman described a different scenario. Aristocrat Cornelia Wilton lives with her husband on the plantation she grew up in, her "children. . .frolicking on the lawn where my first footsteps were watched by tender parents, and one of those parents rests beneath yonder circling cedars."[73] Wilton completes a number of daily tasks to take care of the family's slaves, while her husband, Marion, attends "medical and surgical lectures that he might supply with advice the accidental wants of his people."[74] Whereas Packard feels harried and overwhelmed, Wilton enjoys the quiet of her plantation and has the time to care for her slaves and for the less fortunate whites in the neighborhood. Gilman claimed non-partisanship in the sectional debate, but her novels belie her true feelings: that southern society, with its strict

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[72] "Gov. Wise's Speech at Norfolk," *Richmond Enquirer*, October 12, 1860, 3, Robert Mercer Taliaferro Hunter papers, Virginia Historical Society.
[73] Quoted in Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992), 68.
[74] Quoted in Elizabeth Moss, 71.

racial and social hierarchies, created stable families and a stable society.

In her 1857 novel *Moss-side*, Virginian Mary Virginia Terhune depicted abolitionism and women's rights as part of a comprehensive program reform that northerners had aimed at the South. The plot centers around Grace Leigh, an aristocratic young woman in Virginia. Leigh goes to New York to attend the wedding of school friend Louise Wynne. Wynne reveals that she does not love her fiancé—that she is marrying him to gain the freedom to pursue a career as a women's rights writer. Leigh is shocked, but intrigued. Later, back in Virginia, Leigh reads Wynne's book, which equates marriage with slavery. Leigh wonders: is her own husband oppressing her? Should she run away? Only when her sister-in-law counsels her, "I am not a slave, nor are you, and no sophistry should mislead us into making such a concession" does Leigh realize that she is indeed happy with her life on the plantation, and that she should avoid books such as her friend's in the future.[75]

Gilman and Terhune's novels thus conveyed two themes that Democratic politicians adapted for the stump. First, these novels depicted plantations as well-ordered extended households—the ideal families. The clear, interdependent roles for master, wife, and slaves made southern families more stable than northern families. Slaves could not survive without their masters, wives could not survive without their husbands, and husbands would be worse off without both. When Henry Wise said that the election "goes to the vitals of society and concerns our homes and our firesides," he meant it literally: abolishing slavery would upend southern plantation homes. That, in turn, would destabilize southern society, since, stripped of their wealth, former slaveholders would no longer be able to care for blacks and poor whites. This line of reasoning rebuked abolitionists, who had long argued that slavery harmed southern families by breaking up black marriages and allowing white men to rape black women.[76]

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[75] Quoted in Elizabeth Moss, 148.

[76] In 1860, for instance, abolitionist Lydia Maria Child wrote a pamphlet for the American Anti-Slavery Society that included dozens of ads for runaway slaves who were thought to have left to find their spouse, who had been sold away,

The second theme southern Democrats adapted from these novels was that women's rights and abolition worked hand-in-hand. Both epitomized the northern desire for too much freedom, and both were foreign to the South, where slaves and wives relished their given roles. By complaining about northern "'abolitionism,' 'atheism,' 'free love-ism,' [and] 'womans' rights-ism,'" the Nashville pamphlet echoed the novelists' descriptions of free society. Any unhappiness among slaves or women must be the product of northern meddling, not problems with southern slavery or southern marriages.

The fact that southern Democrats needed to make this argument about northern difference and southern stability evinces some anxiety about their unity in the campaign. They worried that moderate southern Democrats might cave to northerners at the convention, or vote for John Bell, the Constitutional Union candidate, in the general election. Indeed, southern Democrats deployed gender to coerce members to support John C. Breckinridge. Throughout the convention battles and general election, southern Democratic newspapers told southern men that their manhood and honor, and the honor of the South, depended on supporting a pro-slavery platform and a southern candidate.

Democratic newspapers told readers that real men stood for slavery's unlimited expansion. After southern Democrats insisted on a pro-slavery platform, Washington, D.C.'s *Constitution* cheered the move, writing, "There is no middle or evasive ground in this conflict."[77] Douglas Democrats supported popular sovereignty because it favored neither slavery nor antislavery.[78] But in popular sovereignty, southern Democrats saw only cowardice. In an October speech in Bangor,

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as well as stories of light-skinned slaves thought to be the children of notable politicians and landowners. See Lydia Maria Francis Child, "The Patriarchal Institution, as Described by Member of Its Own Family" (The American Anti-Slavery Society, 1860), http://lincoln.lib.niu.edu/object/niu-lincoln:35182.

[77] "Mr. Breckinridge's Letter of Acceptance," *The Constitution*, July 12, 1860, 2.

[78] As Robert Johannsen has put it, Douglas believed that "no political creed. . .was sound which could not be proclaimed throughout the United States." To Douglas, only popular sovereignty seemed to meet this test. "Neither can the Union be preserved or the Democratic party maintained on any other basis," Douglas said. See Robert W. Johannsen, *Stephen A. Douglas*, 699.

Maine, the pro-southern Caleb Cushing cried that Douglas Democrats "timidly, shrinkingly, and tender-footedly, on the platform."[79]

Pro-slavery southerners told voters that a real man would not avoid taking sides on the slavery issue for fear of ruffling a few feathers. Unlike Douglas, Breckinridge stood openly on a pro-slavery platform. According to the *Constitution*, Breckinridge's support for slavery and opposition to popular sovereignty had shown the "manly frankness of the true Democrat and patriot."[80] Similarly, a fellow southern Democrat described Breckinridge's position as "manly and responsive. . .direct, logical, and conclusive," in contrast to the triangulating Douglas and Bell.[81] And in his speech in Bangor, Cushing had followed up his indictment of popular sovereignty with praise for the manly position of supporting slavery. "We can save the party, we can redeem it, in one way, and one way only." "That is," he continued, "in frankly, manfully, firmly, and fearlessly planting ourselves on the great fundamental truths of the constitution"—the protection of slave property everywhere in the Union.[82] According to these Breckinridge Democrats, their candidate had proven his manhood by taking a clear position on slavery. Lest any readers worry about Breckinridge's commitment to slavery, a North Carolina newspaper confirmed that he personally owned slaves.[83]

Democrats praised Breckinridge to pressure southern men to vote for him. Articles and speeches like these implied that just as Breckinridge had demonstrated his masculinity by supporting openly slavery's expansion, so too could southern men demonstrate their masculinity by voting for Breckinridge. Indeed, a month before the election, James Henry Hammond said as much in a private letter to fellow South Carolinian Milledge Luke Bonham. "The true men [were] coming round, as I

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[79] Caleb Cushing, "Speech of Hon. Caleb Cushing, in Norombega Hall, Bangor, October 2, 1860, before the Democracy of Maine" (s.n., 1860), 12, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[80] "Mr. Breckinridge's Letter of Acceptance," 2.
[81] Robert McClane, quoted in "Letter from Minister McLane," *The Constitution*, October 18, 1860, 2.
[82] Caleb Cushing, "Speech of Hon. Caleb Cushing," 12.
[83] "Is John C. Breckinridge a Slave Holder," *Charlotte Democrat*, September 25, 1860, 2.

always expected, [to] Breckinridge," Hammond wrote.[84] In a southern culture where honor and manhood mattered so much, this would have been a powerful appeal.

Southern papers also feminized the South and characterized Douglas Democrats as aggressors who wished to control her. A representative article claimed that Douglas secretly wished to make the South endure "outrage on her person, property, or honor," implying that southern men should defend the South by voting for Breckinridge.[85] And upon Douglas' announcement that he would accept and uphold Lincoln's possible election, the *Constitution* cried that Douglas was "content, seemingly, to permit the election of Lincoln to go by default." Why? According to the paper, Douglas wished for Lincoln's election "that the south may be 'subjugated,' 'coerced,' 'whipped into submission' to black-republican rule."[86] According to the *Constitution*, northern Democrats simply wished to control the South. This claim was patently false. But it passed muster because for five years, Democrats had accused Republicans of the exact same thing: promising moderation, but secretly plotting to subjugate the South. And so, by taking liberties with the truth in 1856, the Democratic Party had paved the way for its southern members to split the party in 1860.

And as they had in the period between the two nominating conventions, southern Democrats continued to compare compromise to sexual violation. In May 1860, Jefferson Davis stood in the Senate and avowed that capitulating on the slavery question "would be to sink in the scale of manhood."[87] It would "make our posterity so degraded that they would curse this generation." According to Davis, compromising on slavery would emasculate southern men for generations. Contemporaries usually reserved the word "degrade" to describe the state of a woman

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[84] "James Henry Hammond to Milledge Luke Bonham," October 3, 1860, Milledge Luke Bonham Papers, South Caroliniana Library.
[85] "The Part Which Mr. Douglas Will 'Do All in His Power to Aid,'" *The Constitution*, September 1, 1860, 2.
[86] "The South to Be Subjugated--Douglasism and Abolitionism on the Same Track," *The Constitution*, October 24, 1860, 2.
[87] "Congressional Speech of Hon. Jefferson Davis, of Mississippi," *The Constitution*, May 9, 1860, 2.

who had been sexually assaulted. That language limited moderate Democrats' political options: southern Democrats could either support Breckinridge and slavery, or they could become as powerless and pitiful as a woman who had been raped. In November, when Breckinridge's defeat appeared increasingly certain, southern Democrats used similar language to justify having run a separate candidate—a move which by then appeared to guarantee Lincoln's election. The *Constitution* reminded readers that "No craven submission to the dictation of party leaders or wire-pullers has disgraced [Breckinridge's] movement."[88]

In 1860, southern Democrats across the political spectrum used gender tactics to ensure a pro-slavery platform and southern nominee—even at the cost of splitting the party. They constructed a vision of two different societies: a northern one that supported women's rights, tolerated amalgamation, and abided abolitionism, and a southern one that stood for patriarchy, slavery, and stability. This reinforced the necessity of preserving slavery and nominating a southerner. And lest any man break ranks, Democratic newspapers and politicians praised the manliness of men who refused to compromise and impugned the masculinity of those who considered it. Moderate and fire-eating Democrats deployed these tactics. Fire-eaters alone went one step further. They used gender tactics to lay the groundwork for secession in case Lincoln won.

Since the birth of the party earlier in the decade, northern and southern Democrats had claimed that the Republican Party supported abolition and miscegenation. Southern Democrats had increasingly lost faith in northern Democrats' ability—or even desire—to stand up to the Republican Party. Who would protect the South from abolitionism, if not northern Democrats? Southern Democrats worried about the election of a Republican president, but most of them adopted a wait-and-see attitude toward secession. They would vote for Breckinridge, but they did

[88] "The Canvass of 1860," *The Constitution*, November 6, 1860, 2.

not believe Lincoln's election alone would justify immediate secession. Extreme southerners, however, argued it would.

Fire-eaters warned that Republicans would abolish slavery and impose racial equality on the South, allegedly leading to the rape of white women by black men. On October 27, the *Houston Tri-Weekly Telegraph* editorialized that under Republican rule, "our property is to be despoiled. . .our wives and daughters ravished, and the sanctity of our homes invaded." If Lincoln were to win, better that the "Southern people. . .live independently of the Abolition States. . .enjoying the comforts and security of a truly patriarchal government."[89] On November 8, the *Telegraph* doubled down on this argument. In an article titled "What Shall the South Do if Lincoln Be Elected," it warned Lincoln would "wage a relentless war on the white people of the South, and never to stay aggression till we, the fathers and sons of the South, shall acknowledge the four millions of negroes among us to be our equals and the equals of our mothers, wives, sisters, and daughters."[90] Historian Stephanie McCurry has shown that southern slaveholders and yeomen shared the experience of mastery.[91] A slaveholder claimed sexual access to his female slaves and controlled their labor, a yeoman had exclusive sexual access to his wife and controlled her labor (and that of their children). The *Telegraph* articles told readers that Lincoln would revoke these privileges. Abolishing slavery would not only abolish a system of labor: it would shatter the system of white patriarchy that allowed white men to control the labor and sexual relations of white women and enslaved workers.

