

ABRAHAM LINCOLN AND WOMEN: A PSYCHOHISTORICAL ANALYSIS

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ABSTRACT

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Perhaps no other historical figure has amassed more attention than Abraham Lincoln. His enormous accomplishments, intermittent failures and sudden death have placed him at the forefront of American folklore and myth for 150 years. His popularity, coupled with the enormous amount of scholarly attention has made Lincoln the most protean figure in American history. But beyond Lincoln's larger than life persona lived a flesh and blood human with faults and imperfections. These flaws are, perhaps, most evident in Lincoln's dealings with women.

Presently, there are three books that evaluate Mr. Lincoln's relationship with women, but only one, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln* (2005) by Clarence Author Tripp, attempts to examine his disinterest towards the opposite sex by claiming that the sixteenth president was gay. Another book—Donald Winkler's *The Women in the Life of the Sixteenth President* (2004)—examines Lincoln's relationship with women by focusing on Ann Rutledge, Lincoln's first love interest. The last book, *The Women Lincoln Loved* (1927) by William E. Barton, is more a biography of Lincoln's women than a scholarly synthesis. For many scholars, Tripp's book is too farfetched, Winkler's is overly subjective because it was written by a distant cousin of Ann Rutledge, and Barton's book is outdated, using research methods that are inadequate for the twenty-first century. Overall, none of these studies evaluates Mr. Lincoln's deficiencies with women by analyzing the social, political and religious climate of his time.

Using a psychohistorical perspective, this dissertation will examine the underlying social and cultural factors that shaped Lincoln's character, especially regarding women. It contends that Lincoln's reaction to women was a result of his childhood experiences, his profound preoccupation with his career, his intent focus on reading books, his lack of courting practice, his intellectual superiority, his stern observance of the law, his biological and physical makeup, the influence of the religious and social standards of the times, and many other pertinent issues. This psychohistorical approach seeks to show a connection between the social and political spirit of the time and Mr. Lincoln's life within these constraints, thereby offering a revisionist analysis of one of history's most puzzling and enigmatic historical figures. While not claiming that Mr. Lincoln's actions were inevitably determined, this study presents evidence that social conventions strongly influenced his reactions regarding women.

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Introduction

The strongest oak of the forest is not the one that is protected from the storm and hidden from the sun. It's the one that stands in the open where it is compelled to struggle for its existence against the winds and rains and the scorching sun.¹

~Napoleon Hill~

To a large degree, the above quotation epitomizes Abraham Lincoln's journey from a lowly farm boy to an imperturbable and incisive president. Lincoln overcame obstacles through his own diligence and wit and among Lincoln's many qualities were his indefatigable spirit, civic virtue and rationalism. He achieved, in several years, what most men cannot achieve in a lifetime. Lincoln clearly possessed numerous admirable traits—each representing a position of his true self—but it seems to me that it was his unrelenting desire to succeed that is most admirable.

Every time Lincoln's name is encountered in the pages of history, Horatio Alger's "rags to riches" narrative comes to mind. According to Alger, diligence and determination can bring a person good fortune and prestige in America.² Though the theory's credibility has waned over the years, in the nineteenth century, it was alive and well.³ Lincoln began his career as a humble postmaster; yet, thanks to his sheer determination and hard work, he is now considered among the most important figures of this nation. At the apex of his career, Lincoln's life experiences

¹ "The Strongest Oak in the Forest by Napoleon Hill," Wisdom Commons, accessed on October 04, 2014, <http://www.wisdomcommons.org/wisbits/4543-the-strongest-oak-in-the-forest>

² Rob Kasber, "Horatio Algers Jr.," *The Horatio Algers Society*, November 01, 2011, accessed Nov 17, 2016, http://horatioalgersociety.net/131_algerbykasper.html

³ Ibid.

made him both consummate and conversant in politics and law. Posthumously, he represents the iconic image of equality, honesty, integrity and hope.⁴ This is not bad for a self-made man.

To many Americans, Lincoln represents the flickering light that refuses to go out—the symbol of irrepressible hope in time of adversity. His image is embedded in the history of this country as a testament to his accomplishments in a time when America was divided and on the verge of secession. Through his wit, firm policies, equanimity and benevolence, he was able to help a worn torn country back to health. In a sense, Lincoln was the “paradigm shift” of his time, becoming president in a tumultuous and unstable period in American history. Yet with this tumultuous backdrop, he was able to succeed against formidable odds and change America forever.

Like Lincoln, America is buoyant. Throughout its history, the country has received massive blows, but has not foundered in distress. To many Americans, Lincoln represents an undying force that keeps on treading in dangerous waters regardless of how dire situations can become. His iconic images are everywhere, occupying a niche in the hearts, minds and memories of those who admire him. In fact, as the Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, observed, “of all the great national heroes and statesmen of history, Lincoln is the only real giant.”⁵

To me, Lincoln is the prototype that we should all strive to become. He was a self-made man who achieved grandeur by merit and perseverance. His journey to the top was serpentine, but his dream to achieve greatness propelled him to great heights. Certainly, this alone is an admirable feat. But he was more transcendent than this. He was a man of the people with a

⁴ “Lincoln National Memorial,” *The National Park Service*, accessed November 17, 2016, https://www.nps.gov/nr/travel/cultural_diversity/Lincoln_Memorial_National_Memorial.html. The Lincoln Memorial serves as a symbol for honesty, integrity and humanity. It is intended to honor Lincoln’s legacy and commitment to equality.

⁵ Harold Holzer, *The Lincoln Anthology* (New York: Library of America, 2009), 386.

profound sense of civic duty and virtue. He helped flatten the playing field so that each person could strive on his or her own merit and become a productive citizen in a competitive world. Though far from perfect, Lincoln lived his life as he saw it, and, in doing so, became an American icon. In the end, though many may attempt to emulate his life, the single thread that made Lincoln unique can never be found. He took that ever-elusive glowing quality with him to the grave, it seems, the day he died.

Over the years, books on Lincoln have been numerous, as countless scholars have attempted to define a man whose life was as complex as any human who ever lived. Yet scholars and others have continued to write about him because of his profound mind and inimitable disposition. Historians, psychologists, authors, politicians, sociologists and philosophers alike have tried to make sense of Lincoln's reasoning, only to realize that their investigations led to further mysteries and questions.⁶ Taking a psychohistorical approach, this study seeks an understanding of Lincoln's relationship with women and his inability to court them properly. The data collected in the study will be used to explain Lincoln's efficiency in some areas and profound deficiency in others—especially in his dealings with women. The findings will attempt to prove that Lincoln's dealings with women were influenced by his external and internal environments.

⁶ Kate Haddock, *Mystery Files: Abraham Lincoln*, Video Format, Directed/Written by Kate Haddock (2010, Smithsonian Channel, 2011), DVD. This video portrays historian Harold Holzer, James MacPherson, Michael Burlingame, and Norbert Hirschhorn talking about Lincoln and the many unexplained mysteries associated with him.

Chapter 1: Psychohistory and Lincoln

More words have been written about Abraham Lincoln than any historical personage except Jesus Christ. There are scores of biographers of every size, shape, and description, as well as books on Lincoln's views on everything from cigarette smoking to Judaism. Is it truly possible to say something new about Lincoln?⁷

Thus begins an article entitled, "The Education of Abraham Lincoln," written by *New York Times* journalist and the DeWitt Clinton Professor of American History at Columbia University, Eric Foner. The central question posed in the article is whether any newly compiled research could be used to describe this enigmatic historical figure. Lincoln was, and continues to be, a fascinating spirit with a seemingly unflappable disposition. To modern readers, Lincoln represents the apotheosis of a great man, an uncanny figure that is as much misconceived as he is understood. For scholars, this image is one of the main reasons why they continue to examine the mind of a man long gone. All we have is a vestige of his former self to rely on—that is, his many speeches, personal letters and secondary accounts. But even with such resources, the study of Lincoln continues to be at the forefront of scholarship. Thus, the prominent Lincoln scholar, Michael Burlingame, felt that historian Fawn McKay Brodie was mistaken when she said, "thanks to the industry of an unending parade of Lincoln scholars, there are almost no important

⁷ Eric Foner, "The Education of Abraham Lincoln," *New York Times*, February 10, 2002, accessed October 04, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2002/02/10/books/review/10FONER.html>. In this article, Foner reviews William L. Miller's book, *Lincoln's Virtues*. He begins by saying that there is an immeasurable amount of research on Lincoln stemming from his honesty to his sexuality and every subject in between. He asserts that when people believe that there is nothing more to write about Lincoln, a new book emerges and makes headlines. But Foner's belief is not a new phenomenon. Historian Honore Willsie Morrow shares the same sentiments and believes that research on Lincoln will continue to persist. In his book, *Mary Todd Lincoln*, Morrow states the following: "writing about Lincoln or about any of his family has become one of the most difficult tasks in the world of letters. In the first place it seems practicably impossible to write anything new about Lincoln himself. There is in existence a mass of Lincolnia; books, pamphlets, articles, clippings, excerpts, mementos, that mounts into thousands and tens of thousands of items." Honore W. Monroe, *Mary Todd Lincoln*. (New York: William Morrow Company, 1928), 3.

mysteries left.”⁸ Burlingame opposes Brodie’s statement and believes wholeheartedly that Lincoln’s inner life is still a predominantly uncharted territory.

