

*The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln.* By C. A. Tripp, ed. Lewis Gannett. (New York: Free Press, 2005. xxxviii, 343 pp. \$27.00, ISBN 0-7432-6639-0.)

In this widely publicized book, the late C. A. Tripp argues that Abraham Lincoln was “predominantly homosexual” (p. 20) and that his secret sex life contributed to “the qualities of his genius” (p. 214). Despite a bold and occasionally intriguing thesis, this monograph quickly degenerates into an embarrassing mess. The finished product manipulates its rather flimsy evidence, lacks historical context, contains examples of plagiarism, and makes a number of bizarre assertions. One chapter suggests a parlor game, asking readers to “jot down a list, of say, ten names of individuals who are remembered as geniuses” and then to “subtract the names of those persons known to be either homosexual or Jewish or both—and see how many are left” (pp. 209–10). Another passage compares Mary Todd Lincoln to Adolf Hitler. In short, it is not a work of serious scholarship.

Early drafts of this book bore the title “Lincoln and Sex.” That remains the guiding spirit of the project as it repeatedly attempts to demonstrate that the Great Emancipator had various types of sexual intercourse with men and, conversely, hardly any intercourse of any sort with women. Tripp, a former assistant to the sex researcher Alfred C. Kinsey and a psychologist best known for his work *The Homosexual Matrix* (1975), seems most engaged by the moments when he can educate readers on issues such as the impact of early puberty on sexual orientation or the mechanics of femoral intercourse.

Yet, despite such colorful sidebars, this book has surprisingly little new to offer. There is, as always, the great president’s bed sharing with other men. Tripp adds somewhat to the list of commonly known bedmates, but otherwise his evidence amounts to little more than a handful of fraternal letters, some dubious (and ambiguous) recollections, one wildly overanalyzed poem, and what can only be described as a healthy dose of gaydar. “To anyone alert to homosexual propositions,” Tripp writes confidently about one rather tame encounter, “it is perhaps obvious from the outset that this is

very much what was involved here” (p. 127). This alertness to covert homosexuality becomes a near-constant refrain in the book. Tripp believes that he can explain Lincoln’s “sexual puzzles” (p. 60) by comparing his nineteenth-century interactions with male friends to closeted gay behavior in the modern era.

Tripp may very well be correct in his conclusions—nobody knows what Lincoln did in bed at night with other men—but his idea of how to prove this interpretation is painfully amateurish. There is a rich body of historical literature on male intimacy in the nineteenth century, but none of it seems to have interested the late psychologist (he died in 2003). The author cites his mentor, Kinsey, well over two dozen times but includes absolutely no references to such social historians as Elliott Gorn, Michael Kimmel, E. Anthony Rotundo, or dozens of others who have explored the history of manhood and male friendship.

On the other hand, Tripp does anything but ignore the work of Lincoln scholars. His study borrows far too liberally from others, quoting large chunks of text in often awkward fashion, synthesizing relentlessly (one brief chapter presents twenty-five separate citations to the same secondary source), and even paraphrasing to the point of plagiarism. Consider this passage from Benjamin Thomas’s biography, *Abraham Lincoln* (1952):

Once again the Lincolns had hard times. Twelve-year-old Sarah cooked, swept, and mended, while Thomas, Abraham, and Dennis Hanks hewed away at the forest and tended the meager crops. Their fortunes ebbed. Deprived of the influence of a woman, they sank almost into squalor. (Thomas, p. 11)

Now compare this to Tripp’s version, which presents neither quotation marks nor any citation to Thomas:

Once again hard times were upon the Lincolns. Twelve-year old Sarah cooked, swept, mended and did her best, while Thomas, Abe, and Dennis Hanks, who moved in with the Lincolns when his parents died, hewed away at the forest and tended meager crops. Still, their fortunes ebbed. Deprived of much that Nancy Lin-

coln had once supplied, the household sank into squalor. (Tripp, pp. 24–25)

If Tripp had lived to edit his flawed manuscript, he might have caught such errors. It is a shame that those charged with shepherding this project through to completion did not do so for him. He deserved better. The late author was certainly correct in believing that Lincoln scholars have more to do in explaining the president's physical and emotional intimacy with other men. But he was just as wrong to think that he could find the answers in the sexology research and cultural mores of the last half century.

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*A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861–1868.* By Anne Sarah Rubin. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005. xii, 319 pp. \$34.95, ISBN 0-8078-2928-5.)

Southerners have clung stubbornly to their regional identity, and Anne Sarah Rubin argues in this book that “The identity that they created as Confederates outlasted the Confederacy itself” (p. 3). Considering a nation not as a state, but as “an emotional, ideological, and frequently sentimentalized construct” (p. 2), she examines the development of that construct in the years 1861–1868.

Her study first probes a variety of ways in which wartime southerners tried to express Confederate patriotism—through diaries, pamphlets, fiction, schoolbooks, sermons, views on personal suffering and sacrifice, and attitudes toward Yankees, slaves, and defeat. Then, in treating the postwar years, she argues convincingly that a desire by whites “to determine the post-war South's racial order . . . underlay almost all the struggles over Southern identity” (p. 138). Even as white southerners adapted to defeat, took loyalty oaths, and tried to rebuild the economy, their resentment of black freedom produced an “element of angry self-pity that . . . gave them the justifications they needed to keep themselves from full reabsorption into the Union” (p. 144). Rubin sees greater support for the Confederacy among

white women than does Drew Faust, and she underscores their abiding hostility to the North during Reconstruction, even as southern men relegated them once again “to the domestic and emotional spheres” (p. 209).

Despite its generally broad scope, the first part of this study ignores the extensive disaffection and social decay that spread through the wartime South and instructs the reader to understand “Southerner” as a “white Southerner who supported the Confederacy” (p. 1). This one-sided definition raises the question of what did more to create a lasting Confederate identity—efforts to promote patriotism in a divisive period or the painful (and shared) facts of suffering and defeat? A small error is the identification of Josiah Gorgas as a “member of the Confederate cabinet” (p. 152). More significant is the misleading statement that “The Confederate Congress passed a bill authorizing the recruitment of black soldiers, who would be compensated with some form of emancipation” (p. 110). The fact that the Confederate Congress adamantly refused to include emancipation in its legislation would support Rubin's emphasis on white supremacy as a central concern for southern whites.

At the beginning of her study Rubin makes an important observation.

The idea of a Southern nation that preceded the war was qualitatively different from the one that followed: before the war, Southerners stressed their common origins and understanding of the Constitution, but during and after, they emphasized their Confederate experiences. (p. 3)

This shift should prompt further analysis of what gave rise to the Confederate identity. How important were prewar sectionalism and wartime goals compared to the bitter collective experience of defeats, deaths, and privation? Was Confederate identity forged more during war or retrospectively, as part of whites' resentment of defeat and racial change?

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*Self-Taught: African American Education in Slavery and Freedom.* By Heather Andrea

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