Democrats repeated this narrative in private as well as public discourse. On October 10, the secessionist John Townsend wrote to fellow South Carolinian Milledge Luke Bonham. Bonham

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[89] "Madison's Views on Slavery," *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, October 27, 1860, 3.
[90] "What Shall the South Do If Lincoln Be Elected?," *Tri-Weekly Telegraph*, November 8, 1860, 3.
[91] McCurry argues that yeomen "found common cause with planters in maintaining and policing the class, gender, and racial boundaries of citizenship in the slave republic. In the end, their commitment to the slave regime owed as much to its legitimation of dependence and inequality in the private sphere as to the much-lauded vitality of male independence and formal 'democracy' in the public sphere." See Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 228.

supported Breckinridge in the election of 1860. Townsend wrote to convince him that the South should secede immediately if Lincoln were elected. "Submission to the will of a party who have openly declared themselves our enemies, and that they intend to destroy our property, and (what is worse) that they intend to degrade us and our families to an equality with our slaves—submission, I say. . .is a thought to be entertained not for a moment," Townsend told Bonham.[92] Townsend feared losing his property in slaves. But more than that, he feared black men's equality with his family. This letter shows that he knew Bonham felt the same—that abolition meant losing their property and their social position. By playing to these fears, Townsend hoped to bring Bonham into the secessionist camp.

A related line of argument called on southerners to secede to protect their families from a slave rebellion. As Edward Rugemer has shown, anti-slavery news, people, and ideas had long traveled into the South from places where slavery had been abolished, including Haiti, Great Britain, the West Indies—and now the North.[93] Southerners worried that the election of a Republican would increase the flow of abolitionist literature and activists into the South, increasing the likelihood of slave insurrection. Fire-eaters believed the South should secede rather than give Republicans this chance, so they encouraged white southern men to consider the fate of their wives and children during a slave insurrection. In April 1860, the pro-secession periodical *De Bow's Review* published an article titled "The Secession of the South." The author enjoined readers not to "accept at the hands of the North a civil and servile insurrection, the devastation of their country, the slaughter of their wives and children, the unspeakable horrors of another Santo Domingo."[94] A letter to the editor of

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[92] "John Townsend to Milledge Luke Bohnam," October 10, 1860, Milledge Luke Bonham Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

[93] Edward Rugemer has argued that the "boundaries of the United States were permeable," allowing news of other slave rebellions to reach southern slaveholders. The more slaveholders learned about other rebellions, the more they came to believe that abolitionist agitation (not the daily atrocities of slavery) caused slaves to rebel. This made them retrench against abolition. See Edward Bartlett Rugemer, *The Problem of Emancipation: The Caribbean Roots of the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), 7.

[94] John Tyler, "The Secession of the South," *DeBow's Review*, April 1860, 381, Virginia Historical Society.

North Carolina's *Semi-Weekly Standard* shows this foreboding vision resonated with the average voter. Just a few days before the election, the man pleaded, "Men of the Southern States, protect yourselves, your wives, your children, and everything that is near and dear to you, by voting for John C. Breckinridge and Joseph Lane." Lincoln's rule, according the writer, "would not so much as protect the lives of our women and children, but leave them to butchery."[95]

In September, ardent secessionist William Yancey made a similar call to southern men during a public speech. While Yancey was speaking, a man interrupted and asked, "What will the South do in the event of Lincoln's election?" Yancey reminded the man of John Brown's raid—committed "under the peace of the Constitution that is supposed to protect [Virginia]." What would happen if another John Brown "c[a]me with pike, with musket and bayonet and cannon. . .and our wives and our children, when we are away at our business, [were] found murdered by our hearthstones"? "What would *you* do?' Yancey asked the man. The man responded, "I would stop him before he got that far."[96] This was exactly the answer that Yancey wanted. "Before he got that far" meant seceding before Lincoln could incite a slave insurrection, not after.

Fire-eaters also deployed the same rape metaphors moderates used, but to their own, secessionist purposes. As we saw, even moderate southern Democrats likened accepting a northern nominee or a popular sovereignty platform to "submission" and "degradation." Fire-eaters carried this to its logical conclusion, claiming that submitting to a northern president would be just as degrading as submitting to a northern nominee. Former Virginia governor Henry A. Wise wrote to a newspaper in Georgia encouraging men there to vote for Breckinridge, even if that vote helped elect Lincoln and led to secession. According to Wise, southern men needed to show that "there are yet men in the South who can face revolution rather than be degraded in the Union."[97] In Alabama,

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[95] "Mr. Editor," *Semi-Weekly Standard*, November 3, 1860, 2.
[96] "Speech of Hon. Wm. L. Yancey," *The Constitution*, September 22, 1860, 6.
[97] "Letter from Gov. Wise," *The Macon Daily Telegraph*, September 3, 1860, 1.

members of a militia claimed to prefer war to the "alternative of national ruin and degradation."[98] By itself, the repeated public use of this language would tell us that speakers expected it to move their listeners toward secession.

Secessionists used the same rhetoric in private. In a letter dated October 27, A.G. Baskin of South Carolina chided John Lawrence Manning, "It seems to me your politics are right if you would go far enough." Manning apparently hoped to build consensus for secession, rather than supporting South Carolina's immediate withdrawal were Lincoln elected. "Failing in [cooperation]," he continued, "rather than submit longer to northern aggression, I would raise the banner of resistance, and if we fall 'let us die with our feet to the foe and our face towards heaven.'"[99] Submission was a female trait, not a male one. Baskin's use of the word indicates that he found the prospect of living under a Republican president humiliating, even feminizing—and that he believed Manning might, as well.

Finally, fire-eating southerners told moderate Democrats that fearing disunion was cowardly, while supporting secession was manly. On October 10, secessionist William Tennent, Jr. wrote to South Carolinian Milledge Luke Bonham bemoaning the "slow poison called 'Love of the Union' which seems to have stultified the polity of the Whole South," as well as the "cautious, creeping, cowardly policy" of compromise. He hoped his correspondence committee, which would publish secessionist literature, would "break the chains we have forged for ourselves, lest Lincoln bestow upon us, after his Inauguration, the shackles which we will merit."[100] Fire-eaters thus continued to use the same tactic that they had used before the Charleston and Baltimore conventions: decry compromise of any sort as cowardly retreat. To this, they added a new tactic: decrying love of Union

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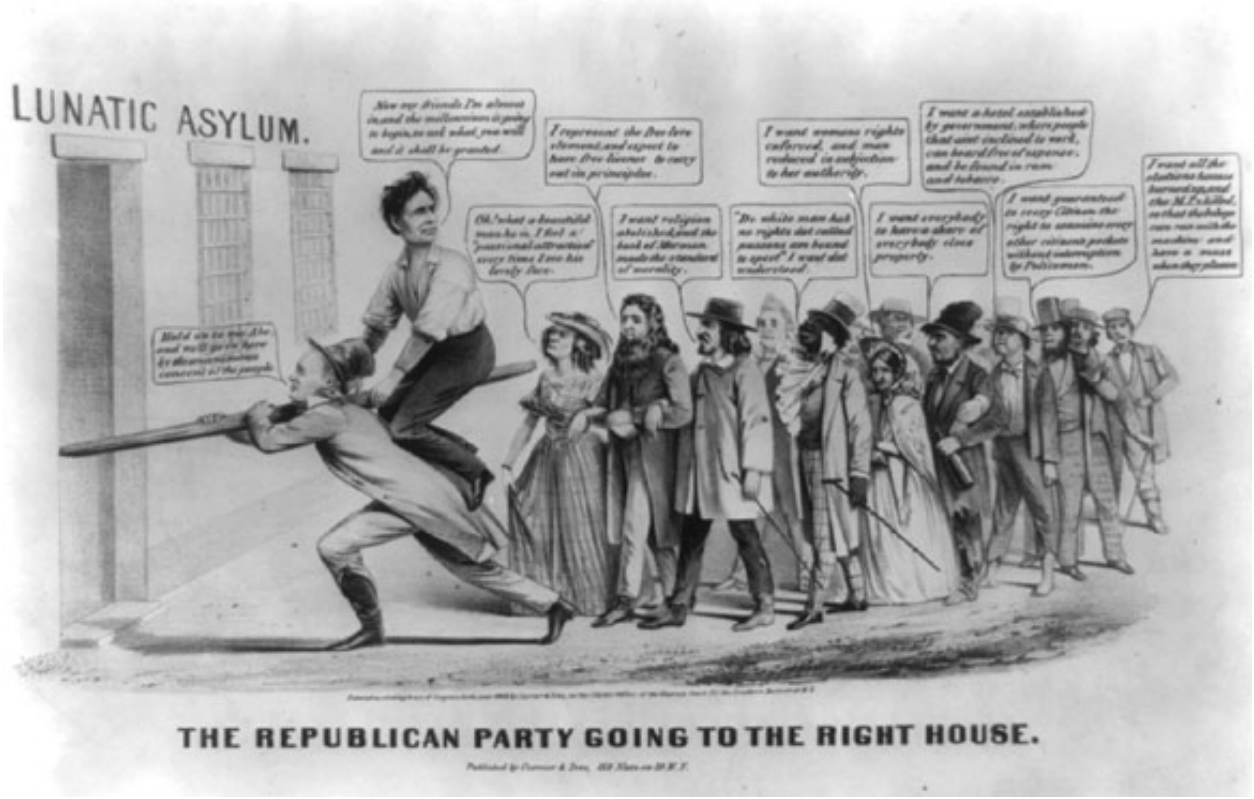
[98] "Presentation," *Daily Confederation*, April 1, 1860, 2.
[99] "A.G. Baskin to John Lawrence Manning," October 27, 1860, Chestnut-Miller-Manning Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.
[100] "William Tennent, Jr. to Milledge Luke Bonham," October 10, 1860, Milledge Luke Bonham Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

as a feminine sentimentalism. In a speech given in June, secessionist John Townsend pleaded with his audience, "Let us hear no more of the sophomoric sentimentality about 'the Union.'" Southerners knew their rights. "Were it not for the fatal counsels to procrastination from their political advisers, aided by the womanly fears of 'Disunion,'" that knowledge "would soon ripen into manly and resolute ACTION."[101] Moderate Democrats had taken the manly action of splitting the Democratic Party to secure a pro-slavery platform. Extremists now asked moderates if they would take the manly action of splitting the Union to secure slavery.

In the final weeks of the campaign, all four candidates—Stephen Douglas, John Breckinridge, Abraham Lincoln, and Constitutional Unionist John Bell—scrambled to make their last pitch to voters. The crowded field had virtually eliminated either Democrat's chance at victory. So although northern Democratic papers continued to predict a Douglas presidency (and southern papers still boosted Breckinridge), Douglas made other preparations. He traveled South to plea not for his own election, but for the Union—for giving Lincoln the chance to govern if he were elected. Southern Democrats had already split the party; Douglas would have to wait and hope they would not tear apart the Union along with it.

[101] John Townsend, "The South Alone," 8, 9.

Chapter Four: Appendix



"The Republican Party Going to the Right House"

Chapter Five: Secession Winter

On November 9, 1860, Americans elected Republican Abraham Lincoln to be President of the United States. Lincoln won with 180 electoral votes; ominously, not a single one of those votes came from a slave state. Indeed, ten of the fifteen slave states had refused even to place Lincoln on the ballot. Nonetheless, Republican newspapers editors were thrilled. "Let the People Rejoice! LINCOLN ELECTED!" the *Freeport Wide Awake* cried. "SHOUT BOYS SHOUT, VICTORY IS OURS, FREEDOM IS TRIUMPHANT!"[1]

The splintered Democratic Party had suffered a crushing defeat. Despite winning nearly a third of the popular vote, Stephen Douglas could only claim twelve electoral votes from only two states. John Breckinridge, meanwhile, took 72 electoral votes but only eighteen percent of the popular vote. By failing to unite around a single candidate, Democrats had paved the way for a Republican victory. Facing these facts, even the Democratic *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* wondered: "Is the Democratic Party defunct?"[2]

Yet though northern and southern Democrats alike abhorred the idea of a "Black Republican" moving into the White House, they responded to Lincoln's election in entirely different ways. Immediately, the most extreme southern Democrats began to call for secession. In December 1860 and January 1861, as state after state in the Deep South voted to leave the Union, northern Democrats tried to stem the tide of secession. Their efforts were frenetic, even contradictory. They decried Republicans and fire-eaters as extremists and blamed both for fomenting feelings of disunion among moderate southerners. But at the very same time, speaking to southerners, northern Democrats tried to walk back five years of campaign rhetoric that had labeled the Republicans as dangerous radicals, hoping to convince southern moderates to give Lincoln a chance to govern.

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[1] "Let the People Rejoice: Lincoln Elected," *Freeport Wide Awake*, November 17, 1860, 3.
[2] "Is the Democratic Party Defunct?," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 10, 1860, 2.