Studying Lincoln’s inner life through the disciplines of psychology and history can lead to new information and insights into Lincoln the person. Furthermore, approaching him through the prism of psychology and history can produce a greater understanding of Lincoln as president. Therefore, to revisit Eric Foner’s question, the answer is most definitely “yes.”

Throughout history, there have always been stories of men who have defied the odds. When obstacles seem insurmountable these men were able to turn the wheel gradually the other way and muster the courage to remain calm in chaotic situations. Among these men of distinction is Abraham Lincoln. Undoubtedly, Lincoln is one of the most talked about and researched figures in American history. Presently, there are about 16,000 books written about this “Great Emancipator,” each with its own historical methodology, scholarly approach and unique twist.⁹ As historian William Lee Miller most eloquently puts it, “there are treatments of Lincoln from head, literally, to toe—or, anyway, to foot.”¹⁰ A recent survey conducted by the *Washington Post* ranked Lincoln as the most popular and effective president in United States.¹¹

⁸ Michael Burlingame, *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994), xi.

⁹ Stefanie Cohen, “Fourscore and 16,000,” *The Wall Street Journal*, October 12, 2012, accessed November 17, 2016 at <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10000872396390444024204578044403434070838>

¹⁰ William L. Miller, *Lincoln’s Virtues* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002), 19. Miller explains how Abraham Lincoln became such an intriguing and interesting figure in history. Soon after his death, people began the process of preserving his memory. Key among these figures was his law partner William H. Herndon, who wrote an elaborate and fairly comprehensive biography of Lincoln.

¹¹ Brandon Rottinghaus and Justin Vaughn, “Obama No. 18 in New Ranking for Presidents,” *Washington Post*, February 16, 2015. The *Post* surveyed 162 members of the American Political Science Association and asked them to rate the U.S. presidents for overall performance.

Yet with all this fame and attention, he remains shrouded in myth and mystery. In fact,

Frederick Trevor Hill wrote the following about Lincoln in a 1909 article of the *New York Times*:

Myth, eulogy, tradition, and romance, are busy with the memory of Lincoln, weaving the mantle of greatness about him with such fashion that all the rugged outlined of his very human personality may soon be shrouded from our view and the man himself translated to the realm of heroes whose development is a mystery and whose achievements are the despair of all ordinary mortals.¹²

Clearly, the popular memory of Lincoln is laden with innuendos that must be dispelled and re-examined for a more accurate depiction of the sentient human being as opposed to the more classical unbreakable “hero.” By dispelling the lies and hyperbole, a flesh-and-blood man can be presented with all his greatness, fears and foibles. In approaching the subject of Lincoln, one must always keep in mind the words of author William Weir: “the subject of history, at times, can be a tissue of lies, boasts, rumors, misperceptions, omissions, and mysteries that coalesced into myths, concocted, used, and believed by many, but never actually controlled by anyone.”¹³

This study will shed light on Lincoln’s life in an effort to extract and counter the argument of his alleged gynophobia and homosexuality.¹⁴ It will seek to prove that Lincoln’s

Abraham Lincoln ranked number one, followed by Washington and F. Roosevelt. The findings give credence of Lincoln’s popularity and acceptance even by today’s standards.

¹² Frederick Trevor Hill, “Lincoln’s Legacy to Americans: The Surroundings of Lincoln’s Birth and Childhood,” *New York Times*, February 1, 1909, accessed on October 08, 2014, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=FB0D17FB3B5512738DDDA80894DA405B898CF1D3>. The article, written nearly forty-four years after Lincoln’s death, is crucial. The article gives proof that people began to inject myth into the life of Abraham Lincoln soon after his death. If Lincoln’s life was marred by these innuendos and hyperboles from the onset, imagine how much more tarnished his life is in the present day.

¹³William Weir, *History’s Greatest Lies* (New York: Fair End Press, 2009), 138.

¹⁴“Gynophobia and Symptoms,” *All About Counseling*, accessed on October 18, 2014, <http://www.allaboutcounseling.com/library/gynophobia/>. Gynophobia is a psychological fear of women that can be caused by many factors. Gynophobic experiences run the gamut from simple, moderate, to severe. In other words, gynophobia can emerge in simply a lack of interaction with

lack of experience with the opposite sex was not simply a result of an inherent lack of interest in women, as Clarence A. Tripp suggests, or an intractable desire to be with his one true love, as Donald Winkler contends, but rather was a culmination of intrinsic and extrinsic social factors that crippled the way he interacted with women. More directly, this study will prove that Lincoln's set-backs with women were a direct result of the *zeitgeist* of his era and his own self-perception. By examining Lincoln's approach to women with a psychohistory mindset, one may be able to piece together an often-overlooked aspect of American history. First, however, a brief overview of the scholarship pertaining to Lincoln must be presented.

Brief Overview of the Scholarship

Many scholarly sources, both primary and secondary, shed light on Lincoln's relationships with women. Some sources are more valuable than others, but each provides insight into Lincoln's fascinating life. Presently, scholarly analyses of Lincoln's relationships with women run the gamut from describing a loving husband, caring companion and intimate friend, to a perspective that sees him as an insensitive and unrefined misogynist. Therefore, in an effort to suitably define and clarify Lincoln's responses to women, a thorough investigation of Lincoln's life must be undertaken. By reviewing the works of Lincoln scholars such as Michael

the opposite sex or it can be manifested by a severe negative experience with the opposite sex. Usually, however, most cases result from men who did not regularly interact with women in their early years. Inevitably these feelings result in shyness, erratic or abusive behavior, and ambivalence or indifference to the needs of women. Though Lincoln's behavior patterns are indicative of someone suffering from gynophobia, it is not believed that he was exclusively gynophobic. There is evidence that he had some fear, as depicted in some of his writings, but not enough to completely stay away from women. There is proof that he interacted and fell in love with a few women during his lifetime. Eventually his desires to acquire a wife were fruitful when he married Marry Todd. In the end, it seems that he was more inclined to suffer from caligynophobia—that is, a fear of young and beautiful women. As the historian, David Herbert Donald mentions, “[on many occasions] Lincoln froze in the presence of eligible young women.” Herbert D. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster Publication, 1996), 56.

Burlingame, Harold Holzer, David Herbert Donald, William Lee Miller, Eric Foner, C.A. Tripp, Joshua Wolf Shenk, Jean H. Baker, and others, an accurate picture of Lincoln's intimate world will be unveiled. Furthermore, by analyzing and interpreting journals, letters, diary entries, and personal accounts of Lincoln's contemporaries, a more complete view of Lincoln's life is possible. People such as William Herndon, Joshua Speed, Sarah Bush Lincoln, Sarah Rickard, Mary Owens, Mary Todd Lincoln, and many others will be discussed in this study as a way of looking into Lincoln's life from the point of view of those who knew him best. Overall, the purpose of analyzing these primary sources is to situate Mr. Lincoln within the social, political, and religious framework of his time, as well as to make judgments about his era based on eyewitness commentary of the period.

While some scholars, such as Turner, Baker, and Epstein, contend that Lincoln's marriage to Mary Todd was a normal one, others, such as Tripp and Burlingame, believed that the marriage was filled with vitriol and contempt.¹⁵ Herndon suggests that Lincoln married his wife simply out of obligation, without the emotion of love and affection.¹⁶ Still others, like Tripp, believe that he was never fond of women and, rather, had a hidden interest in men that became apparent in his adult years.¹⁷ Tripp, in particular, also examines Lincoln's odd relationship with certain men, contending that latent and suppressed homoerotic sentiments shaped his numerous interactions with them.¹⁸

¹⁵ C.A. Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 225-227.

¹⁶ Douglas L. Wilson, "William H. Herndon and Mary Todd Lincoln," *Journal of The Abraham Lincoln Association*, Summer 2001, accessed November 17, 2016 at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0022.203/--william-h-herndon-and-mary-todd-lincoln?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

¹⁷ Tripp., 10.

¹⁸ Ibid.,15.

Overall, the scholarly sources attempt to explain Lincoln's intimate world through various lenses and, to varying degrees, are successful in presenting snapshots of Lincoln's relationships with women. However, none of the research has tried to correlate Lincoln's relationship with women by focusing on his social environment. By taking this approach, this dissertation will attempt to illuminate Lincoln's relationship with women and his inability to court them properly.

Traditional Historians vs. Psychohistorians

The study of history has evolved from a singular, regimented narrative to a discipline of multiple ideas, perspectives and interpretations. In the past, historians have followed the same *ad nauseam* routine of presenting history as the story of certain elite men, ignoring the deeds and accomplishments of women and minorities.¹⁹ These historians of the past felt constrained to follow an inflexible template on how history should be reported. As a result, the history that was presented was not as accurate as many believed it to be. Presently, however, the discipline of history is broadening and incorporating all sorts of new methodological approaches to historical inquiry. Among these newer methodologies is psychohistory, which differs from the way traditional historians investigate their subjects.

