

never examines in earnest the rise of consumerism or the implications of increasing materialism on home life, class structure, or cultural style. Finally, the writing style and the analysis are so balanced, so tempered, so *academic*, that the resulting history veers toward the predictable and lifeless. Undergraduates reading this book will get a detailed story and will be introduced to some of the analytical disagreements among professional historians, but they will not be challenged or inspired to become their own historians.

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Out of the Wilderness: The Life of Abraham Lincoln. By William Hanchett. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994. Pp. xi, 151. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. Cloth-bound, \$21.50; paperbound, \$7.95.)

Unfortunately, William Hanchett's short biography of Abraham Lincoln does not measure up to *The Lincoln Murder Conspiracies* (1983), his justly acclaimed study of the Lincoln assassination. That monograph, also published by the University of Illinois Press, met a demonstrable need in Lincoln scholarship by patiently and meticulously demolishing the various conspiracy myths that had developed around the first presidential assassination in American history. This attempt to provide a "new introductory biography" (p. x) is uninspired and poorly organized.

Hanchett opens the story with President-elect Lincoln's departure from his adopted hometown of Springfield, Illinois, in 1861, a potentially powerful dramatic moment that he describes with little effect. The narrative then touches upon most of the well-known incidents of Lincoln's early life with almost no elucidation. Hanchett divides the Civil War period into overlapping thematic segments, focusing upon the war, emancipation, Lincoln's family, and political opposition to Lincoln in the North. The biographer then discusses the aftermath of the assassination and assesses the nature of Lincoln's success as a war leader.

Hanchett's narrative judgement is curious at best. This may be the first published biography of Lincoln that fails to discuss, or even mention, the Gettysburg Address. Hanchett whips through the important period 1854–1860 in a mere six pages. He disposes with the Lincoln-Douglas debates in two sentences and with Lincoln's 1860 presidential nomination in three paragraphs. His chronology of the Civil War is disjointed and difficult to follow, with platitudes often substituting for analysis. "Of course [Lincoln] had

no absolute control over events," writes Hanchett, "no one ever has had, and no one ever will" (p. 129).

In Hanchett's defense, many others, equally accomplished as scholars, have been frustrated by the demands of Lincoln biography. Honest Abe is a difficult subject, at once familiar and distant. His biographers face a veritable mountain of secondary sources yet must overcome a relative dearth of primary material. There is no doubt, however, that Hanchett has researched this biography well, committing no obvious errors of fact. This itself is an accomplishment.

Lincoln's exalted role in the national memory creates unique pressures on anyone who aspires to understand and explain his behavior. To his credit, Hanchett has offered already at least one significant contribution to the Lincoln field.

Perhaps Hanchett's desire for brevity is simply too burdensome for a subject as important as Lincoln. The reader is repeatedly frustrated by a confusing absence of details and explanations. If such an introductory biography is to succeed, however, it must tell the story with more verve and coherence. *Out of the Wilderness* has also been produced as a video documentary by Hanchett and Gary L. Beebe. It is possible that what fails to impress in print is more evocative on film. Still, the problems of the printed biography are severe enough to make the book sadly irrelevant.

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The Abolitionists and the South, 1831-1861. By Stanley Harrold. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1995. Pp. x, 245. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95.)

In *The Abolitionists and the South*, Stanley Harrold examines the breadth of abolitionist activity in the Upper South during the antebellum period. The purpose of this study is to correct longstanding assumptions that the abolitionist movement was circumscribed within northern geographic boundaries. Harrold successfully demonstrates that antislavery activism flourished in the border states, however much that tradition was mediated by northern capitalist and religious motivations.

He begins by examining the images of white and black activists that existed in the minds of both northerners and southerners and then moves on to discussions of well-known, mostly male antislavery activists. These activists participated in the movement in a number of ways: creating a cadre of abolitionist missionaries, establishing antislavery colonies in the Upper South, and attempting to forge political alliances in the South with northern-based Republican antislavery parties.