Southern Democrats, however, were not convinced. Years of crying out about Republican radicalism had caught up with southern Democrats, depriving them of the ability to distinguish rhetoric from reality. They believed Republicans wanted to destroy slave society. The majority of the North had voted Republican. Therefore, the majority of the North wanted to destroy slave society. They believed southern society was fundamentally different from northern society—slavery made it stable, conservative, moral, and patriarchal. They needed to secede to protect not just slavery, but to protect southern society. Some southern Democrats, primarily in the Upper South, did not agree that Lincoln's election alone justified secession. Secessionists questioned the masculinity of these holdouts. But after April 15, 1861, when Lincoln called for volunteers to respond to the Confederacy's attack on Fort Sumter, these former holdouts joined the Confederacy, vowing to protect southern wives and daughters from the northern menace. After years of appeasement, northern Democrats had to accept that the southern wing of their party had torn the country asunder. Yet even as Union troops marched into battle, northern Democrats held out hope that their southern brethren would rejoin the national family without too much bloodshed. They hoped in vain.

Upon hearing of Lincoln's election, fire-eaters rejoiced. Finally, they could present southerners with a clear justification for secession. This had been part of their plan: by splitting the Democratic Party in two, fire-eaters had hoped to either strong-arm northerners into supporting a southern candidate or elect a Republican to justify secession. Northern Democrats had not supported a southern candidate, and Americans had elected a Republican president. Now southern fire-eaters just needed to push southern Democrats to seal the deal—to meet in state conventions and pass ordinances of secession.

In the week after Lincoln's election, the fire-eating *Charleston Mercury* called on South

Carolina's legislature to take swift action. "The overwhelming desire is for the very promptest call of a State Convention, to act at once, and resume the sovereign powers of the State," the *Mercury* claimed.[3] The *Mercury* did not exaggerate: citizens of the heavily Democratic South Carolina were eager to secede. In letter to a newspaper in Philadelphia, one South Carolinian reported, "Lincoln's election has filled the people of S[outh] Carolina with mad joy. They have waited long for the signal to secede, and now they think it has sounded."[4]

South Carolinians got their wish. On December 17, South Carolina's secession convention convened in Columbia. Three days later, and forty-four days after Lincoln's election, the convention voted unanimously to secede from the Union. "The union now subsisting between South Carolina and other States, under the name of 'The United States of America,' is hereby dissolved," the convention's secession ordinance declared.[5] Charlestonian Emma Holmes, the daughter of a wealthy planter, rejoiced. "Doubly proud am I of my native state," she wrote in her diary, "that she should be the first to arise and shake off the hated chain which linked us with Black Republicans and Abolitionists." Pleased, she added, "'Secession,' said a gentleman, 'was born in the hearts of Carolina women.'"[6]

Over the next six weeks, six more Deep South states seceded: Mississippi on January 9, Florida on January 10, Alabama on January 11, Georgia on January 19, Louisiana on January 26, and Texas on February 1. As lame-duck president James Buchanan wrung his hands, the seceding states' governors appointed commissioners to counsel the Upper South states to join the Confederacy. On January 1, in Princess Anne, Maryland, a commissioner from Mississippi cited "the election of

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[3] Charleston Mercury, quoted in "Opinions of the Press on the Result," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, November 14, 1860, 2.
[4] "J. M. Claxton to Mr. Jones," November 10, 1860, Milledge Luke Bonham Papers, South Caroliniana Library.
[5] "South Carolina Ordinance of Secession," December 20, 1860, Constitutional and Organic Papers, South Carolina Department of Archives and History, http://www.teachingushistory.org/lessons/Ordinance.htm.
[6] Emma Holmes, *The Diary of Miss Emma Holmes*, ed. John F. Marszalek (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 1.

Abraham Lincoln, as President of the United States, upon a declaration and pledges of principles and designs, which subvert the Constitution of the United States," and pleaded with Marylanders to secede from the Union.[7] Breckinridge had won nearly half the popular vote in Maryland, and many Democrats there indeed hoped their state would secede—especially if other southern states continued to do so. Democrat Jefferson Martenet had moved from Baltimore to San Francisco in the early 1850s, but he retained his prejudice toward the South. Writing to his mother, Catherine Richardson, who still resided in Maryland, Martenet argued that Maryland should side with the South, in part to avoid finding herself outnumbered by free states in Congress. "I pray that Maryland may stand by the South," Martenet wrote. "If Maryland does not prove true to the South, she will find herself without a friend in either section."[8] Responding to her son in March, Richardson agreed. "I think as you do in regard to Maryland."[9]

Over the course of only three months, then, seven states had left the Union—and more seemed poised to join them. While Buchanan waffled over a course of action—he did not believe there was a right to secession, but he also did not believe the federal government could prevent states from seceding—other northern Democrats cast about, searching for someone to blame for the secession crisis.

Reprising their arguments from the campaign, many northern Democrats blamed northern extremists (Republicans, according to northern Democrats) or southern extremists (fire-eaters) for the secession crisis. In the end of January, when New York's Democrats convened at their state convention in Albany, they held Republicans responsible for southern secession. One Democrat at

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[7] "Substance of Speech Delivered by Hon. A. H. Handy, Commissioner to Maryland, at Princess Anne, Maryland, on the 1st Day of January, 1861," n.d., http://facweb.furman.edu/~bensonlloyd/ms2md.html.
[8] "Jefferson Martenet to Catherine M. Richardson," December 15, 1860, Jefferson Martenet Correspondence, Huntington Library.
[9] "Catherine M. Richardson to Jefferson Martenet," March 18, 1861, Jefferson Martenet Correspondence, Huntington Library.

the convention claimed that "Our immediate dangers are. . .not so much the secession from the Union of sever dissatisfied States, as that the Republican Party. . .produced the mischief. . .[and] will not yield to the South such constitutional guarantees. . .as will win back to the Union the alarmed states."[10] Republicans, with their loud antislaveryism, had precipitated southern secession. Now it was the Republicans' responsibility to bring those states back into the Union with conciliation and compromise.

Other northern Democrats blamed fire-eaters for the secession crisis, claiming they had used scare tactics to whip Union-loving southerners into a treasonous frenzy. In its post-election analysis in November, the Democratic *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* concluded that "fire-eaters there denounced the whole people of the north as abolitionists, and maintained that there could be no safety in any fellowship with them, and disunion. . .offered the only means of security."[11] On January 9, New York's *Sun* blamed fire-eaters for appealing "to the baser elements of society" with "the cry of intolerable tyranny and rapine."[12] Even in private, northern and western Democrats mused that secession was merely a new form of fanaticism, spearheaded by the fire-eaters. Writing to his friend and fellow Democrat Samuel Barlow, California financier Henry Douglas Bacon dismissed secession as a "fever" led by "poor mad fellows." "The good men and patriots of the country are not found in any considerable number [among secession's] advocates," Bacon concluded.[13]

In some cases, northern Democrats combined these two complaints, blaming the secession crisis on abolitionists and fire-eaters in the very same breath. "An ambitious Congressmen, particularly from a locality where the anti-slavery feeling is very strong, has only to pitch into the

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[10] *Proceedings of the Democratic State Convention, Held in Albany, January 21, and February 1, 1861* (Albany, NY: Comstock & Cassidy, Printers, 1861), 13.
[11] "A Remedy for Disunion," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 20, 1860, 2.
[12] "Help for the South!," *The Sun*, January 9, 1861, 2.
[13] "Henry Douglas Bacon to Samuel Barlow," November 21, 1860, Samuel Barlow Collection, Huntington Library; "Henry Douglas Bacon to Samuel Barlow," December 1, 1860, Samuel Barlow Collection, Huntington Library; For further articles blaming fire-eaters for Lincoln's victory or for the secession frenzy, see "The Union," *Democrat and Sentinel*, November 14, 1860, 2; "Threatened Reign of Terror," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 20, 1860, 2.

South to gain a local popularity," the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* editorialized on December 8. "So on the other hand a fire-eater who retires with still more spicy epithets, secures the approbation of a secession constituency."[14] Readers, apparently, agreed. On January 24, the paper published a letter it received from a reader. The man had written, "'Fire-eater' vs. abolitionism. . .my hope and prayer is that they may mutually demolish each other, for they are emphatically the bane and curse of our country."[15]

When southerners seceded, they demonstrated, one last time, that their commitment to the Union was contingent upon the Union's protection of slavery.[16] Indeed, for the past decade, northern Democrats had been spending their political capital to accommodate southern Democrats' pro-slavery demands. When northern Democrats refused to acquiesce to a new federal slave code and to guarantee slavery's expansion, southern Democrats left the party; when Lincoln was elected, they led their states out of the union. Secession was a popular movement to protect against a perceived threat to slavery. But northern Democrats struggled to see it that way. They could not abandon the argument they had made during the campaign: that a few, dangerous fanatics were stirring up trouble, but the vast majority of Democrats were conservative, Union-loving men.

If the fire-eaters alone had instigated secession, northern Democrats reasoned, then surely the reasonable men from the North and South could come together to form a compromise that would save the Union. Northern Democrats used gendered language to generate sympathy for southerners, hoping that doing so would push northerners to agree to a compromise. On January 3, the recently-vanquished Stephen Douglas arose on the floor of the Senate to give a speech in favor of one potential solution to the secession crisis: an amendment that would enshrine popular

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[14] "The Age of Talk," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 8, 1860, 2.
[15] "Reply to 'Y.'---Who Talks Like a 'Secessionist,'" *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 24, 1861, 2.
[16] Robert Bonner demonstrates that southern slaveholders even found the Union and American nationalism a useful vehicle to promote slavery's expansion. See Robert Bonner, *Mastering America: Southern Slaveholders and the Crisis of American Nationhood* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

sovereignty in the Constitution. Douglas pleaded with his audience to put themselves in southerners' shoes. "Apprehension has become wide-spread and deep-seated in the southern people. It has. . .filled them with the conviction that their fire-sides, their family altars, and their domestic institutions, are to be ruthlessly assailed through the machinery of the Federal Government."[17] If northern men found themselves in the same position, Douglas implied, would not they, too, demand protections?

During the nominating conventions that spring, newspapers had discouraged northern Democrats from giving into southern demands by decrying compromise as emasculating. Now they sang a different tune. On the compromise attempts in Congress, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* editorialized, "An equal responsibility will rest upon the representatives of the North and upon those of the South. Let the former have the manliness to be just and offer to the latter such measures of redress as will be right and proper."[18] At first glance, describing compromise as emasculating in April and manly in December seems fantastically inconsistent. But all along, northern Democrats' primary goal was not affirming their masculinity—it was preserving the Union. In the spring, they believed that nominating Stephen Douglas would secure the Union, so they used masculine language to discourage compromise. By December, compromise with the South seemed to be the only way to save the Union, so they used masculine language to encourage it. In both cases, Union was the goal, and gendered language was the tactic.

Even as feelings ran high in the days after South Carolina seceded, one northern Democratic paper continued to encourage compromise. "Matters look dark and gloomy, it is true," the *Democrat and Sentinel* acknowledged, "but we are still not without a hope that conservative men, both north

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[17] "Hon. S. A. Douglas, of Illinois, on the State of the Union, Delivered in the Senate, January 3, 1861," 1861, 17, Stephen A. Douglas Papers, University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center; For the text of the proposed bill, see "S.R. 52: Joint Resolution Proposing Certain Amendments to the Constitution of the United States," December 24, 1860, Stephen A. Douglas Papers, University of Chicago Library, Special Collections Research Center.
[18] "The Meeting of Congress," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, December 3, 1860, 2.

and south, will soon succeed in obtaining a hearing." To those who would impugn South Carolina's men as "nothing but cowardly braggarts," the *Sentinel* had stern words. "Their history proves exactly the reverse of this. . .As soldiers in the Revolutionary struggle, in the war of 1812, and in the Mexican War, they were distinguished for bravery and dauntless daring."[19] Southerners kept up on northern newspapers, so we can interpret this defense of South Carolinians' manliness as an attempt to reconcile with South Carolinians themselves. It also represents an appeal to northern readers. Giving in to "cowardly braggarts" would emasculate northern men. Compromising with brave brothers-in-arms would not.