Traditional historians take an empirical approach to historical research. Supporters of this methodology believe that only verifiable historical data should be used in historical inquiry, and that the interpretation of these sources should be unbiased. For example, in *England Under the Tudors*, Geoffrey R. Elton follows a very strict historical practice by focusing exclusively on

¹⁹ Anna Green and Kathleen Troup, *The Houses of History* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 253-285.

archival data.²⁰ Elton does not deviate from what the archival sources says about England in the times of the Tudors. In his work, there are minimum conjectures and more reliance on archival facts.

Practitioners of psychohistory, on the other hand, believe in all the core tenets of the traditional historian with a bit more conjectures. For example, in *The Legend of Hitler's Childhood*, Erik H. Erikson acquired much archival data about Adolph Hitler, as both a child and adult, and tries to create a historical view of his childhood experiences.²¹ The psycho-historian believes that well researched and examined conjectures are necessary to give answers to some of history's quandaries. Some puzzles include why Hitler and Stalin were set on ethnic cleansing, or what motivated Lizzie Borden to kill her parents in 1892. By analyzing the social forces influencing an individual, psycho-historians seek to posthumously interpret a man's mode of thinking. In all, psychohistory provides the historian with a method of investigation that is slightly different from that of traditional historians, but that employs the same modes of data collection and interpretation. By acquiring data, the psycho-historian is able to examine the life of a person and, through sound conjectures, determine that person's reasoning and mode of thinking.²² Historian David Beisel describes the process best when he said the following:

Psychohistory is the systematic application of the findings and methods of the science of psychology to help explain individual behavior, past and present within the context of history. Since we deal not just with the distant, but also the recent past (what historians call contemporary history), we look at present politics as well and draw upon the findings of political psychology... [A question often asked is] what psychology do we use to explain our discipline? [We use] any of the several schools from psychoanalysis to behavioral psychology to Gestalt, whatever improves our understandings of individuals.

²⁰ Ibid., 14.

²¹ Green and Troup, *The Houses of History*, 71.

²² David Beisel, "Teaching Psychohistory," *The Journal of Psychohistory*, January 1998, accessed November 17, 2016 at <http://psychohistory.com/articles/teaching-psychohistory/>

This is an investigative enterprise, not a religious cult; we should always explore the discipline with open minds, always keeping in mind that historians work from documentary evidence to conclusions, never the other way around.²³

In this study, data will be collected and examined to situate Lincoln within his time frame. The information will be used to construct a debatable but sound argument as to why Lincoln was deficient with the opposite sex. The overall objectives of the research are to provide new interpretations of Lincoln's relationships with women and to attempt to discover answers on a widely contested subject. The findings should be more cohesive and explanatory than the present interpretation of Lincoln and women.

Since this study utilizes psychohistory for the bases of its arguments, it is necessary to further define the concept of psychohistory.

Defining Psychohistory

In the field of historical inquiry and research, various methodologies have been used to explain historical realities. While some employ the more popular annals school approach, which focuses exclusively on quantitative facts, others attempt to define historical data by other means.²⁴ Amongst these historical schools is psychohistory—that is, a school of historical theory that focuses on both psychology and history to define both historical figures and the times in which they lived.

Sigmund Freud developed psychohistory in the early part of the twentieth century and the premise gained popularity in the 1960s.²⁵ By definition, psychohistory refers to the use of

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Green and Troup, *The Houses of History*, 87.

²⁵ Ibid., 59. One of the most controversial areas of modern historiography is psychohistory. While most historians employ more conventional approaches to their inquiries, the psychohistorian analyzes historical data through the lens of a psychologist. Sigmund Freud, who

psychoanalytical investigation to understand historical personalities.²⁶ In other words, psychohistory combines the insight of psychology with the discipline of history to understand the actions and behavior of prominent historical figures.²⁷ More directly, psychohistory is the marriage between history and psychology. Overall, the objective of psycho-historians is to evaluate the lives of their subjects and attempt to highlight any deficiencies, or peculiar habits, associated with his or her upbringing.²⁸ Together, these disciplines produce sound interpretations of historical realities by providing insight into some of history's most elusive topics.²⁹

believed that adult neurosis springs from childhood trauma, developed the theory. Though Freud's idea was not taken seriously at first, the notion became more tolerable as scholars attempted to prove its validity. Among those who spurred and popularized the movement was historian William Langer.

Langer, to give merit to the newly established discipline, skillfully established the importance of psycho-history in a public lecture to the American Historical Association. In his 1958 lecture, Langer contended that one can fully understand history by analyzing data through psychiatric interpretations. In all, the theory carries forward Locke's view on *Tabula Rasa* (Clean Slate). Psychohistory rests on two main principles: first, the idea that experiences of infancy and childhood have primacy in determining the shape of adult behavior, and secondly, that there are stages of development through which all individuals pass in their very long period of maturation. Psycho-historians believe that to understand historical realities, one must first examine the zeitgeist to which that individual belongs. By understanding their environment, one will be able to understand the individual and their actions.

²⁶ Green and Troup, *The Houses of History*, 59.

²⁷ "Definition of Psychohistory," *The Institute For Psychohistory*, accessed October 27, 2014, at www.htmlcorner.com/psychohistory.com

²⁸ Green and Troup, *The Houses of History*, 60.

²⁹ Ibid., 67. Erik Erikson saw psychological and historical methods as the key to understanding the history of the world. According to Erikson, the history of humanity is a gigantic metabolism of individual life cycles. Therefore, to understand the core of historical information, we must first understand the individuals who created it. The only way to understand the individual and the world, he argued, is through the amalgamation of history and psychology.

Supporters of psychohistory believe that the best way to approach history is to look at the way society molds individuals and how, in turn, those individuals react to their society.³⁰ These historians argue that the experiences of childhood have prime importance in determining the course of adult behavior.³¹ Similarly, as adults, these individuals mature and gain experiences as they live their lives. In other words, psychological development continues beyond childhood, influencing every aspect of a person's life.³²

Psychohistorians carry forward the philosophy of John Locke, who believed that people are influenced and socialized by their environment. In his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke contended *that* all human knowledge is derived primarily from sensory experiences.³³ According to Locke, all people are born with a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) and gather experiences solely through the five senses.³⁴ Humans are completely free of ideas and judgments about the world at birth, but, with the influence of family, friends, and society, the human mind is molded to create a complete and conscious awareness of our human selves.

The philosophers George Berkeley and David Hume supported Locke's theory, though with slight nuances.³⁵ Like Locke, these two philosophers contended that in order to understand

³⁰ Ibid., 60-61.

³¹ Ibid., 60.

³² Ibid., 60-61.

³³ John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, (New York: Prometheus Books, 1995), Book I, Chapters I-III.

³⁴ Tom Jackson, *Philosophy: An Illustrated History of Thought* (New York: Shelter Harbor Press, 2015), 45.

³⁵ "Empiricism," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed October 27, 2014, at <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/186146>. Empiricism refers to a theory which states that human experiences are acquired through our senses rather than innate perceptions. All the

philosophy, one must first understand the development of the human mind, for it is here that humans develop into the entities they are to become.³⁶ Sensory experiences, not logic, are the touchstones of a philosopher's trade, because without understanding the rudiments and subsequent development of the human mind, a person's logic can only be superficially understood.³⁷ In the end, all three philosophers concluded that the mind is the decrypting tool that unleashes the mystery to human reasoning.

Another promoter of social influences is the sociologist Herbert Spencer. In his book, *The Study of Sociology* (1896), Spencer proclaims that social forces are crucial in developing the human-self.³⁸ He explains that people are molded by their social environment, and it is through this force that they become great. According to Spencer, people "must admit that the genesis of a great man depends on the long series of complex influences which has produced the race in which he appears and the social state into which that race has slowly grown. Before he can

mentioned philosophers agree in this belief that the senses are pivotal in developing human character. The slight differences are as follows. Locke's view of sensory experiences is solely based on science. Locke believes that our senses of the world form ideas and that these ideas make us understand the world. Berkeley's view on sensory experiences is based on scientific knowledge with hints of Godly intervention and influence. Berkeley believes that sensory experiences make us understand the world, but things that we do not understand are facilitated by God's intervention and interpretation. Finally, Hume's view on sensory experiences is based on scientific knowledge, with the belief that the daily structure of the world (which he call "matters of facts") such as night and day and sun and moon do not need to be understood because they are not merely ideas, they are facts. In other words, Hume believes that the fact that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west are things that we do not need to know or learn about because we experience them every day and they are part of a worldly structure.

³⁶ "George Berkeley," Encyclopedia Britannica, accessed November 17, 2016, at <https://www.britannica.com/biography/George-Berkeley>

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ "Herbert Spencer," *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy: A Peer Review Academic Resource*, accessed November 17, 2016 at <http://www.iep.utm.edu/spencer/>

remake his society, his society must make him.”³⁹ In other words, before a person can become great, he or she needs to absorb the lessons of society. Only through social experiences can the human-self properly evolve. As will be demonstrated in this research, Lincoln was a product of a harsh social environment that catapulted his interest in politics and fueled his passion to be great. Regrettably, it was this preoccupation with his career that injured his confidence with women.

