

*Lincoln's Quest for Union: Public and Private Meanings.* By Charles B. Strozier. (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1982. Pp. xxiii, 271. Illustrations, notes, index. \$17.50.)

This book is not, as the publisher insists, a "major new biography" of Lincoln. Charles B. Strozier, who holds academic appointments in both history and psychiatry and serves as editor of *The Psychohistory Review*, rather describes it as a study of Lincoln's personality and character from an "avowedly psychohistorical" approach; that is, one that employs "concepts from psychoanalytic theory" in an attempt to identify the "real" Lincoln (p. xi). Lest that description put off potential readers, it should be said at the outset that the psychoanalysis has been muted and the use of jargon carefully avoided. Indeed, the occasional references to the speculations of Sigmund Freud, Heinz Kohut (to whom the author acknowledges a special debt), and others often seem intrusive and gratuitous. For example, one need not appeal to psychoanalytic theory to be persuaded that humor held a particularly therapeutic value for Lincoln (the point has been made many times), nor is it difficult to see that much of Lincoln's early behavior stemmed from a search for "personal coherence and integrity" without knowing that that search made sense "in terms of psychoanalytic conceptualizations of identity" (p. 35). At other points, the author's theorizing appears less credible, as when he determines that the nine-year-old Lincoln unconsciously explained his mother's death as a punishment for his "earlier forbidden sexual desires" (p. 26). At such times, however, Strozier alerts the reader to his own uncertainty through his use of highly tentative language. The "real" Lincoln, he concedes, still remains obscure.

Strozier offers a series of interpretive chapters focusing largely on the pre-presidential Lincoln: his childhood; his young manhood (including his relations with women); his relationship with his father and with the Founding Fathers (in which the Lyceum Address is subjected once again to scrutiny—why cannot the address ever be seen for what it was, a typical Whig diatribe against the breakdown of order associated with romantic democracy and the dictatorship of King Andrew I?); his continuing search for order through the law; his political rhetoric (emphasizing his congressional term and the House Divided speech); and his qualities of leadership (including his fits of depression and melancholia). Perhaps the finest of

Strozier's chapters is not on Lincoln at all but on Mary Todd Lincoln, a sensitive, moving, compassionate portrait that by itself will amply reward the reader of this book.

There is not much that is new in these chapters, although devotees of psychobiography will probably disagree. The story, however, deserves retelling, and by combining a scrupulous search of the historical materials (the author's balanced and judicious use of William H. Herndon's biography is especially meritorious) with a fluent, engaging style, Strozier has done so with insight and feeling. The unifying theme, as the title suggests, is Lincoln's quest for union, a private quest that ultimately merged with a public one; put another way, Lincoln's "private concerns found reflection in the country as a whole" (p. 233). It is a theme with which few can argue. Nothing has been said of Strozier's Chapter 8, "The Group Self and the Crisis of the 1850s," in which the author attempts to place the American people on the psychoanalyst's couch. In his preface Strozier warns the reader of its tentative and problematic nature and suggests that it might even be skipped. In view of this disclaimer it hardly seems fair to comment upon it.

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*Theodore Dreiser: American Diaries, 1902-1926.* Edited by Thomas P. Riggio, James L. W. West III, and Neda M. Westlake. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1982. Pp. xi, 471. Illustrations, notes, appendix, index. \$28.50.)

Reading Dreiser's *American Diaries* is largely an exercise in frustration for the reader who expects thoughtful, incisive, extensive comments on people, times, and the author's own writings. The biographical scholar, however, who needs to know the daily details of Dreiser's life, will get some satisfaction from the thousands of two-word or one-line references to people met, places traveled to, restaurants visited, women slept with, and work completed or in progress. The mass of atomistic facts and quotidian detail, impressive though it is, rarely blossoms into insightful, articulate response that would reveal Dreiser's personality.

Two examples will suffice to define the problem. Since these diaries cover the years in which Dreiser wrote *An American Tragedy*, one would expect interesting revelations about the process of composition. A check of every index reference to