Reconciliation would require more than stroking South Carolinians' egos, and northern Democrats knew it. They recognized that southerners harbored genuine concerns about the ascendant Republican Party. For years, northern Democrats had been impugning all Republicans as radicals—as men who would impose woman's rights, free love, and abolition on the whole country if elected. And lo, southern Democrats had come to believe it, and they moved to secede to protect their society from this radical social order. Suddenly, northern Democrats had to amend this characterization—their characterization—of the Republican Party. Immediately following the election, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* wrote, "The probability is that success being achieved, Lincoln will administer the government conservatively and wisely, in spite of the outside pressure of the radical wing of his party."[20] The *New York Herald*, meanwhile, encouraged the "moderate and conservative portion of the [Republican] party" to "call public meetings in every Northern State, and declare their intention to. . .put down every attempt to coerce the South or violate its right of self government"—that is, southerners' right to own slaves.[21] Faced with the consequences of their caricature of the Republican Party, northern Democrats finally portrayed the party as it was: a broad coalition of

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[19] "The Remedy," *Democrat and Sentinel*, December 26, 1860, 2.
[20] "The Secession Movement in the South," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, November 9, 1860, 2.
[21] New York Herald, quoted in "The Secession Movement in the South," 2.

radical abolitionists, moderate anti-slaveryites, and conservative northern farmers and businessmen. They also tried to assure southerners that Lincoln would not hold much real power.[22] Taken together, they hoped these assurances would convince southern Democrats they had nothing to fear from coming to the table, compromising, and remaining in the Union.

In January 1861, as more and more states peeled off from the Union, Republicans refused to compromise on their core antislavery principles in order to bring the South back into the fold.[23] Northern Democrats, however, remained firmly committed to peaceful compromise. They framed their opposition to the use of force—"coercion," as they called it—in terms of protecting real American families and the symbolic American national family. On January 11, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* asked its readers to consider the consequences of invading the South. "Suppose an army of norther abolitionists. . . should succeed in devastating and destroying the South." "What then?" the paper asked. "The hostile agitation. . .has gone hand in hand with the other fanaticisms springing from [New England]." If abolitionists invaded the South, the paper argued, they would impose their social order on southerners. This would be utterly unacceptable. "A social despotism is so much more galling than a political one," the paper argued. "[A man] may be denied the exercise of his political rights. . .but a despotism that penetrates the sanctities of conscience and social life humiliates him as a man."[24] The North could not coerce southerners to remain in the Union because invading abolitionists would impose their wild "fanaticisms" on southern families and southern society. As historian Daniel Walker Howe explains, "the natural rights philosophy of the Jacksonians asserted the individual's claims to be protected against interference from officious ecumenical

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[22] See, for instance, "Stand by the Union and Constitution," *Democratic Press*, December 20, 1860, 2.
[23] As Russell McClintock writes, through January and February, "under the growing pressure for compromise, most Republicans clung to their party's core doctrines all the more tightly. This was a testament to their devotion to those principles and the party that represented them, and also to their deep-seated distrust of their opponents' motives." See Russell McClintock, *Lincoln and the Decision for War: The Northern Response to Secession* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 151.
[24] "A Military Despotism," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 11, 1861, 2.

reformers."[25] Even forty years later, Democrats still claimed the right to be free from meddling reformers. Compromise—even if it required significant concessions to southern demands—would be a far better solution, for it would respect the masculine prerogative of southern men to manage their own homes.

Northern Democrats also bolstered their opposition to coercion by describing America as a national family. In this telling, the South played the Prodigal Son. Southerners had left the Union. They needed to return on their own volition; otherwise, the return would be meaningless, because a family cannot be held together by force—only by love. On January 18, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* published a letter it had received from a reader. The letter read, "The aggressors are our brothers; shall we madly attempt their coercion by force of arms[?] . . .Must we kill thousands of them, to teach the rest to love and respect us?" The writer scorned such a suggestion. "Shame on the man who, in his self his self-conceit, counsels such treatment in the great American family!"[26] It was neither morally right nor politically feasible to reunite the country by force. Like a family, northerners—Democrats and Republicans—must allow southerners to realize their error and return on their own time. They could facilitate southerners' return by offering concessions. But they could not coerce southerners into loving their northern brethren. Thus, contemporary ideas about men's autonomy and power within real families encouraged northern Democrats to spurn coercion within the national family.[27]

When they talked about the Union as a family, northern Democrats elaborated on a theory

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[25] Daniel Walker Howe, "The Evangelical Movement and Political Culture in the North During the Second Party System," *The Journal of American History* 77, no. 4 (March 1991): 1228.
[26] "The Present Juncture of Our Political Affairs," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, January 18, 1861, 2.
[27] Lynn Hunt has argued that something similar happened in the years before, during, and following the French Revolution. According to Hunt, changing understandings of the proper roles of family members consciously and subconsciously affected the way the French understood the course of their Revolution. "Authority in the state was explicitly modeled on authority in the family," she argues (3). Once the king had been deemed a "bad father," revolutionaries had to draw governing authority from a different family model. They found it in brotherhood, but brotherhood was a necessarily less stable, less hierarchal model than fatherhood. See Lynn Hunt, *The Family Romance of the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992).

that had germinated in the eighteenth century and strengthened in the nineteenth: the affective theory of the Union. As historian Michael Woods has explained, Americans understood the Union as a political body held together by affection, fraternity, and love.[28] They hoped that those positive emotions would bind Americans together as the nation expanded westward. Americans from different parties and different sections subscribed to this view of the Union. James F. Dowdell of Alabama said, "Sentiments of affection and feelings of fraternal sympathy" constituted "the true bonds of union"; without them, even the Constitution could not hold together the Union. Stephen A. Douglas argued that the United States out to be "not only a union of states, but a union of hearts." In 1860, James Buchanan warned that if the Union "can not live in the affections of the people, it must one day perish." President-elect Lincoln agreed, describing Americans as "brothers of a common country" who "should dwell together in the bonds of fraternal feeling."[29]

But the secession crisis threw into sharp relief the affective theory's inherent danger: what would become of the Union of the bonds of affection that maintained it vanished? If love could not be coerced, then neither could be the Union. John Quincy Adams had worried about this potential future as early as 1839. "The indissoluble link of union between the people of the several states of this confederated nation is, after all. . .in the *heart*," Quincy maintained. "If the day should ever come (may heaven avert it) when the affections of the people of these States shall be alienated from each other. . .far better will it be for the people of the dis-united States to part in friendship with each other, than to be held together by constraint."[30]

In the winter of 1860-61, Adams' nightmare vision had come true: the good feelings that had

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[28] For a full explanation of the affective theory of Union, see the prologue of Michael E. Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict in the Antebellum United States* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Rogan Kersh also briefly touches on this idea. He describes how the affective theory of union--or "voluntary national solidarity," as he calls it--provided a basis for nationalism beyond ancestry or ethnicity in the early days of the Republic and throughout the antebellum era. See Rogan Kersh, *Dreams of a More Perfect Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 292.
[29] Dowdell, Douglas, Buchanan, and Lincoln, quoted in Michael E. Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict*, 22–23.
[30] Quoted in Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict*, 23.

cleaved many southerners to the Union had vanished. Northern Democrats did not want to coerce southerners to remain in the Union because they believed in the affective theory of Union and, relatedly, because they respected southern men's equality in the national family. Forcing southerners to remain in the Union disrespected southern men, and therefore was bound to create bad feelings. But nor did northern Democrats want to see the precious Union torn asunder. Northern Democrats thus concluded that national politicians should induce southern men to come back to the Union with compromise measures, rather than forcing them back in with arms.

Southern Democrats, however, could not accept northerners' attempts to draw them back into the Union. They could not do so because the electoral tactics of the past five years, combined with the ascension of a Republican to the White House, had persuaded them that the majority of northerners were fanatics who wanted to abolish slavery and force woman's rights, free love, and any number of other radical social programs on the South.

Lincoln's election terrified southern Democrats. Northern Democrats rushed to reverse their claims that Lincoln was a radical abolitionist, but it was too late: they had created a caricature of their own society. To southern Democrats, Lincoln's victory demonstrated, once and for all, the popularity of radical social movements among northerners. A correspondent for the *Nashville Union and American* confirmed as much after a November trip to Cleveland. "This section as all are no doubt aware, is intensely abolition," the correspondent reported. "It is the very Elysium of JOHN BROWNITES; here free-love holds its sway, GREELEYISM, Negroism, or any other ism sufficiently imbrued with fanaticism upon any topic has hordes of ardent supporters."[31] Located in northern Ohio, Cleveland was certainly more Republican than the southern Butternut counties, but implying on that basis that the whole state had turned Republican—let alone fanatical—was wrong.

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[31] "Special Correspondence of the Union and American," *Nashville Union and American*, December 2, 1860, 2.

Lincoln only won Ohio with 52 percent of the popular vote. Yet southern Methodist preacher John Berry McFerrin, another correspondent for the newspaper, offered a similar message. In his December 24 letter to the paper, he briefly acknowledged that "there are many wise and good men North of Mason and Dixon's line." The vast majority, however, had lost their way. "The blindness of these fanatics. . .has fun many of them to infidelity," McFerrin reported. "Woman's rights, Free-love, [and] spiritualism. . .are some of the legitimate offshoots of the disordered public mind at the North."[32]

This was not merely rhetoric. Following the election, southern Democrats fretted to one another that the North had become completely fanatical—that it seemed like a different country. In a letter to his mother Catherine Richardson, Marylander Jefferson Martenet affirmed his belief that "The unwarrantable interference with the affairs of the South by northern fanatics, will never cease. . .I tell you this generation of Northerners have had abolition bred in their bones, brain, and muscle, and nothing will ever take it out." Martenet believed all northerners had been radicalized. He continued on to warn that these radicals must be forced out of the South. "It would be a pity to force them to live under the despotism of slavery," he wrote. But "probably their fellow humanitarians of New England will invite them to an abode in their land of freedom and philosophy." There, they "would make a splendid pattern of a free-love-free-speech free-everything."[33] On March 2, Theophilus Nash penned letter to Margaret Stanly Beckwith that expressed the same anxiety about northern fanaticism and the same desire for northerners to leave the South. Nash thought that northern "fanatics," as he twice called them, had taken over the country, which tarnished the Union's honor. "Our country, our nationality is gone!" he cried. "Our proud name, the 'United States' is gone!" Working himself into hysterics, he continued, "Them

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[32] "Interesting Correspondence," *Nashville Union and American*, January 4, 1861, 2.
[33] Jefferson Martenet to Catherine M. Richardson, January 14, 1861, Jefferson Martenet Correspondence, Huntington Library.

black-hearted Yankees! All New England can go to Canada. . .with their free-love societies, their spiritualism, and their higher law! . . . I will have none of them!"[34]

Democrats had conjured images of Republican free-love colonies to great effect in the election of 1856. Here, four years later, we see southern Democrats deploying the same tropes. The durability of this language demonstrates that the anxiety about free love was not merely a political trope—though it was that, too. Rather, southerners seem to have genuinely feared the advance of free love colonies. To them, free love was part and parcel of a whole program imported from Europe—including free love, woman's rights, spiritualism, Fourierism, and abolitionism—that sought to undermine the traditional family, religious, and property structure of the South. Since white men owned their wives' property, led churches, and profited from slavery, any threat to even one of those structures threatened white male dominance. The talk of free love, therefore, constituted a powerful emotional appeal to white southern manhood as a whole.

Since the election of 1856, northern Democrats had portrayed Republicans as fanatics and themselves as the only possible protection against that menace. Secessionists now saw it differently. Northern Democrats had hemorrhaged seats in the 1858 midterms, they had failed to stop John Brown's raid, and they had now lost the White House to a Republican. No matter that southern Democrats, by demanding endless concessions to pro-slavery ideology, had played a significant role in northern Democrats' losses. They concluded nonetheless that northern Democrats could not check the advance of the Republican Party—or abolitionism, free love, or woman's rights, all of which they saw as related. Secessionists pointed to these recent failures on behalf of the northern Democrats to convince equivocating southerners to support secession. In early December, a speaker at a meeting of the Southern Rights Association in Jefferson Parish, Louisiana reminded attendees of

[34] "Theophilus Nash to Margaret Stanly Beckwith," March 2, 1861, Margaret Stanly Beckwith Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

northern Democrats' broken promises. "Before this election we were told—and many true and loyal southerners believed the tale—that there were enough conservative men at the North to keep in check that fanatical abolition element, from which materials are gathered to make raids and commit robberies on the South. We were told that. . .with money, influence, and power, they could stay the advancing tide of destructive fanaticism." But, the speaker concluded, "the ballot box has told the tale."[35] Similarly, in a January 15 speech in the North Carolina House of Commons, one representative asked listeners to reflect on the events of the past two years. "Let me rind [you] of the great Union meetings after the John [Brown] raid," he warned. After that show of support for the South, "they elected a miserable, white-livered, black-hearted abolitionist to the highest office in their gift. And yet we are told they are to be trusted."[36] At best, northern Democrats were weak. At worst, they were deceptive—tricking southerners into believing slavery was safe within the Union, while secretly working with Republicans to undermine the institution. In short, these secessionists concluded, southerners who feared northern abolitionism and northern free-love should not look to northern Democrats for protection.