Process and Purpose of the Research

In an attempt to provide evidence that Lincoln’s misunderstanding of women was caused by a lack of interactions with the opposite sex, we must focus on his childhood. Evidence will be gathered and analyzed to demonstrate that Lincoln was not exclusively gynophobic; rather, he was not well-versed in the courting practices of the times. As will be shown in the research, the rigors of life impeded Lincoln from pursuing many socially valued customs, and proper courting was one of them. By analyzing his relationships with women, a clearer picture of Lincoln’s deficiencies with the opposite sex will be unfolded. The research will reveal, perhaps for the first time, the idea that Lincoln’s social factors were the agents that were instrumental in the way he perceived and dealt with women.

With the exception of his untidy and disproportionate physical appearances—which negatively affected the way he perceived himself—Lincoln’s view of life, and his actions thereof, were influenced by his social environment. Some of the issues to be discussed in the study are as follows: Was Lincoln’s restriction from reading books as a child one that affected

³⁹ Herbert Spencer, *The Study of Sociology* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1896), 36.

his natural growth?⁴⁰ Arguably, Lincoln spent numerous hours daily catching up on books he always wanted to read, and thus disregarded other activities, such as playing or flirting with girls. The young man ruminated constantly on his father's stern declaration that books were useless and that physical labor was necessary for the survival of the family, paradoxically promoting in him a commitment to learn and to succeed at all costs.

While it is admirable to be steadfast in one's beliefs and to strive for accomplishments, Lincoln's profound preoccupation with his career affected the way he interacted with women. Lincoln's childhood home and its isolation in the woods was also a factor that affected his approach to women. His physical makeup was also a significant issue that crippled his confidence and limited his romantic interactions with women. In addition, his strong practice of the law delayed his marriage almost to the brink of never finding a suitable partner. But more than all of this, it was Lincoln's social and religious setting that most influenced the way he perceived women. Ironically, these shortcomings, and Lincoln's resulting decision to focus more intently on certain subjects more than others, made him the great man he eventually succeeded in becoming.

Critique and Support of Psychohistory

Throughout the years, psychohistory has been critiqued by many scholars. Many historians believe that the avant-garde nature of psychohistory makes the discipline weak and unsustainable. Psychohistorian David Beisel argues that, for three long decades, some scholars have belittled the theory of psychohistory. Beisel explains that psychohistory has not yet proven

⁴⁰ Herbert D. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon and Schuster Publication, 1996), 38. When a people become restricted from engaging in activities they enjoy, the passion for said activities becomes greater. Take for instance Prohibition (1920-1933). During its thirteen-year span, prohibition caused all sorts of deaths and problems as people sought ways to beat the system by committing crimes. Similarly, Lincoln's restriction from reading books made him more passionate about them. As a result, Lincoln sought to read before anything else.

its validity in academic circles and is regarded as a dubious methodology by many historians.⁴¹

According to Beisel, some historians argue that using psychohistory to analyze historical events provides only a superficial understanding without the authority and conviction of hard data.⁴²

The psychohistorian Peter Gay suggests that some scholars believe that psychohistory is speculative and subjective. True history, according to some historians, he argues, is about hard facts.⁴³ The historian, David E. Stannard, is one of those scholars who seek to undermine the utility of psychoanalysis as a legitimate force in historical research. In his article, “On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory,” Stannard says,

Psychohistory—the application of psychoanalysis to individuals on the basis of historical records—was always one of the more dubious-looking wings of the house that Freud built, and now it is surely nearing extinction.⁴⁴

⁴¹ “Teaching Psychohistory,” *The Institute for Psychohistory*, accessed on March 11, 2015, at www.psychohistory.com/htm/04_teach.html. Biesel and Gay are psychohistorians who are fed up with scholars who refer to psychohistory as a dubious discipline filled with fantasies. Biesel, in particular, enjoy the words of fellow psychohistorian Lloyd DeMause when he said, “Introspection is clearly a dangerous task, and those who attempt it in psychohistory are likely to be accused of being the sole source of the fantasies they investigate.”

⁴² David Beisel, “Teaching Psychohistory,” *The Journal of Psychohistory*, January 1998, accessed November 17, 2016 at <http://psychohistory.com/articles/teaching-psychohistory/>

⁴³ Green and Troup, *The Houses of History*, 67. While there are numerous supporters of psychohistory such as Wilhelm Reich, Erik Erikson, and the prominent contemporary psychohistorian Lloyd deMause, there are also staunch critics. Among the critics is David E. Stannard, who believes that the theory of psychohistory is all about conjectures. According to Stannard, the discipline of psychohistory is void and should not be considered a subgroup of history. He argues that insufficient credible data makes this form of research unsubstantiated and inconclusive. The psycho-historian, Peter Loewenberg, though not as critical as Stannard, proclaimed that one negative aspect of psychohistory is that no two researches will interpret the data the same way. Loewenberg explains that psychoanalytic interpretations are by their nature individual and subjective. In other words, if two people write about a historical figure, and one likes him and the other does not, one will get totally different views of that particular person. Furthermore, a writers’ passion toward a particular figure of history can make the research hagiographical, instead of detached and objective. A true writer of psychohistory, he argues, should present the facts, construct a narrative, and be as objective as possible.

⁴⁴ David E. Stannard, *Shrinking History: On Freud and the Failure of Psychohistory* (London: Oxford University Press, 1980) accessed March 10, 2014, <http://bactra.org/reviews/shrinking->

Unbeknownst to Stannard, psychohistory has presently gained momentum in academia and has been taught in Boston University as electives.⁴⁵ The utility of psychohistory in historical research is finally being seen more favorable among historians and scholars throughout the academic world. Therefore, Stannard's prognosis of psychohistory as dubious and near extinction is no longer correct.

Though psychohistory has been criticized for being subjective and flawed, its methodology has been employed in numerous studies. Key figures examined through psychoanalysis include Hitler, Stalin, Guibert, Zedong and Borden.⁴⁶ The historian's craft is to

history/ Stannard's article was written in the 1980s and is far from the truth. Presently, psychohistory has gained momentum and recognition in scholarship and research. In fact, Boston University is offering undergraduate courses on psychohistory.

⁴⁵ Brian Fitzgerald, "Psychohistory Course Probes the Psyches that Changed the World," *Boston University Community Weekly Newspaper*, October 2003, accessed November 18, 2016 at <https://www.bu.edu/bridge/archive/2003/10-31/psycho.html>

⁴⁶ Rafael Rosa, "Lizzie Borden: A Case Study of Parricide" (Master's Thesis, Drew University, 2013), 3. Since the inception of psychohistory in the 1960s, numerous studies have sought to shed light on some of history's most elusive and enigmatic figures by looking for behavioral roots of their actions. For instance, Erik H. Erikson in *The Legend of Hitler's Childhood* argues that Hitler's adult behavior was a product of his upbringing by an abusive, alcoholic father and a loving, caring, demonstrative mother. In a similar fashion, historian and journalist Edvard Radzinsky, in an effort to understand Josef Stalin's paranoia and his motivations to direct mass murder, embarked on unprecedented research into Stalin's childhood. Radzinsky discovered that Stalin's father was an unstable dipsomaniac, while his mother, contrary to her mythical characterization as a *grisette*, was actually a caring woman. In the end, Radzinsky reveals that Stalin's domestic experiences at home coupled with a country on the verge of revolution were the factors that affected his mental state.

In the 1970s, the psychologist, Jonathan Kanter, conducted a similarly poignant investigation of the life of medieval Benedictine Abbot Guibert of Nogent. Through psychoanalytical analysis, Kanter concluded that Guibert's mother was instrumental in her son's mental composition, including his notable disdain for women. Born in 1055 in modern-day France, Guibert was raised by an austere mother with a penchant for religious and moral behavior. Unfortunately, Guibert's father, a chronic philanderer and habitual drunk, died when the boy was only a year old. Coddled by his mother for several years, Guibert developed an effeminate and hermetic disposition that made him seem socially awkward and strange to many people.

bring readers as close to the past as humanly possible. By analyzing historical documents and data, the historian is able to unveil some key aspects of past societies. Notwithstanding this, true and direct access to the period being investigated can never be achieved through classical historical inquiry alone. As the historian Charles A. Beard once stated, claiming that history is completely objective is merely an illusion.⁴⁷ Therefore, historians can only envision the past and provide approximate results. Furthermore, the rigidity of evaluating historical occurrences solely through traditional interpretations is gradually waning. Today, historians are challenged vigorously to analyze data to construct their own unique interpretation and conclusions of the period being studied. When evaluating the historian's role and profession, Howard Zinn states,

A historian must pick and choose among facts, deciding which ones to put into his or her work, which ones to leave out, and which ones to place at the center of the story. Every historian's own ideas and beliefs go into the way he or she writes history.⁴⁸

The same can be said about Mao Zedong. He was born on December 26, 1893 in Hunan Province, China. His father was very strict and would often beat the boy for minor infractions. During his early years, revolutionary sentiments were in the air, and Zedong became involved in the nationalist movement. In no time, he rose through the ranks and became the ruthless leader of the Communist Party in China.

In reviewing their lives, it becomes clear that all these men were influenced by inner and outer social experiences. Like these men, psycho-historians would argue that Lincoln's difficulty with woman was a direct result of his social environment and personal experiences.