By describing the North as a place with fundamentally different social norms, the correspondents for the *Nashville Union and American*, Jefferson Martenet, and Theophilus Nash helped construct a southern national identity. Historians have long recognized that nations do not arise naturally from similarities in language, religion, culture, or economic interests. Rather, ordinary people have to invent nations; they must decide that certain similarities are significant enough to justify the creation of a new state. Likewise, historians recognize that people construct nations based on perceptions of difference—difference from other peoples or nations. Feminist historians add

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[35] "Address of the Executive Committee of the Southern Rights Association, Parish of Jefferson," *Daily Delta*, December 7, 1860, 1; For similar commentary on the election, see "The 'Union Meeting' at Vicksburg," *Daily Mississippian*, December 12, 1860, 1.
[36] "Remarks of Mr. Slade, of Rockingham," *Semi-Weekly Standard*, January 26, 1861, 3.

that people have frequently used gender identities to justify nationalism.[37] As historian Mrinalini Sinha puts it, "attachments to modern gender and national identities have developed together and reinforced each other."[38]

Taken together, these insights help us understand why the *Union and American*, Martenet, and Nash harped on the supposedly irredeemable social order in the North. They shared an economic interest in maintaining slavery, and they believed that a Republican government, elected by northerners, threatened that interest. But they also believed they shared a culture. Slavery, they believed, provided the groundwork for a stable, organic society, in which men and women understood and fulfilled their unique roles. This happy society stood in stark contrast to northern free society. There, abolishing slavery had been but the first step in creating chaos, in which everyone sought to free themselves from the ties—including marriage and gender roles—that southerners believed were essential to a harmonious society.

At best, these depictions of the North and South were gross distortions of reality. At worst, they were outright lies. In the South, white plantation owners raped and murdered their enslaved workers with impunity. White women had little recourse to deal with their husbands' infidelity. And slaveholders broke up black families when they sold family members to other plantations or other states. This was not stability. Meanwhile, in the North, free love colonies were few, small, and isolated. Membership in the abolitionist group the American Anti-Slavery society peaked at about 200-250,000 adherents—meaning that only about one percent of the people living in states that would remain in the Union called themselves members. Yet the campaigns that Democrats had run

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[37] For an overview of this scholarship, see Mrinalini Sinha, "Gender and Nation," in *Women's History in Global Perspective*, ed. Bonnie G. Smith, vol. 1 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 229–39; David Potter pushes historians to pay attention to the importance of shared interests--especially shared economic interests--in creating a national identity. For the South, that shared economic interest was, of course, slavery. See David M. Potter, "The Historian's Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa," *The American Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (July 1962): 933–35.

[38] Mrinalini Sinha, "Gender and Nation," 231.

in 1856 and 1860 had created the perception that free love and abolition reigned in the Republican Party.

But perception, not reality, guides actions. While secessionists saw the northern society as fanatical and dangerous, they saw southern slave society as stable, conservative, and patriarchal. In a letter to his mother, Jefferson Martenet praised southern slave society, writing, "Slavery. . .in the South. . . involves the rights, interests, and prejudices of a whole community." He was right: the presence of slavery affected all of southern society, from economics to social relations to gender relations. Martenet continued, "It is high time that this clap trap cry of 'free speech' 'free press' 'free love etc' was dropped[.] A healthful state of society demands certain concessions from its individual members, each yields a small portion of his freedom for the welfare of the whole, and upon no other basis can society exist at all."[39] Higher-ups in the Democratic Party agreed. On January 23, after his state seceded, South Carolina Governor Francis Pickens wrote to Jefferson Davis about creating a southern government that would protect southern society from fanaticism. "As to who may be selected to fill the highest civil offices," he began, "they should be high-toned gentlemen of exemplary purity, and firmness of character. . .and no demagogism. We must start our government free from the vulgar influences that have debauched and demoralized the government at Washington."[40]

Maintaining slavery had always required a certain kind of society—one that removed any chance that enslaved workers would be able to cultivate dissent among whites. And, as historian David Potter has written, "the more speculative a society became in its social thought, the more readily it might challenge the tenets of the established order."[41] So the South tended toward

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[39] Jefferson Martenet to Catherine M. Richardson, December 26, 1860, Jefferson Martenet Correspondence, Huntington Library.
[40] Francis Pickens to Jefferson Davis, January 23, 1861, Francis Pickens Papers, South Caroliniana Library.
[41] David M. Potter, *The Impending Crisis: 1848-1861* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 456.

orthodoxy—in religious practice, which emphasized personal salvation; in its education system, which stressed classical learning; and, I argue, in its gender norms, which emphasized patriarchal control of households. So even though there remained many similarities between northern free and southern slave society, there were also important differences. But those differences had existed for decades, and yet it took southerners until 1860 to declare themselves a separate nation. Why then? The Democratic Party's rhetoric helps answer this question. It helped southerners see their slave society as significantly different from, superior to, and under threat by northern free society. Southerners seceded not only to protect slavery, but to protect slave society.

Southerners used the image of southern womanhood to symbolize the supposedly profound differences between the South and the North. Since the 1830s, novelists had written northern women as publicly-minded, sometimes proto-feminist characters, and southern women as family-oriented or even subservient.[42] Democrats had brought those tropes out of the world of domestic fiction and into the world of politics. Now southerners used them to build a sense of nationhood. In a letter to his mother, native Marylander Jefferson Martenet complained about the northern women who had immigrated to San Francisco, where Martenet now lived. "The Yankee ladies are good enough in a utilitarian sense," he sighed, "but how can you expect delicacy or refinement from young women who are taught from childhood to fight the world with its own weapons?" He went on to describe them as "self-reliant, shrewd, and energetic"—a grave insult, in his book. Northern women were functional and independent, not ornamental and dependent, as Martenet would have preferred them.[43] A Tennessee newspaper similarly criticized northern and western women—this

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[42] Elizabeth Moss offers a thorough summary and analysis of many of these works in Elizabeth Moss, *Domestic Novelists in the Old South: Defenders of Southern Culture* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1992).

[43] Jefferson Martenet to Catherine M. Richardson, January 20, 1861, Jefferson Martenet Correspondence, Huntington Library; Indeed, Martenet said as much when enumerating to his mother his requirements in his search for a wife a few years earlier. See Jefferson Martenet to Catherine Richardson, January 31, 1855, Jefferson Martenet Correspondence, Huntington Library.

time, the ones who attended one of Lincoln's receptions at the White House. "Some of the strong[-]minded women from the West insisted on dancing the rail splitter's dance," the paper scoffed. "It certainly was the most undignified and childish performance ever seen in the White [H]ouse."[44] It seems that years of campaign rhetoric denigrating the "strong-minded women" who supported the Republican Party had made their mark on southern Democrats.

By contrast, southern Democrats constructed an image of southern women as pure, moral, and submissive. In early January, South Carolina lawyer and Democrat John Smythe Richardson received a letter from a contact who was working to raise a regiment of troops who could fight if war arrived. After praising the men for volunteering, the writer praised southern women for giving their brothers, husbands, and sons so willingly to the fight. "Our women are worth of the best days of Rome or Sparta," he declared. "They give their best and dearest treasures ungrudgingly to the state."[45] This letter built a kind of circular logic for southern nationalism. On the one hand, by offering their men up to the cause of southern independence, the women proved themselves to be self-sacrificing and honorable—and worthy of southern men's protection from a northern menace. On the other hand, this very worthiness also justified southern nationalism. Contemporaries saw women as society's moral compass. If these honorable women supported the southern cause, how could that cause be wrong?

In mid-March, proceedings at a pro-secession meeting in Concord, North Carolina also used the virtue of southern women to prove the virtue of secession. The women of Cabarrus County had organized the gathering at a local hotel, and invited North Carolina House of Commons member William S. Harris and North Carolina State Senator Victor Clay Barringer to attend as the guests of honor. Barringer remarked "that he was proud to see that the ladies of old Cabarrus awakened on

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[44] "High Life in Washington," *Memphis Daily Appeal*, April 19, 1861, 2.
[45] John W. Ervin to John Smythe Richardson, January 3, 1861, John Smythe Richardson Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

the subject of their rights, (not *woman's rights*, for that is a *plant* that is indigenous to abolition *soil*, and cultivated in the general crop of rank fanaticism and infidelity)," but rather "of Southern rights." Barringer believed it augured "well for the country when the voice of women was heard, not attempting to guide the 'Ship of State'. . .but commingling together for its peace and safety in the domestic circle."[46] In just one speech, Barringer twice denigrated northern women as power hungry and twice praised southern women as domestic. Having just hosted a pro-secession meeting, southern women were clearly no less political than northern women. But the women's blessing affirmed the morality of secession; Barringer would be a fool to reject their support. So, with a mixture of idealism and self-deception, Barringer claimed that the women only supported secession only because they wanted to protect southern homes—not because they wanted to steer the ship of state.

Secessionists believed that slavery created a society that allowed women to live as God intended: in the private sphere, first as daughters, then as wives, and finally as mothers, in all cases protected from the hurly-burly of the modern economy. On March 4, North Carolina's *Newbern Daily Progress* reported with dismay on the classified ads found in the *New York Herald*. According to the *Progress*, the ads "show[ed] how much valuable talent in the professional and domestic arts i[s] 'wasting its sweetness' in vain quest of some occupation sufficient to keep soul and body together." That is: the free economy in New York forced too many women to work outside the home to feed their families. The *Progress* cited examples of "a Lady of education and refinement, twenty-four years of age," "a 'Young American' widow," "a respectable married woman," and more, all of whom sought paying work. These classifieds represented "a fearful testimony to the widespread distress and suffering from want of employment which pervades Northern Society." "Happily for us," the southern paper continued, "these specimen are rare in our latitude. . .We have within us all the

[46] "Complimentary Party," *The Evening Bulletin*, March 13, 1861, 2.

elements of increasing prosperity, and we have peace and harmony among ourselves.[47]

This image of southern slavery and southern woman was fictional. As historian Jeanne Boydston has shown, women's unpaid domestic labor drove America's economic growth—even if papers like the *Newbern Daily Progress* denied that women's labor had economic value.[48] This held true up and down the southern social ladder. The wives of small freeholders worked on family farms, doing essential tasks ranging from cooking to working in the fields. The wives of plantation owners helped to manage their enslaved workers: they enforced the system of labor that made the southern economy possible. Southern women, therefore, contributed to their families' finances and to the region's economy. If southern women were able to stay home, it was only because their homes were places of work.[49] Erasing women's contributions to the southern economy and to the slave system's brutality allowed men to idealize southern women as different and worth fighting for.

Many southern men came to think of themselves as Confederates because they thought of themselves as slaveholders and patriarchs, and they thought of their society as slaveholding and patriarchal. In January 1861, Virginia secessionist John Tyler drafted a set of remarks he titled, "Virginia and her responsibilities!" to explain his support for secession. For Tyler, the issue was clear: Virginia shared more culturally, economically, and politically with the seceding southern states than it did with the northern states. As he put it, "The Revolution before us is founded in the. . .differences and distinctions, moral, social, and political, existing between the non-slaveholding and slaveholding states. . .The Border States must either accept emancipation and join the North, or

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[47] "Life in New York," *Newbern Daily Progress*, March 4, 1861, 2.

[48] Jeanne Boydston, *Home and Work: Housework, Wages, and the Ideology of Labor in the Early Republic* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

[49] Thavolia Glymph argues that even historians have been tripped up by the idealization of the southern home as separate from the public sphere of work, assuming because southerners said so that work took place in the fields, not in the home. Glymph proves that this is not the case: that southern home were places of work and, therefore, of brutality against enslaved workers. See Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

maintain the patriarchal institution of negro slavery and join the South."[50] Secessionist Richard Thompson Archer, a wealthy Mississippi plantation owner, drafted a letter to a Mississippi paper declaring that there was no use in trying to compromise with northern fanatics. "Who believes the concession or reasoning will stay fanaticism? Who believes that it has any stopping place short of the extreme point of its tenets?"[51] Tyler and Archer spoke for the legions of southern men who had, even before Fort Sumter, developed a strong sense of southern nationalism.[52]

Events on the ground made it clear that many in the Border South rejected Lower South secessionists' case for ripping the nation apart. Texas had seceded on February 1, capping a six-week period in which seven states seceded from the Union. But for the next two and a half months, not a single additional state seceded. Historians have explained the Upper South's hesitation in a few ways. William Link argues that in Virginia, slaveholders had adapted slavery to a more industrial economy, strengthening their desire to remain attached to the Union.[53] William Freehling has pointed to the rising price of slaves in the 1850s, which he contends drove down rates of slave ownership and therefore support for a new slaveholders' republic.[54]

Whatever the cause, many southerners, even southern Democrats, acknowledged that Lincoln had been elected according to the Constitution and resolved to wait and see whether the Lincoln administration would commit an "overt act" against slavery. Take, for instance, Virginian

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[50] John Tyler, "Virginia and Her Responsibilities!," January 1861, Virginia Historical Society.
[51] Richard Thompson Archer, "Editors of the Mississippian," n.d., Richard Thompson Archer Family Papers, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.
[52] This overall thesis owes much to the work of Paul Quigley, who argues that "white southerners increasingly defined their national identity in gendered terms" (10). This, combined with his insight that southerners defined their nationalism in opposition to northerners, helped me connect the denigration of northern women to the praise of southern women and to the growth of southern nationalism. Paul Quigley, *Shifting Grounds: Nationalism and the American South, 1848-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[53] William A. Link, *Roots of Secession: Slavery and Politics in Antebellum Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).
[54] See especially the second chapter of William W. Freehling, *Road to Disunion: Secessionists Triumphant, 1854-1861* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990).

Richard Eppes. A prominent planter from Prince George County, Virginia, Eppes voted for the southern Democratic ticket of Breckinridge and Lane. Five days after the election, on November 11, a friend called on Eppes at his house. Eppes recorded the visit in his diary. "Mr. James Proctor called and spent the evening[. He] talked politics and advocated a Southern Confederation." But Eppes spurned the idea of secession.

> I stated to him. . .that I was opposed to a dissolution of the Union before an overt act had been committed by the Black Republican Government, that as we had gone into the election with the B[lack] Republican party it was but fair that we should submit being vanquished until some act was committed against our institutions.[55]

Like Eppes, Virginia Democratic Senator Robert M. T. Hunter also spent the winter rejecting calls for immediate secession. On December 9, one of Hunter's friends needled him on the point. "I do not agree with you on one thing—that the election of Lincoln is not sufficient cause for disruption. I think that election with its surroundings is enough more than enough," his friend wrote.[56] Despite his friend's urgings, Hunter continued his work as a member of the Committee of Thirteen, a group of northern and southern senators that tried to devise a compromise that could save the Union. Democratic newspapers in Virginia also championed the wait-and-see attitude throughout November and December of 1860.[57]

Sources from North Carolina tell the same story. The *Semi-Weekly Standard*, a Democratic paper published in Raleigh, had railed against John Brown in 1859 and supported Breckinridge and Lane in 1860. Yet as late as April 1861, the paper refused to condone secession. On April 10, the paper quoted the pro-secession *Richmond Examiner*, which had printed a threat against Union men in Virginia. The *Standard* then turned to its readers, declaring, "Union men. . .you are abused and

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[55] Richard Eppes, "Diary, 1859 August 12 - 1862 July 1, of Richard Eppes," n.d., Virginia Historical Society.
[56] George Booker, "George Booker to R.M.T. Hunter," December 9, 1860, Mss1H9196aFA2, Virginia Historical Society.
[57] See, for instance "The Meeting To-Morrow," *Staunton Vindicator*, November 16, 1860; "Disunion from a Love of Disunion--Disunion by Reason of a Failure to Correct the Breaches of the Constitution," *Staunton Vindicator*, December 21, 1860.

branded as submissionists to unjust power, simply because you are true to the Constitution and obedient to its laws! Such is the mad spirit of disunion."[58] On the very same day, the *Standard* devoted another column to reprinting an anti-secession poem. The piece is set in the future, and features four characters—Discord, Famine, Slaughter, and the Devil—describing with glee the apocalyptic scene that secession has wrought. Slaughter says, "The mother gave her babe one parting glace/ The soldier spitted both upon his lance." Famine adds,

> I saw the farmers, standing like a pack
> Of starving wolves, lank-ribbed and fiery-eyed.
> Beside them sat their wives, whose starving babes,
> Like withered lilies lay upon their laps,
> Seeking the breasts that gave no nourishment.[59]

The publishers at the *Standard* may very well have agreed with secessionists that southern women were pure, moral, and worth protecting. But the *Standard* concluded that the best way to do that was by keeping the peace, not by agitating for war.

In every state except for South Carolina, secession had not passed unanimously. In some states men debated vociferously. In Alabama, secession only carried the day by a vote of 61 to 39. Americans revered the Union. Their system—a democratic government, secured by a constitution, that guaranteed political liberty—had afforded white men immense economic opportunity. The failed European revolutions of the 1840s had made Americans especially aware of their unique position in the world.[60] Men in the Upper South were even less eager to relinquish their connection to the Union. In Lower South states—Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, Florida, and South Carolina—enslaved people made up 46.5 percent of the population, and one in three families

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[58] "The Reign of Terror," *Semi-Weekly Standard*, April 10, 1861, 3.
[59] "The Disunion Banner.---A One-Act Drama," *Semi-Weekly Standard*, April 10, 1861, 2.
[60] I have based my understanding of the meaning of Union on Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011).

owned slaves. Since so many whites in the community served slaveholders—including overseers, lawyers, preachers, merchants, physicians, and bankers—most whites in black belt areas had a tangible economic stake in slavery. In the Middle South—Arkansas, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Virginia—and Border South—Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland, and Delaware—slaves made up 31.7 and 12.7 percent of the population, respectively. White belt areas were more common in these states; there, as William Freehling has explained, "whites had little economic interest in slave ownership to protect, little prospect of free blacks to fear, [and] no slaveholders to ask for a loan." Many men in these states benefitted from close economic ties to the North. "White belt southerners loved white men's Union," Freehling writes, and they would be slow to quit it.[61] In Virginia, representatives convened in February to consider secession, but they went for months without voting to leave the Union.

In short, convincing southerners to leave the Union required a bit of work. Secessionists primarily appealed to fence-sitters by promising them that slavery would be safer in the Confederacy than in the Union.[62] But they realized that a political appeal is more powerful when it is combined with a gender-cultural element. So, secessionists added that the Confederacy would protect southern families and southern women.

Indeed, the two appeals were related. As we saw, southern politicians and southern novelists had long argued that slavery afforded southern women a more gentle, feminine way of life. Now they asked pro-Union men to consider what might happen to their wives if slavery were abolished—or worse, if northern rule incited wide-spread insurrection. In January 1861, Virginian John Tyler, drafting a set of remarks to convince unionists to support secession, included a long warning about

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[61] William W. Freehling, *The South Vs. The South: How Anti-Confederate Southerners Shaped the Course of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 18–23.

[62] Charles Dew demonstrates this fact with his extensive analysis of secession commissioners in Charles B. Dew, *Apostles of Disunion: Southern Secession Commissioners and the Causes of the Civil War* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2001).

the devastation that would fall upon Virginian women if Republicans abolished slavery. "Our present Patriarchal system of slave labor [will be] broken up, and our present race of planters [will be] destroyed, and their children beggared," he wrote. By seceding, men in the Deep South had protected themselves and their families from this fate. "The early secession of the Planting States will have saved their Patriarchal Institutions, their Family altars, their home life," Tyler averred.[63] In this passage, Tyler appealed directly to Virginia's slaveholders who still cleaved to the Union. Those slaveholders were willing to wait and see if Lincoln would move to abolish slavery. But secessionists like Tyler sensed the time for a southern Confederacy had finally arrived, and did not want to miss the moment. So he reminded slaveholders of the system that slavery undergirded—a system that made them the undisputed heads of households and that gave their families a comfortable life. Did they so want to give Republicans a chance to govern that they were willing to risk their families' well-being?

Mere days after Lincoln's election, Mississippi Democrat R. S. Holt already felt sure the South should secede. His brother Joseph, on the other hand, rejected secession; he had moved to Kentucky about twenty years earlier and was currently serving as postmaster general for the Buchanan administration. In a November 9 letter, Holt tried to change his brother's mind. "[Lincoln's] election is a declaration by northern people. . .of a purpose to emancipate the slaves of the South, and to involve southern states in all the horror which that event would plainly entail," Holt warned. "I know your heard is altogether southern," he assured Joseph. "You cannot but abhor the fanatics and assassins by whom our rights and firesides are invaded." Anticipating that Joseph, like many Kentuckians, might hope to remain neutral in the coming conflict, Holt finished by pleading that Joseph side with the South to protect his brother's family and families like it. "The issue involves. . .the safety of my roof from the fire brand, and of my wife and children from the

[63] John Tyler, "Virginia and Her Responsibilities!"

poison and dagger, and I would like to hear from you the assurance that you are with us and that you demand no Moloch-like sacrifice upon the altar of the Union," Holt told his brother.[64]

Holt supported secession in order to protect slavery. His brother did not—perhaps because he did not believe Republicans would abolish slavery, perhaps because of his staunch Unionism, or likely because both. So Holt combined his political appeal for secession with a personal appeal to protect his wife and children from slave insurrection. Southerners believed that abolitionist agitation gave enslaved workers the hope and information they needed to rise up against their white masters. As David Potter has argued, southerners like Holt feared not so much what Lincoln might do as what his election might encourage their slaves to do. They feared that, as Potter puts it, "the election to the presidency of a man who stated flatly that slavery was morally wrong might have a more inciting effect upon the slaves than denunciatory rhetoric from the editor of an abolitionist weekly in Boston."[65] For Holt, then, there could be no delay: the South must secede before Lincoln took office or else face the threat of slave insurrection. He implored his brother to think of the issue not as a choice between Union and secession, but between slave insurrection—with its threat against his wife and children's lives—and safety.

Secessionists alternated the image of slave insurrection with the image of bloodthirsty northern soldiers raping and murdering southern women. On December 26, Raleigh's pro-secession *Spirit of the Age* beseeched readers to support secession so they could prepare themselves to protect their families against a northern invasion. "Do we not all love our homes, our hearths, and our blessed father-land[?]" the paper asked. "Supposed the startling news was received that the black republican hordes of the abolition North, were on their way, in hostile array, to steal our slaves, burn our towns, desolate our fields, and slaughter our wives and children! How soon would every man

[64] R.S. Holt to Joseph Holt, November 9, 1860, Milledge Luke Bonham Papers, South Caroliniana Library.
[65] Potter, *Impending Crisis*, 454–55.

rally to a common standard of resistance."[66] According to the paper, abolitionists would stop at nothing in their quest to impose their social order on the South—even if it meant marching into the South and doing it themselves. The threat was utterly absurd, not least because one cannot imagine the balding, humorless, 55-year-old abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison leading the charge on horseback. Yet it forced readers to consider: if the North invaded, whose side would they be on? Would they allow the Lincoln administration to trample South Carolina's right to secede? And would they be ready to protect their wives and families from harm?

Most often, the cries about protecting southern families drew on no specific threat at all, instead simply calling on a vague fear of violence and rape. A patriotic ballad circling in the South in the month after the election called on men to save their wives and children from ruin: "Ye sons of the South, awake to glory!. . .Prevent their tears and save their cries!"[67] Another one exhorted men to honor "the noble mothers, at whose fond breast ye hung" and the "wives and daughters, and by the ills they dread" by "driv[ing] deep that good secession steel right through the monster's head."[68] Secessionists warned darkly that they needed protect their families, without explaining exactly from who or what their families required protection. On January 8, less than a month before resigning his position in the Senate, Louisiana Democrat Judah P. Benjamin wrote to a friend that "one million of men" in the South would rise up to "[defend] themselves at home against invasion."[69] Two days later, a South Carolinian wrote that "The community believe that their personal safety, and the security of their families, are seriously threatened."[70]

Whether summoning southerners' old fear of slave insurrection, calling to life a new fear of

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[66] "Temperance and the Times," *The Spirit of the Age*, December 26, 1860, 2.
[67] "Words of a Patriotic Song," *New York Herald*, November 29, 1860, Henry Campbell Davis Scrapbook, 1850-1865, South Caroliniana Library.
[68] "A Secession Ballad," *New York Herald*, November 29, 1860, Henry Campbell Davis Scrapbook, 1850-1865, South Caroliniana Library.
[69] Judah P. Benjamin to Samuel Barlow, January 8, 1861, Samuel Barlow Collection, Huntington Library.
[70] J. M. Claxton to Mr. Jones."