In my thesis, I choose to prove that Lizzie Borden's unpleasant experiences both at home and in the community prevented her from savoring the true essence of aristocratic exuberance. As a result, she became reclusive, melancholic, and prone to bizarre behaviors. Her disturbed and dejected spirit, unfortunately, was not generally noticed until she bludgeoned her father and stepmother to death. Similarly, as will be revealed in this research, Lincoln's reclusive upbringing, intent focus to be someone great, elevated intellect, careful analysis of marriage, austere father, deficient courting abilities, and other issues were all factors in the way he interacted with women.

Other more notable work in psychohistory can be seen in Erik Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, Lloyd De Mause's *Foundation of Psychohistory*, Rudolph Binion's *Hitler Among the Germans*, and Peter Loewenberg's *Decoding the Past: The Psychohistorical Approach*.

⁴⁷ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The Objectivity Question and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 254.

⁴⁸ Howard Zinn, *A People's History of the U.S.* (New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics, 2005), 12.

In direct and simpler terms, history is the story the author wishes to write and narrate. In the end, the historian, E. H. Carr, was right when he said that “the historian is a fisherman, choosing which pond to fish, and what tackle to use.”⁴⁹ In other words, one needs not to be a traditional historian to be a historian. For the purpose of this study, the tackle being cast is a psychohistorical one.

To give full justice to the theory of psychohistory, a synopsis of Lincoln’s *zeitgeist* must first be presented as a way to prove that Lincoln’s social climate was a factor in his mental development. The psychologist and lecturer, Alfred Adler, believed that when studying the individual, one must always take into consideration the individual’s society, for it is these social currents that shape an individual’s personality.⁵⁰ A good example is a contemporary research by the historian Tim Cook. In studying the adaptability of Canadian soldiers during the First World War (1914-1918), Cook concluded that the soldiers consistently used slang terms to help survive and adjust to their environment. According to Cook, “the excessive use of diatribes was useful

⁴⁹ Green and Troup, *The Houses of History*, 7. This statement by historian E.H. Carr is perhaps one of the most erudite remarks to the discipline of history. Carr argues that no two historians are going to agree on any given topic, but that all topics researched by historians carry some merit and scholarship. In other words, no matter if one employs Cliometrics, psychohistory, postcolonial perspectives, or the annals school approach to history the results will always be different and unique. Carr explains that history can never come to us pure; it is the ultimate product of the historian. In the end, Carr is right. As logical historians, we can only infer motives from historical documents that may or may not be true because direct access to history can never be achieved. The key word here, however, is infer. By inferring, one is contributing to the continuous cycle of intellectual thought without jeopardizing its continuity. In other words, whether a research is extol or condemned for its methodology, it will continue to shed light to some historical dilemma and bring new insight and continuous literature for the masses to read and muse for years to come.

⁵⁰ “Alfred Adler-Biography.” *Famous Psychologists*, accessed on May 27, 2014, <http://www.famouspsychologists.net/alfred-adler/>

in offering relief and adaptability from the stresses of warfare.”⁵¹ He argued that inner and outer natural forces can influence a person’s reaction to any given situation. Extensive exposure to social stressors, he believed, can affect a person’s personality.⁵²

The same concept can be applied to this study. By understanding Lincoln’s social and domestic climate, we can understand his personality more accurately. His rural seclusion during most of his formative years, and his inadequate experience with courting practices, must have affected Lincoln’s view on women. Therefore, this study seeks to define Lincoln and explain his courting deficiencies and eccentric ways regarding the opposite sex, based on his life experiences. The study is attempting to formulate a cogent and valuable resource in Lincoln’s view of women that will be an added contribution to scholarship on our sixteenth president.

The *Zeitgeist* of Lincoln’s America

Lincoln’s America was an ambiguous, complex and paradoxical time with no simple definition. Like Britain during the same time period, nineteenth-century America experienced high levels of sophistication, culture, and progression, but it also witnessed class disparity, gender issues, and soaring crime rates. It was both a progressive and a regressive period, a time when industrialization was launching the economy to greatness, but began the destruction of the

⁵¹ Tim Cook, “Slang and Swear Words Helped Soldiers Survive the First World War,” *BBC History*, December 2013, 9. Cook explains how humans adapt to their environment by tweaking their behavior pattern to better fit with the cultural climate of the time. To Cook, swearing reinforced regional and national identity, and further promote stability and reassurance at the battlefield. Like the Canadian soldiers whose behaviors were influenced by the social climate, Lincoln’s behavior was also influenced by the social, domestic, and political climate of the era. In public, Lincoln held the same beliefs about slaves and women. Lincoln knew that the institution of slavery was morally wrong, but initially kept quiet because of society’s views. Similarly, Lincoln always had an affinity for smart women, but he encouraged education for women privately because he knew that the traditional role of women in Victorian America was all about domesticity.

⁵² Ibid.

serenity of the environment. It was an epoch that experienced the rise of the machine and the descent of man; an era that elevated the status of a selected group of people and abandoned the remaining population; and an age that incessantly exploited women and children in the workforce. Victorian America fulfilled Charles Dickens's opening statement in *A Tale of Two Cities*, for it was truly "the best of times and the worst of times."⁵³

In Victorian America, women were not equal to men. Women were considered physically and intellectually incapable of managing society's problems and, as a result, were better suited for domesticity. In *Lincoln's Ladies: The Women in the Life of the Sixteenth President*, the author and historian, Donald Winkler, explains,

The girls of New Salem, Illinois chose their mates at an early age—thirteen or fourteen—and were usually "hitched" by fifteen or sixteen. Most girls on the prairie planned to be homemakers, and there was no reason to delay marriage. Once married, few of them continued whatever schooling they may have begun. They were too busy fixing meals, keeping house, and raising children.⁵⁴

In her book, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, Carroll Smith-Rosenberg argues that men and women were deliberately placed in separate spheres by a male-dominated world dedicated to defining the role of women as the "other" in society.⁵⁵ Rosenberg believes that the willful partitioning of gender created a woman's culture devoted exclusively to

⁵³Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (New York: Signet Classic, 1997), 12. *A Tale of Two Cities* is a novel depicting the struggle between French peasantry and French nobility on the eve of the French Revolution. Dickens believed that, while it was a great time to live, it was also a bad time to live. In a sense, this is what was happening in Victorian America. Like Britain, during the same time period, Victorian America was experiencing some social issues that elevated some people or groups and undermined others.

⁵⁴Donald Winkler, *Lincoln's Ladies: The Women in the Life of the Sixteenth President* (Tennessee: Cumberland House Publishing, 2004), 41.

⁵⁵ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. (Oxford University Press, 1987), 11.

domestic responsibilities.⁵⁶ Rosenberg further contends that, for centuries, gender segregation undermined women's role in society and placed them at a huge disadvantage compared to their male counterparts.⁵⁷ In her book, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism*, Ann L. Ardis explains how educated women were perceived during Victorian times. According to Ardis, women writers were not given the same reception that male writers were, and often their works were critiqued and debased by male reviewers. Ardis explains situation in this way:

She was called "Novissima": the New Woman, the odd Woman, the Wild Woman, and the Superfluous Woman in English novels and periodicals of the 1880s and 1890s. A tremendous amount of polemic was wielded against her for choosing not to pursue the conventional bourgeois woman's career of marriage and motherhood.⁵⁸

This is not to say that women were incapable of matching the "intellectual superiority" of men, but rather that men continued to debase their accomplishments for years to come. Even before the American Revolution, there were educated women among the elites. These women shared the same passion, sentiment and convictions as their male contemporaries. Women like Judith Sargent Murray believed that women's minds were as strong as men and that they should be

⁵⁶ Ibid., 12. According to Rosenberg, Victorian American women were considered one step above slaves. Today, however, women are empowered to see the truth of their long forgotten history. Rosenberg explains, "Perhaps the most revolutionary aspect of contemporary's women's history was our refusal to accept gender-role divisions as natural. . . . Gender, we insisted was man-made, the product of cultural definitions, not biological forces. No universal femaleness or maleness existed. . . . Rather, economic, demographic, and ideational factors came together within specific societies to determined which rights, powers, privileges, and personalities women and men would possess." In the end, Rosenberg proclaims that to acquire an accurate account of the women's role in society, one must first strip centuries of misogyny and conservative beliefs.

⁵⁷ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, 12.

⁵⁸ Ann L. Ardis, *New Women, New Novels: Feminism and Early Modernism* (Rutgers University Press, 1990), 1. Although the years postdate Lincoln's death by nearly two decades, the evidence shows how deep-seated the disparity between men and women were in America.

allowed to contribute to their society with no restrictions.⁵⁹ However, though these women were critical to the success of the American Revolution, none experienced any legal or social equality with men.⁶⁰

In *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution, 1760-1791*, the historian, Rosemarie Zagarri, remarks,

A small number of elite women in both England and America had already begun to express an interest in politics and a desire to participate in government. . . . By and large, however most women remained reluctant to transgress into what was understood to be male territory.⁶¹

The conscious and deliberate disregard of women was a reality that continued well into Lincoln's time. In fact, in the village of New Salem, Illinois, the local postmaster, Samuel Hill, neglected women standing in line for mail in favor of men.⁶² Unlike New Zealand, which experienced favorable and progressive change for women's rights from the onset, the American suffragist movement was drawn out and slow moving.⁶³ Arguably, the women's movement in America

⁵⁹ Alan Brinkley, *American History*, (New York: McGraw Hill, 2003), 145.