abolitionist invasion, or invoking a vague fear of rape, all of these secessionists accomplished the same objective: they created a false choice between secession and the rape and murder of southern women. If southern men wanted to protect their wives and children from violence, they should support secession. This related to another gender tactic that secessionists deployed to pressure southern men to support secession: questioning their masculinity. During the nominating conventions, southern Democrats discouraged representatives from compromising with northerners by characterizing intransigence as a masculine behavior and compromise as a feminine one. Now secessionists did nearly the same thing, declaring that real men would be willing to fight for the South and for secession. On December 26, Marylander Jefferson Martenet wrote to his mother from San Francisco, promising that, if war arrived, he would fight to defend southerners' right to own property in slaves. "If our Country is invaded we fight. . .there could be patriotism, nothing to strive for if we know we had no security in possession, the South is right and I would not consider a southerner a man who would not fight for her rights," he wrote.[71] Martenet presented a stark choice: be a man and fight for the South, or prove yourself an effete, quaking coward. Southern women encouraged men to think of soldiering as an important way of proving their manliness. Writing to the editor of Jackson's *Weekly Mississippian*, one woman "challenge[d] to chivalric and generous emulation the true knights of Mississippi," promising that "to him that plants his standard in the thickest of the fight be the award of valor."[72]

Other secessionists put the question in terms of submission: did other southerners so love the Union that they were willing to submit to northerners, as women did to men? Secessionists used this language over and over again to explain their position and to cajole others to support the Confederacy. On November 10, one South Carolinian reported to a correspondent in Philadelphia

[71] Jefferson Martenet to Catherine M. Richardson, December 26, 1860.
[72] "A Cheering Voice from Texas," *The Weekly Mississippian*, January 16, 1861, 2.

that there was not a "southerner who does not prefer disunion, before submission to the incoming administration."[73] He exaggerated—there were plenty—but the way he framed a political decision as a question of honor hinted at things to come. Secessionists continued to use this language throughout the winter. William Montague Brown had immigrated to the United States from his Ireland; like many native Irishmen, he supported the Democratic Party. After he moved to Washington, D.C. to write for the pro-administration *Constitution*, he also became a partisan of the South. On November 22 and again on December 10, Brown fumed to New York Democrat Samuel Barlow that he would not submit to northern rule. "I am a citizen of a southern state," he wrote. "I should suffer anything rather than submit to Lincoln's election."[74] The second letter read, "Ought you [give] them. . .the left cheek, because you have endeavored in vain to prevent their being smitten on the right cheek?" Clearly not, according to Brown. "The South will never bend the knee again and beg for her rights."[75] On December 2, as South Carolina began to assemble a secession convention, a Democrat from Virginia's Tidewater wrote to a friend in South Carolina, praising South Carolina for putting Virginians in a position where they would have to stand like men. "If left to herself [Virginia] would do nothing but 'pass resolutions' and let all her courage rage out through them. . . but thanks to South Carolina (God bless her) she (Virginia) will not be permitted to 'brag and back out.'" But the writer worried that "the state is full of submissionists," who might delay Virginia's secession.[76]

On and on secessionists raged against the so-called submissionists.[77] This rhetorical device accomplished two things. For one, it feminized those who wanted to give the Lincoln administration

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[73] J. M. Claxton to Mr. Jones.
[74] William Montague Brown to Samuel Barlow, November 22, 1860, Samuel Barlow Collection, Huntington Library.
[75] William Montague Brown to Samuel Barlow, December 10, 1860, Samuel Barlow Collection, Huntington Library.
[76] Unknown to Unknown, December 2, 1860, John L. Manning Papers, South Carolina Historical Society.
[77] See also Richard Thompson Archer, "The Friends of Southern Rights," n.d., Richard Thompson Archer Family Papers, Box 2E647, Folder 5, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin; Richard Thompson Archer, n.d., Richard Thompson Archer Family Papers, Box 2E647, Folder 5, Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, The University of Texas at Austin.

an opportunity to govern before quitting the Union. These men were conditional unionists: they supported the Union as long as the Union supported slavery. They simply did not yet believe that the Republican government represented an existential threat to slavery or to slave society. By calling these men submissionists, secessionists made their position seem cowardly rather than reasonable. Second, the secessionists justified their own position. For many years, Americans across the political spectrum had dismissed calls for disunion as radical—even treasonous. Among contemporaries, the mere word "disunion" conjured up images of chaos, death, anarchy, and war.[78] And now, the secessionists wanted to make disunion a reality by seceding from the Union. They needed a way to sell this program. Reframing themselves as courageous (rather than treasonous) and those who wished to stay in the Union as submissive (rather than loyal) helped them do just that. They convinced sufficient numbers of men in the Lower South states to secede, and they primed the pump for secession in the Upper South, too.

After Lincoln's election, as states began to secede and senators rushed to find a compromise that could save the Union, tensions mounted in Charleston's harbor. After South Carolina seceded in December, its government demanded that the United States army abandon its facilities in Charleston Harbor, which South Carolina now claimed as its own. The United States refused. But supplies on Fort Sumter were dwindling. In early January, President James Buchanan sent the *Star of the West* to resupply the American troops on the island, but shots fired from the shore forced the ship to retreat without completing its mission. When Lincoln took office on March 4, he learned that only a few weeks' worth of rations remained at Fort Sumter. Competing for public opinion—especially in the slaveholding states that remained in the Union—neither Lincoln's administration

[78] For more on the uses of the word disunion, see Elizabeth R. Varon, *Disunion!: The Coming of the American Civil War, 1789-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

nor the new Confederate government wanted to be perceived as the aggressors. Yet both wanted control of Fort Sumter. Finally, on April 4, Lincoln ordered a relief expedition sent to Sumter. Lincoln notified South Carolina Governor Francis Pickens of the resupply mission. The Confederate government responded by demanding the federal troops evacuate Fort Sumter. U.S. Major Robert Anderson refused. On April 12, at 4:30 in the morning, Confederate troops opened fire on the fort. Anderson surrendered 34 hours later. On April 15, two days after the surrender, Lincoln issued a call for 75,000 volunteers to defend Washington and suppress the rebellion.

Though Confederate troops had fired the first shots, southerners perceived Lincoln's call for troops as an act of aggression. Virginia voted to secede on April 17, Arkansas on May 6, North Carolina on May 20, and Tennessee on June 8. The gender tactics deployed over the previous five years, and especially over the past five months, primed southerners to perceive Lincoln, the Republicans, and the North as aggressors. Those same tactics also primed southerners to see joining the war effort as a way to defend slavery, slave society, and a conservative gender order.[79]

Following Lincoln's call for troops, Democratic newspapers in Tennessee used the defense of wives and children to bolster their demands for secession. The *Nashville Union and American* had spent much of the winter working itself into a lather over the supposed preponderance of free love colonies and abolitionist societies in the North. Now, it seemed that the Union army would march South to impose that radical social order. "Black Republicanism" represented "a crime against the peace and safety, not only of the State, but of the domestic circle," the paper claimed. But still, "some half dozen or so of old grannies, hold the opinion that in the present conflict between the old tyrant of the White House and the South, the true policy of Tennessee is to take no part in the fight."[80] The word granny denoted age, and indeed, young southerners were impatient with their

[79] By so arguing, I am building on William Link's thesis: that men enlisted because of cultural and social concerns that went beyond political and ideological debates. See Link, *Roots of Secession*.
[80] "Discretion, the Better Part of Valor," *Nashville Union and American*, April 19, 1861, 2.

parents' and grandparents' "old fogey" leadership, which they believed had cost the South some of its power and standing within the Union.[81] Moreover, age connoted weakness and even sexual impotence. By belittling men who wished to remain neutral as grannies, the *Union and American* made them seem weak, not cautious. They lacked the virility to protect Tennessee's women from the invading northerners. Readers did not even need to turn the page to find a second article in the paper, using gendered language; this article commented directly on the special session of the legislature called in response to the raising of Union troops. "It behooves Tennessee to place herself on a footing of defense, and to make herself ready to protect her hearthstones and her homes against the invader," the *Union* asserted.[82]

An article in Raleigh's *Semi-Weekly Standard* demonstrates the versatility of this gendered language. Only a few weeks earlier, the *Standard* opposed secession. At that time, the *Standard* published a poem that imagined the hunger, death, and destruction that secession would wreck on North Carolina's women and children.[83] Now, after Lincoln's call for troops, the *Standard* favored secession. On April 20, at a public meeting in Lumberton, a town in southeastern North Carolina, a man stood to give a speech that called for men to be "willing to die, if need be, for the honor and safety of the State." "The State ought to throb as it were with on[e] heart, and that heart should be for the safety of their firesides," the speaker concluded. The *Standard* praised the speech as "very able and patriotic."[84] In a matter of weeks, the *Standard* had changed from opposing secession on the grounds that it would devastate North Carolina's women to supporting secession on the grounds that it would protect them. Historians recognize that Lincoln's call for troops affected a sea change in southern public opinion. This example from the *Standard* reflects that rapid change. It also

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[81] Peter Carmichael traces the influence of this generation of young Virginians in Peter S. Carmichael, *The Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War, and Reunion* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
[82] "Extra Session of the Legislature," *Nashville Union and American*, April 19, 1861, 2.
[83] "The Disunion Banner.---A One-Act Drama," 2.
[84] "Public Meeting in Robeson," *Semi-Weekly Standard*, May 1, 1861, 2.

elucidates how gendered language facilitated that change by encouraging men to see Lincoln's call for troops as a threat to their families—a perception that persisted throughout the war.[85]

Finally, in the weeks after Lincoln's call for troops, secessionists appealed to southern women to support the new nation. In many, they found a receptive audience. Twenty-two-year-old Amanda Virginia Edmonds of Fauquier County in northern Virginia praised her state's vote to secede from the Union. "Virginia today is numbered with her Southern Sister states, and a revolution the intelligence brings in political affairs," she wrote in her diary.[86] A Vicksburg woman mourned the death of the Union, but nonetheless believed the separation necessary. "The Union is but a name, there is no concord, no real heart Union any longer."[87] In South Carolina, Mary Boykin Chesnut, the wife of former South Carolina Senator James Chestnut, Jr., became irritated at her husbands' acquaintances' lack of spirit and enthusiasm for secession. On April 27, she complained to her diary, "Fears for the future and not exultation at our successes pervade [Alexander Stephens'] discourse." Later that same day, she snapped, "It is very tiresome to these people always harping on this: 'The enemy's troops are the finest body of men we ever saw.' 'Why did you not make friends of them,' I feel disposed to say. We would have war, and now we seem to be letting our golden opportunity pass."[88]

Even though they could not vote or speak in public, southern women organized to support

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[85] Aaron Sheehan-Dean's work on Virginian men during the Civil War supports this notion. He writes, "Virginians' tenacity on the battlefield belies the simplistic notion that they fought solely for the defense of a loving family. Their antebellum families were organized within a slave society and the two were inseparable, as Virginians recognized. The interdependence of Virginians' intimate households and the slave society that sustained them compelled Virginians to reject return to the Union. Appreciating this historical reality helps explain why Confederates fought for their independence with such determination." See Aaron Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 194.

[86] Amanda Virginia Edmonds Chappelear, "Amanda Virginia Edmonds Chappelear Diary," n.d., Virginia Historical Society.

[87] Sarah Lois Wadley, diary entry, quoted in Michael E. Woods, *Emotional and Sectional Conflict*, 30.

[88] Mary Boykin Chesnut, *A Diary from Dixie, as Written by Mary Boykin Chesnut, Wife of James Chesnut, Jr., United States Senator From South Carolina, 1859-1861, and Afterward an Aide to Jefferson Davis and a Brigadier-General in the Confederate Army*, ed. Isabella D. Martin and Myrta Lockett Avary (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1905), 49–50, http://docsouth.unc.edu/southlit/chesnut/maryches.html#mches42; For another example of support for the war, see "Unknown to Margaret Stanly Beckwith," n.d., Margaret Stanly Beckwith Papers, Virginia Historical Society.

secession. In December 1860, a group of Georgia women began weaving their own cloth, rather than purchasing northern-made fabric at local shops. A newspaper noted with pride that "at a recent State Fair, not the least attractive feature was the appearance on the grounds of a party of thirty-seven ladies. . .attired in a substantial check homespun dress." By spinning their own fabric, the women took concrete action to support southern independence. They also provided a powerful visual—of "thirty-seven blooming, bright-eyed southern lasses, in clothing of southern manufacture"—for secessionists to deploy in their efforts to consolidate support for secession.[89] In South Carolina, a group of women sewed a Palmetto flag for their local cadets. Careful not to break the proscription against women speaking in public, the group asked the leader of the cadets to present the flag for them. The leader held forth on "the emotions of pleasure and gratification, which spring from the depths of our hearts for this beautiful embodiment of the approbation of the fair ladies." One of the cadets at the gathering also thanked the women—but then moved quickly to remind them of their appropriate place in southern society. "While history records many illustrious examples of woman's capacity to guide and control the destinies of nations. . .the appropriate sphere of woman will be found in the exercise of those gentle and benign affections peculiar to her sex, which constitutes the charm and solace of domestic life."[90] In the South, women could care about politics—but only if they supported the Confederacy. Women could even participate in politics—but only in silence, and only if they did so knowing their participation constituted an anomalous foray outside of their proper sphere.