⁶⁰ Richard D. Brown and Benjamin L. Carp, *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution, 1760-1791* (New York: Wadsworth Publishing, 2014), 306.

⁶¹ Ibid., 306. The authors discuss that women engaged as spies, fighters, and advocates during the American Revolution and were critical to the resistance of the British, but never received the equality they desired until many centuries later. For years before, during and after the revolution, women were expected to devote their time in teaching their children the art of being good citizens. Most men believed that women should preoccupy themselves with instilling positive values to their children so that they can become productive members of society.

⁶² Herbert D. Donald, *Lincoln*, 66. According to Donald, Samuel Hill, the postmaster of New Salem, Illinois was known to serve men first while blatantly undermining women. Hill's behavior and sentiments parallel the American Victorian view of women at the time. In later chapters, Donald explains how Samuel Hill, the ugly, crude, and male-chauvinist storekeeper, attempted to lure Ann Rutledge romantically, but she was not interested.

⁶³ Patricia Grimshaw, *Women's Suffragist in New Zealand* (Oxford University Press, 1972), 202. Twenty-eight years after Lincoln's death, women in New Zealand were given the right to vote.

was hampered by the deep-seated belief that women were inferior to men; a belief that penetrated the fibers of Victorian society and viciously crippled the mobility of women's rights. These notions were promoted by the influential nineteenth-century educator Elizabeth Sewell, a supporter of gender segregation. She commented,

Boys are to be sent out into the world to buffet with its temptations, to mingle with bad and good, to govern and direct as leaders. . . . Girls are to dwell in quiet homes, amongst a few friends; to exercise a noiseless influence, to be submissive and retiring.⁶⁴

Sadly, these ideas were entrenched and supported all across Western Europe and America. In France, the French philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a great promoter of equality amongst men, did not extend these rights to women:

I would a thousand times rather have a homely girl, simply brought up, than a learned lady who will make a literary circle of my house and install herself as its president. A female wit is a scourge to her husband, her children, her friends, her servants, to everybody. From the lofty height of her genius, she scorns every womanly duty, and she is always trying to make a man of herself.⁶⁵

Clearly, these sentiments crossed the waters of the North Atlantic and settled comfortably into the mindset of American men. The renowned American novelist, Nathaniel Hawthorne, sneered at any literary text produced by female writers. According to Hawthorne, "America is now wholly given over to a damned mob of scribbling women and [there is] no chance for success while the public taste is occupied with their trash."⁶⁶ Perhaps no other scholar put the plight of

The year was 1893, and New Zealand women were ecstatic on earning their rights, thanks mostly to the efforts of Kate Sheppard, the leading New Zealand female suffragist leader. In that same year, Elisabeth Yates became New Zealand's first female mayor. In the United States, it took fifty-five years after Lincoln's death for American women to be given the rights to vote. In 1920, American women were given the rights to vote with the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment.

⁶⁴ Joan Perkin, *Victorian Women* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), 2.

⁶⁵ Marvin Perry, *Western Civilization*. (Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 607.

nineteenth-century women more eloquently than Rosenberg, when she observes, “men formulated the Cult of True Womanhood, which prescribed a female role bounded by kitchen and nursery, overlaid by piety and purity, and crowned with subservience.”⁶⁷

The Church and Gender Divides

Nineteenth-century America, like Britain, experienced a heightened attachment and adherence to the church; as a result, church dogma played a major role in defining the role of women. According to traditional church views, divine Providence held that women were subordinate to men and that obedience was the proper behavior of a good, pure and cultivated woman.⁶⁸

Among the greatest supporters of these gender divides was the church, which adamantly espoused the traditional role of women and declared that women were subservient to men. In

⁶⁶ Alan Brinkley, *American History* (New York: McGraw Press, 2003), 338. Hawthorne was critiquing the excessively sentimental novels being produced by women at the time. It was evident that women preferred these novels over Hawthorne’s dark and serious works. The truth is that these novels were sought out by women because it gave them a voice and hope in a time when their opinions and beliefs were not considered important.

⁶⁷ Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, 13. The Cult of True Womanhood, which was characterized by piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity, was alive and well in Victorian America and engrained deeply in the customs and traditions of the people.

⁶⁸ Rosa, *Lizzie A. Borden : A Case Study of Parricide*, 7. In my Master’s thesis, I explained the *zeitgeist* of Victorian America and how the social atmosphere of the times psychologically impacted Lizzie Borden. In this dissertation, the same social experience affected Abraham Lincoln, but in completely different ways. Unlike Lizzie, who was a victim of an androcentric society, a parsimonious father, and a society determined to instill their religious ethos on the people, Lincoln was a victim of seclusion, personal and public tragedies, and a hardhearted father who refused to acknowledge the importance of education. As will be revealed, Lincoln’s isolation in the country, his tragedies, and his restriction from reading books all culminated in his inability to court women properly.

fact, across much of Victorian America, church dogma controlled the public discourse.⁶⁹ In the eyes of the religious ethos of the time, women were inherently feeble and in need of protection, direction and guidance.⁷⁰ In other words, women were subordinate to men and incapable of matching men's intelligence, good judgment, strength and dexterity. The church believed that women were required to serve men because the Bible demanded it.⁷¹ Men were viewed as lords of the house and responsible for ruling the world. Failure to follow church teachings led to all sorts of debasement and ridicule by high society.⁷²

Perhaps no other woman in history describes this era more vividly than the American feminist writer and orator, Elizabeth Cady Stanton.⁷³ In a series of pamphlets, Stanton denounced the church's view of the female sex by eloquently urging women to fight against their

⁶⁹ Elizabeth C. Stanton, "The Christian Church and Women," *American Memory Archives*, accessed November 18, 2017, at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(rbnawsan8346div4\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field(DOCID+@lit(rbnawsan8346div4)))

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Elizabeth C. Stanton, "The Degraded Status of Women in the Bible," *American Memory Archives*, accessed November 18, 2017, at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(rbnawsan8346div3\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field(DOCID+@lit(rbnawsan8346div3)))

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ "Nineteenth-Century Feminist in America," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed on July 9th 2014, <http://www.britannica.com>. In Victorian America, there were many educated women who, like their British and Irish contemporaries, sought to change the course of history through their writings and good deeds. Among the American female intellectuals and kind-hearted souls were Harriet Elisabeth Beecher, author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Emily Blackwell, the second female medical doctor in the United States, Julia Ward Howe, author of "The Battle Hymns of the Republic," Cordelia A.P. Harvey, caretaker for wounded soldiers and known as the Wisconsin Angel, Anna Dickinson, the tempestuous feminist orator, Susan B. Anthony, the American feminist and orator, Victoria C. Woodhull, the American leader of the women's suffragist movement, Martha Coffin Wright, the feminist-abolitionist, Lucretia Coffin Mott, the social reformer-feminist, and the most forcible and prominent of all, Elizabeth C. Stanton. These women were as influential as British-born Mary Wollstonecraft and Irish-born Jane Wilde, most commonly known by her pseudonym, Speranza.

religious oppressors and declare themselves equally capable as men in all aspects of life. One of her most famous polemics was titled *Bible and Church Degrade Women*. Stanton wrote:

Woman's education has been left too much to the church, which has made her a devotee, training her sentiments and emotions at the expense of her reason and common sense. The state must now open to her a wider field of thought and action. We must turn the tide of her enthusiasm from the church to the state, arouse her patriotism, and awaken her interest in great public question, on which depends the stability of the republic and the elevation of the race, instead of wasting so much time and thought on the salvation of her own soul.⁷⁴

As a rational and educated woman, Stanton was able to see how the church was enforcing the Cult of True Womanhood through its sermons and church activities. Stanton believed that as long as women continued to adhere to the demands of the church, they would never be free.⁷⁵ These were the ethos of the times that were enforced by men, church leaders and some women.

The Influence of Society upon Lincoln

Though not a religious man, Lincoln was influenced by the ethos of the time. Gender roles were an important factor in Victorian America, and they were strictly enforced and maintained by society. Women, though essential for procreating and moral family support, were reared differently than men. Traditionally, women had very little access to the spheres of business, education, and politics.⁷⁶ Men, especially the upper class, wanted their women at

⁷⁴ Elizabeth C. Stanton, *Bible and Church Degrade Woman* (New York: Qontro Historical Reprints, 2009).

⁷⁵ Elizabeth C. Stanton, "The Christian Church and Women," *American Memory Archives*, accessed November 18, 2017, at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(rbnawsan8346div4\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field(DOCID+@lit(rbnawsan8346div4)))

⁷⁶ Brinkley, *American History*, 288. Brinkley explains how women were not allowed to participate in what society considered "male affairs." Women, he argued, should be contained to their houses tending to domestic duties and being devoted to their husbands and children.

home, looking comely and ready to serve their demands as “*donna di palazzo*.”⁷⁷ According to the historian Alan Brinkley women were regarded as guardians of domestic virtues and their home was their palace.⁷⁸ The home was considered a serene sanctuary from the strident and busy workplace. It was here, amidst the stove and children, where women belonged most.