Southern women also demonstrated their whole-hearted support for secession by attending speeches and rallies in favor of the movement. Newspapers frequently recorded their presence in the galleries at pro-secession speeches, such as the one Democrat Francis Pickens gave when he was

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[89] "The Georgia Girls," *Vicksburg Whig*, December 15, 1860, 2.
[90] "Presentation of a Flag to the Cadets of Anderson Military Academy--Interesting Speeches on the Occasion, &c., &c," *The Intelligencer*, April 11, 1861, 2.

inaugurated as governor of South Carolina in December.[91] In February, when Louisiana Democrat Judah P. Benjamin gave his final speech in the United States Senate before quitting the body to support the South, women packed the galleries to show their support. As one paper described the scene, "Senator Benjamin's speech in the Senate has created a perfect whirlwind of excitement. . . He intimated. . .that this day was the last day of the last session of the Senate of the United States." "At the close of his remarks," the report went on, "the cheering in the galleries was vociferious [*sic*]. The ladies stood upon the seats, and, waving their hankerchiefs [*sic*], shouted as loud as the men."[92] When the people of New Orleans lit up their city with candles, bonfires, and torches to celebrate Louisiana's secession, the local paper reported that "thousands of people, half of them ladies, assembled from all quarters of the city to see the display."[93] When mores prohibited southern women from organizing on their own to support secession, they attended events planned by men to show their support.[94]

Southern volunteers appreciated women's enthusiasm. In June, a group of Confederate volunteers camped at Manassas Junction wrote to the women members of Richmond churches who had sewn uniforms for the company. The volunteers thanked the women for their support, "evinced not only in their smiles and promised prayers, but in acts of substantial kindness."[95] But as they went off to war, southern men wanted more: they wanted women to become flesh-and-blood representatives of the southern womanhood the men so idolized. And if sexual purity differentiated

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[91] A paper reported, "the galleries of the hall of the House of Representatives were densely crowded, many ladies being present. Gov. Pickens read his inaugural, the sentiments of which were decidedly firm for secession. The address was warmly applauded." "South Carolina Convention," *Vicksburg Whig*, December 26, 1860, 2.
[92] "From Washington," *The Evening Bulletin*, January 3, 1861, 3.
[93] "The Illumination Last Night," *The New Orleans Crescent*, February 7, 1861, 1.
[94] Southern women who supported remaining in the Union also participated in out-of-doors politics. See, for example, this example of Tennesseean women presenting a national flag, and then removing and burning a Palmetto one. "A Palmetto Flag Burned," *The Tennessean*, February 1, 1861, 2; Women also attended pro-Union meetings in the South. See "Another Great Union Meeting," *Weekly Raleigh Register*, December 5, 1860, 3.
[95] "Sumter Volunteers of SoCa. to the Ladies of the First and Second Baptist Churches and the Four Methodist Churches of Richmond, Va.," June 9, 1861, John Smythe Richardson Papers, South Caroliniana Library.

idealized southern womanhood from northern womanhood, then southern women must abstain from extra-marital sex while their husbands fought on their behalf. The company of soldiers wrote to the Richmond women, "There is nothing truer than that women are the tutors and guardians of our Race"—that is, of white southerners. "So absorbing is her influence upon Youth that patriotic intelligent woman has never been known as the mother of a bastard boy." In case that did not make the imperative to abstain clear, the men went on, "As [woman] has been elevated or depraved—licentious or pure, so has risen or fallen the morals, the manners, and the character of a people."[96]

The letter served a few purposes. The first was undisguised sexual control. As men left their homes, they wanted to make sure women did not find company elsewhere. To accomplish this, men tied sexual loyalty to husbands to political loyalty to the Confederacy: women could demonstrate the latter by performing the former. Second, the men needed women to act as the men had imagined them: as pure, almost untouchable goddesses who could bear witness to men's greatness in war.[97] The women's witness gave the men's efforts deeper meaning. And finally, the letter defined women's roles in the new nation. In the North, women projected their virtuous nature into the public sphere by supporting reform programs such as woman's rights and abolition. According to southerners, this had created a disordered and chaotic society. So, in the South, women would demonstrate their virtue in the domestic sphere, by raising virtuous children and refraining from extra-marital affairs. This marked a return to the early republican vision of patriotic womanhood.[98]

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[96] "Sumter Volunteers of SoCa. to the Ladies of the First and Second Baptist Churches and the Four Methodist Churches of Richmond, Va."

[97] Stephen Berry argues that having a woman's undying support allowed Southern men to conceptualize their sufferings in pursuit of éclat as sacrifices on the altar of love. Women, in turn, were expected to be mere witnesses to male becoming: essential, but sidelined. But as Berry argues, and as this passage affirms, this idealized vision of southern womanhood put pressure on flesh-and-blood southern women to behave in certain ways. See Stephen W. Berry, *All That Makes a Man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

[98] Which Linda Kerber and Mary Beth Norton have described as "Republican Motherhood." See Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1980).

Southern Democratic women, and now most southern women, had proven themselves willing supporters of slavery and secession. Now secession demanded just as much from them.

Conclusion

The Confederacy's bombardment of Fort Sumter commenced the Civil War. By June 8, 1861, both Abraham Lincoln and Confederate president Jefferson Davis had called for volunteers to fight a war; Lincoln's call for troops prompted four more southern states to secede from the Union.

Stephen Douglas did everything in his power to stanch the tide of secession. On October 8, 1860, while speaking in Iowa, Douglas received news of the Republican victories in the Pennsylvania and Indiana state elections. The results indicated that Lincoln would take those states in the presidential election in a few weeks' time. Douglas determined that he should make a trip to the South—his second of the fall—to discourage southerners from seceding in the case of Lincoln's election. "Mr. Lincoln is the next President," he told his private secretary. "We must try to save the Union. I will go South."[1] Though Constitutional Union Party outlets heralded Douglas' second tour of the South, Democratic newspapers were not impressed.[2] "He professes a desire for the defeat of Lincoln, and yet, in the very hour of danger. . .when the conservative allies are struggling, almost without hope, against the swelling ranks of their fanatical opponents. . .Stephen A. Douglas meanly deserts the field of battle," the *Nashville Union and American* charged.[3] The same paper declared, "by coming to the South. . .[Douglas] proves conclusively that the is either afraid to confront the strong anti-slavery feeling of the Northern States. . .or that his hatred to Breckinridge is so intense that he would prefer anything to his election. The latter would seem to be the fact."[4] Southern Democrats had lost all faith in northern Democrats, believing that Douglas would rather throw the election to Lincoln than support Breckinridge's victory and the vindication of southern slavery.

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[1] Quoted in Robert W. Johannsen, "Stephen A. Douglas and the South," *The Journal of Southern History* 33, no. 1 (February 1967): 46.
[2] For an example of a Constitutional Union paper praising Douglas' trip, see "The Hon. Stephen A. Douglas in Nashville," *The Tennessean*, October 27, 1860, 3.
[3] "Douglas Gives Up His Own State," *Nashville Union and American*, October 21, 1860, 2.
[4] "What Does He in the South, When He Should Serve His (Squatter) Sovereigns in the North?," *Nashville Union and American*, November 1, 1860, 2.

After the election, though, northern Democrats still imagined secession to be the malicious work of a few fire-eaters. For northern Democrats, who loved the Union above else, secession was a tragedy. They had resisted "coercion," as they called war, because it pitted national "brothers" against each other. And by separating soldiers from their families, secession also created social instability—which, contrary to what southerners believed, northern Democrats still abhorred. Northern Democrats wanted to reunite the country. But taking real families as their model, they did not believe one could force a reconciliation with violence. Once they accepted war had arrived, then, northern Democrats fervently hoped Lincoln would prosecute the conflict as leniently as possible.

Even after Fort Sumter, Democrats from states remaining in the Union still spoke affectionately about their southern brethren. Kentuckian Joseph Holt received a letter commending him for his Unionist views. On June 15, a woman who signed her letter only as "a clergyman's wife" first thanked Holt for a recent public statement he had made in support of the Union. "I must return you my thanks for the noble stand you have taken for our country," she wrote. Then, the woman expressed her love for southerners—so very different from the animosity southern women demonstrated toward northern women in their letters. The woman wished "that our southern brethren could read our hearts, and hear the prayers that are offered in their behalf! . . .I love them as fellow countrymen and many of them as brethren in Christ."[5]

Once war arrived, most northern Democrats determined they would fight in order to save the Union—though they rued that Republicans had not offered sufficient concessions to secure a peace deal. But Democrats sincerely worried that nothing good would come of the war. One Boston preacher lamented the turn of events. "It is too late now to prevent war," he acknowledged in a sermon. But he worried about the "demoralization attendant on bringing together large bodies of

[5] Anonymous to Joseph Holt, June 15, 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, Huntington Library; Two months earlier, John Porter Brown, the nephew of a U.S. diplomat in Turkey, also wrote Holt (though he from Constantinople) to thank Holt for his tireless Unionism. See John Porter Brown to Joseph Holt, March 28, 1861, Joseph Holt Papers, Huntington Library.

men and separating them from the gentler influences of home."[6] Northern Democrats believed strong, patriarchal families were the building blocks of a stable society—just as southerners did. Northern Democrats worried that by dividing men from their families, the war had the potential to undermine the stability of northern society. Perhaps they worried that this would leave northern society more susceptible to women's rights, free love, abolitionism, and all the other radical "isms" they so despised.

They would go to war if they had to, but bound by their notions of white male equality and of the affective Union, northern Democrats could not fathom waging a hard war against men whom they saw as their "brethren"—as brothers in the American family. On April 22, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* described the enthusiasm for war that swept the North following Lincoln's call for troops. "Brooklyn is one scene of commotion," the paper reported. "Young men are going off in a continuous stream. . .but no family seems to shrink from offering its dearest member." But as these men marched off to war, the *Eagle* intoned, "The bravery which is a common attribute of both sections"—that is, of both the North and the South—"will, we trust, restrain all barbarities, and keep the contest within the rules of manly and honorable warfare." And if the war were so conducted, "the social and political fabric [will] be reconstruction on more solid foundations than it now stands upon."[7] Democrats would fight to bring their southern brethren back into the Union, not down to their knees.

Most Americans mourned the shambolic state of their beloved Union, even as many southerners believed secession was the only way forward. But Democrats bore special responsibility for the unraveling of the Union during the 1850s in general and the secession winter of 1860 to 1861 in particular. Since the Lecompton crisis, southern Democrats had demanded increasingly vigorous

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[6] "Sketch of a Sermon by Rev. J. F. Clark--The State of the Nation--The War to End Either in Southern Independence or in Emancipation," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 29, 1861, 3.
[7] "The Impending Conflict," *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, April 22, 1861, 2.

protections for slavery—from a guarantee that slavery could extend to the territories, to a stronger fugitive slave law, to a southern nominee for president. In so doing, they put northern Democrats in an impossible position: support southern demands and lose their seats, or deny southern demands and alienate one half of their party—and one section of the country. And when southern Democrats led the charge toward secession and then attacked a federal fort, they both caused and started the Civil War.

But northern Democrats played a critical role in this chain of events: they provided southerners with the powerful gendered language that southerners used to express and intensify their alienation from the Democratic Party and the Union. In 1856, northern Democrats differentiated themselves from their new Republican competitors by condemning the Republicans as radicals on gender and slavery alike, claiming that Republican rule would result in an upside-down world in which black men were equal to white men and wives were equal to their husbands. Southern Democrats did the same, and together, northern and southern Democrats elected James Buchanan president and affirmed popular sovereignty as the law of the land. But then came the perceived betrayal of Lecompton and the shock of John Brown's raid. After both events, southern Democrats co-opted the gendered language from the previous presidential election to question northern Democrats' loyalty. Southern Democrats wondered whether their northern counterparts truly cared about protecting southern slavery, southern patriarchy, and southern women from the onslaught of Republican radicalism; they even worried that northern Democrats subscribed to radical beliefs, themselves. Southern Democrats continued to use that language against Republicans and northern Democrats throughout the election of 1860. And finally, southern Democrats combined a gendered explanation with a political one to both justify their support for secession and to push wavering southern moderates toward war. Against that emotional and political juggernaut, northern Democrats' motions toward compromise rang hollow.

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