In her article, “Women’s Role in the Late Nineteenth Century,” Dorothy W. Hartman characterizes the role of women in Victorian America in this way:

The beliefs embodied in the ‘Cult of Domesticity’ gave women a central, if outwardly passive, role in the family. Women’s God-given role, it stated, was as wife and mother, keeper of the household, guardian of the moral purity of all who lived therein. The Victorian home was to be a haven of comfort and quiet, sheltered from the harsh realities of the working world.⁷⁹

For this reason, among others, women were expected to engage in meticulous preparation for the afternoon repast, keeping their husbands content as they returned from work. In fact, many of

⁷⁷ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (Barnes & Noble Digital Library, 2009). In *The Book of the Courtier* (1528), Castiglione argues that all women are the heads of their palaces (household) and men are their daring protectors. This is the balance that God created and should be strictly respected and enforced. According to the law of divine providence, men are superior to women in all physical and mental faculties. For this reason, it is the man’s duty to care for them. Castiglione supported the ideas of his affluent and influential contemporaries such as Giuliano de’Medici and Cesare Gonzaga who adamantly and publicly declared that women were inferior to men. The idea of women as the lower sex remained alive and well during Lincoln’s time. However, it was in this era when women began to voice their opinions more forcibly and frequently than ever before. It was during Lincoln’s time when men witnessed the voices of women in the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention, the first women’s convention ever in the history of the United States. They also witnessed the stentorian cry of women in the pages of the *Declaration of Rights and Sentiments*, a document requesting the equal treatment of women in all political, social, religious, and civil matters. Regrettably, it took fifty-five years after Lincoln’s death and seventy-two years after Seneca Falls for women to be given the right to vote.

⁷⁸ Ibid., 289.

⁷⁹ Dorothy W. Hartman, *Women’s Role in the Late 19th Century*, accessed online on September 28, 2014, <http://www.connerprarie.org/learn-and-do/indiana-history/america-1860-1900/lives-of-women.aspx>

these women were obsessed with keeping their houses impeccable because they believed that adhering strictly to these types of cultural norms made them more valuable to their husbands.⁸⁰

In this era, women were subservient maids adhering to their husband's every demand. It was for these reasons that Emily Thornwell's book on feminine gentility, and a book called *Household Management* by Isabella Beeton (1859), were used by many women. Both books were extensive guides to properly managing a Victorian home and family. More synthesis on Thornwell's book in chapter 3.

In reviewing Lincoln's cultural climate, it is evident that there are many important facets that can be used to understand his *raison d'être*. In Victorian America, the consensus among men and institutions was that women were inferior to men and that men were superior to women. Lincoln was a product of his environment, and so grew up under these gender divides. Even Lincoln's statements on women can be analyzed as containing subtle signs of androcentric sentiments. Lincoln once said that women were the only things that he was afraid of that would not hurt him.⁸¹ Though the former part of the sentence holds some truth, the latter reveals an important opinion shared by Victorian men. That is, the idea that women are benevolent angels and incapable of inflicting physical pain. Surely, Lincoln's dealing with women inflicted emotional distress, but here it is evident that Lincoln is referring to physical pain.

Consistent with the Victorian worldview, women were seen as incapable of maleficent crimes. The field of criminology, or the study of criminal minds and behavior patterns, emerged in the late nineteenth century. The psychiatrist and early criminologist, Cesare Lombroso, along with his colleague, William Ferrero, stated in *The Female Offender* (1893) that women's innate

⁸⁰ Christopher Clark and Nancy A. Hewitt, *Who Built America* (New York: Worth Publishers, 2000), 381.

⁸¹ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 27.

inferiority made them less likely to commit crimes.⁸² Their study was based on phrenology and concluded that women who are prone to deviance have similar cranial traits to those of men.⁸³

In the view of both criminologists, men were naturally atavistic and more susceptible to deviant behavior than women.⁸⁴ This Victorian criminal mindset persisted until the 1950s, when sociologist Otto Pollak published his treatise on *The Criminality of Women*. Pollack argued that women are as equally malicious and devious as men, but that their crimes are more easily hidden because of their subservient role in society.⁸⁵ This analysis explains the social perception of

⁸² Cesare Lombroso and William Ferrero, *The Female Offender* (New York: D. Appleton Company, 1895), 147.

⁸³ Ibid., 37-38. Lombroso believed in the pseudo-science of phrenology, the idea that the structure of the skull determines criminality. According to Lombroso, women were incapable of violent crimes, and although they engaged in prostitution, theft and other vices, these crimes were only minor offenses. Lombroso believed that the more primitive the skull, the more prone to violence a person was. Therefore, he believed that African-Americans were more prone to violence than their white-counterparts. To Lombroso, a disproportionate cranium, big and protruding jaws, big eye sockets and ears were all factors in determining a person's propensity for violence.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 37-38.

⁸⁵ Otto Pollak, *The Criminality of Women* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950), xvii. Pollack explains that the idea that women are not as deviant as men is a myth and a lie. Pollack postulate that women, like men, are equally capable of committing atrocious crimes. Take for instance, Lizzie Borden. Borden was on trial for killing her father and stepmother, Andrew and Abby Durfree Burden, in 1892. After a lengthy trial, the jury, comprised exclusively of men, found Lizzie not guilty of murder. Many felt that the gruesome murders could have never been committed by a woman. Women, in those days, were "angels of the house," and not ax wielding murderesses. Here too, one can see how societal belief influenced individuals. In Victorian America, women were not considered killers because the belief was that women were always kind, feeble, and devoted to their domestic responsibilities. This is not to say that women were exculpated from criminal acts all the times; there is evidence that some women in America were executed or imprisoned for dreadful crimes. These included Martha Canon (Maryland and Delaware, 1829), Martha Grinder (Pennsylvania, 1865), Lydia Sherman (New Jersey and Connecticut, 1871), Sally Story (New Jersey, 1882), Sarah J. Robinson (Massachusetts, 1886) and many others. But generally, as Cesare Lombroso (1836-1909) and others of his time believed, women were rarely incapable of committing crimes.

women during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries as benign, seraphic beings incapable of such deadly sins as murder.

According to Locke, socialization is crucial in molding the human character. His theory on human development, though challenged by some scholars, remains essential in the theory of human growth today.⁸⁶ Modern interpretation of socialization describes the process in the following way:

Socialization is a learning process that begins shortly after birth. Early childhood is the period of the most intense and the most crucial socialization. It is then that we acquire language and learn the fundamentals of our culture. It is also when much of our personality takes shape. However, we continue to be socialized throughout our lives. As we age, we enter new statuses and need to learn the appropriate roles for them. We also have experiences that teach us lessons and potentially lead us to alter our expectations, beliefs, and personality.⁸⁷

Arguably, Lincoln's early experiences influenced the way he viewed women. Though there is some evidence that he valued their role in society, as was the case with Elizabeth Todd Grimsley (who will be discussed later in this study), he also felt that women should not concern themselves with manly affairs. To be more direct, Lincoln believed that the role of a man was to provide for his family, and that a woman's role was to manage the domestic responsibilities. By and large, Lincoln and his male contemporaries followed the idea set forth by poet laureate Alfred Tennyson. Tennyson wrote in *The Princess*,

Man for the field and woman for the hearth:
 Man for the sword and for the needle she:
 Man with the head and woman with the heart:
 Man to command and woman to obey;
 All else confusion.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Jackson, *Philosophy: An Illustrated History of Thought*, 45.

⁸⁷ Dennis O'Neill, "Process of Socialization," Behavioral Sciences Department, Palomar College, accessed, May 24, 2014, <http://anthro.palomar.edu/social/default.htm>. There are various online sources that define socialization, but for clarity and simplicity, this website is the best.

This work, among other literary materials, was circulating all over Victorian America, engraining in the minds of men the notion that men were superior to women. Lincoln, a product of his time, must have felt victim to some of these androcentric sentiments. But it was not only secular literature that permeated the Victorian atmosphere; gender disparity was also found in the Bible.

In an examination on *The Education of Women* (1874), Thomas Holmes argues that biblical law was the catalyst that defined the roles of women and men in society. Biblical phrases, such as “I will make him a helpmeet for him” (Genesis 2:18) or “women are helpers, companions, consorts, assistants and loyal wives to their male counterparts” were literally interpreted to indicate that women should occupy a subordinate role in society.⁸⁹ Though not affiliated with any religious organization, Lincoln was well versed and extremely familiar with the Bible.⁹⁰ Donald describes incidents where the young Lincoln “rallied the other children around him and repeated—or sometimes parodied—the minister’s words.”⁹¹ The teachings of

⁸⁸ Ruth Ashby, *Victorian England* (New York: Benchmark Books, 2003), 58.

⁸⁹ Thomas Holmes, *The Education of Women* (Barnes and Noble: Christian Publishing Association e-Books digitized from 1874 Volume) 10.

⁹⁰ Donald, *Lincoln*, 41.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 41. Donald explains how Lincoln had an uncanny ability to permeate and remember biblical passages without difficulty. Yet, as an adult, he was not part of any religious organization. It seems that Lincoln was enthralled with the literary component of the Bible and cherished its language and moral stories. But then why was he not religious?

He was not religious because he was an extremely rational human being who relied on facts to explain the world around him. Lincoln recognized, early in his life, that there was some degree of doubt in religious dogma that could not be explained through rational and objective facts. As a result, he appreciated the Bible as a book for morality, good-behavior, customs, and deeds.

In retrospect, it seems that Lincoln was right. Soon after his death, Lincoln became a martyr to the American people. People began to liken his actions to Jesus Christ and there are numerous depictions of Lincoln ascending into the arms of his political hero, George

the Bible must have influenced Lincoln as he was known to use passages in many of his most popular political speeches.⁹² So, too, it is believed that the Bible's teaching on women affected the way Lincoln viewed them. The Bible never degrades women as worthless and unimportant, but rather labels them as inferior to their more superior male companions.⁹³ Therefore, it is safe to infer that Lincoln respected women and admired their tenacity, but believed in the socially accepted norm of gender roles. This is not to imply that Lincoln was misogynistic with women or that he devalued their contribution to a marriage; instead, he adhered to the conventional status quo.

Similarly, one can equate Lincoln's view of women with his view of slaves. From an early age, Lincoln detested slavery. Lincoln felt that the institution of slavery was unethical and a product of bad policy.⁹⁴ Donald suggests that Lincoln's father, Thomas, left Kentucky and settled in Indiana for two reasons. First, land titles were difficult to acquire in Kentucky, and secondly, Kentucky was a slave state.⁹⁵ To the Lincolns, the idea of slavery was unconscionable,

Washington. One can argue that Washington represents the father (Yahweh) and Lincoln the son (Jesus). There is no argument, however, that upon his death, Lincoln became a national saint revered by many people as a man who died in the moment of his triumph.

⁹² Harold Holzer. *Lincoln as I Knew Him* (New York: Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill, 1999), 27. Elizabeth Todd Grimsley, Mary Todd's cousin, explains how Lincoln enjoyed reading the Bible. "After eating he would stretch himself upon the couch, with a book in his hand, as often the Bible as any other, for he felt there was nothing in literature that would compare with poetic Job, Moses the Law Giver, the beautiful and varied experiences of the psalms of David, or the grand majestic utterances of Isaiah. . . . And this was, at that time, the only relaxation he took." This explains his profound mastery of the Bible and his reasons for using it in his speeches.

⁹³ Bob Rogers, "Does the Bible Demean Women?" *Bible Teaching*, accessed November 18, 2016 at <https://bobrogers.me/2012/05/15/does-the-bible-demean-women/>

⁹⁴ Jorg Nagler, "Abraham Lincoln's Attitude on Slavery and Race," *American Studies Journal*, Accessed November 18, 2016 at <http://www.asjournal.org/53-2009/abraham-lincolns-attitudes-on-slavery-and-race/>

⁹⁵ Donald, *Lincoln*, 29.

inhumane, atrocious, and unjust, and they opted to live in a state that prohibited the practice.⁹⁶

Regrettably, slavery was pervasive and engrained deeply in the fibers of Victorian America. As a result, Abraham was subjected to the influences of the times, a time steeped in bigotry and ethnocentric dogma. Though vehemently opposed to the institution of slavery, Lincoln was still influenced by the ethos of the time. Miller explains:

Lincoln's bias should not blind us to his many virtues, yet it cannot be denied that, like many of his contemporaries, he held prejudiced views regarding blacks even as he believed that slavery was a crime.⁹⁷

As society molded Lincoln's views of blacks, so too did it mold Lincoln's view on women—and although he was able to suppress these views more thoroughly than other men, he was still afflicted by them. Lincoln believed that women were pivotal to the American family system, with men responsible for addressing society's ills and women in charge of the home. Lincoln

⁹⁶ Ibid., 24.

⁹⁷ Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 121. Undoubtedly, there are always going to be debates of whether Lincoln was truly a great president. Some believe that he was the great emancipator who doggedly pursued the liberation of blacks from the bondage of slavery. Others, such as the historians, Leronne Bennet Jr and Edna Medford, feel that he was not the great president society has portrayed him to be. They believe that his "celebrity status" had to do more with the myths that originated soon after his death than through his feats. Both historians are critical of Lincoln's actions and believe that there were other more prudent approaches to ending slavery. There is also the question of Lincoln wanting to liberate the blacks and send them back to Africa in an effort to prevent future attempts of re-enslaving them. Bennet believes that Lincoln was racist and wanted to liberate them more for political ascendancy than altruistic reasons. Though Bennet highlighted some interesting facts, such as the belief that Lincoln's image brings forth one-hundred-million dollars to the American economy, some of his critique and approaches are typical of scholars who are trained to probe the life of prominent people. In fact, all great men who have overcome remarkable obstacles have been criticized once or twice during their lifetimes, or even in death. Accordingly, the best and easiest way to attack a political entity is by ridiculing their actions and publicizing their faults. Lincoln once said, "What is to be, will be, and no cares of ours can arrest the decree." His statement holds more truth today than ever before. Upon his death, more revisionist rubbish has been written about Lincoln than during his seminal lifetime. Until humanity desists to exist, people will continue to write about Lincoln's accomplishments, foibles, and beliefs. Some will write favorably while others will defile his accomplishments. Yet in the end, it is up to the reader to determine which school of thought he or she supports most.

did, however, find intelligent women attractive. Donald explains that Lincoln was enthralled by Mary Todd's vivaciousness and intelligence.⁹⁸ Arguably, it seems that Lincoln acknowledged the gradual transformation of the women's role in society from one of domestic responsibilities to that of a flowering intellectual. Yet, in his time, the women's movement was in its infancy and not strong enough to make an indelible mark in society. As a result, the women's role remained fairly static and conventional for many years to come.

Gentility Books Not Part of Lincoln's Reading List

As stated earlier, in Lincoln's era, there were numerous books instructing women on how to properly care for their household. Fulfilling their assigned roles, many women were well versed in the theory of domesticity. While some took pride in their work, others such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Mary Wollstonecraft, Margaret Fuller and Sojourner Truth, sneered at the idea that women should be contained within domestic responsibilities.⁹⁹ Together, they produced a plethora of polemics and opted for equality of the sexes. Ironically, when it came to men, books on gentility were almost non-existent or, at the very least, scanty. One book that circulated the globe was Baldassare Castiglione's *The Book of The Courtier* (1528).

The *Book of The Courtier* was translated in English by the British diplomat, Sir Thomas Hoby, in 1561 and was disseminated all over Europe during the Renaissance. Castiglione's book is the most comprehensive guide to gentlemanly conduct and remains in print today. The question is whether or not Lincoln read the book.

⁹⁸Donald, *Lincoln*, 101.

⁹⁹ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 199. Though Sojourner Truth could not read and write, she championed the women's movement by her fiery and magniloquent rhetoric. She also had the privilege of visiting Abraham Lincoln on October 29, 1864.

One can make the argument that books were expensive and difficult to acquire during Lincoln's time, and that most books in circulation were the traditional works in the Western literary canon. Certainly, it is well documented that Lincoln enjoyed reading Shakespeare, Byron, the Bible, and some scholarly selections of David Hume (1711-1776), Edward Gibbon (1737-1794), Samuel Johnson (1709-1784), and John Milton (1608-1674).¹⁰⁰ Similarly, Lincoln also read the works of William Grimshaw—*The History of the United States* (1822)—and Parson Weems' *The Life of George Washington* (1800).¹⁰¹ It is not known, however, whether Lincoln ever read Castiglione's work, and there is no mention or evidence of Lincoln reading. Therefore, the imposing question is why was Castiglione's book not an essential reading? The answer to this question is bifurcated. First, the Bible is the single most popular book in history and is

¹⁰⁰ Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 43. The historian, William Lee Miller, explains how Lincoln despised fishing or other outdoor activities, but loved to read. While most boys were fishing, Lincoln would sit quietly and read Shakespeare. By his early twenties, Lincoln read, understood, and recited passages in *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, and *Richard III*. He also enjoyed reading more scholarly and serious works in the field of history and philosophy. Not surprisingly, one of Lincoln's favorite tragedies was William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. One can argue that Lincoln equated the heath, the barren, desolated, and mysterious wasteland where Macbeth met the three portending wishes, with his own isolated landscape. The imagery of the witches living in wooded scraggly lands devoid of human existence represents the mystery of country living. One can picture a young Lincoln reading Macbeth and associating the loneliness of his dwelling with that of the heath.

¹⁰¹ Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 51. Aside from Miller, Michael Burlingame, in his biography of Lincoln, believes that Washington was one of Lincoln's most admired historical figures and that, during his tenure, a full length painting of Washington adorned the walls of the White House (*Lincoln: A Life*, 2013, 50). Ironically, in a George Washington biography, author Ron Chernow describes how Washington read and studied a pamphlet on proper comportment. According to Chernow, Washington, in his adolescent years, spent numerous hours reading *The Rules of Civility and Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation*, a pamphlet intended to correct the inappropriate behavior of men (*Washington: A Life*, 2010, 13). Overall, however, the pamphlet was more an ethical set of rules to follow than a comprehensive guidebook to wooing women as seen in the works of Castiglione and Gentleman.

printed for a worldwide audience.¹⁰² Second, by the nineteenth century, social evolution had shifted men's interest from chivalry and decorum to expansion and prosperity.¹⁰³ By this time, the social role of men was different from the role that their predecessors were expected to conform to, but unfortunately the role of women remained static and essentially unaltered.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, while there were various books on female gentility in the nineteenth-century, there is scanty evidence suggesting that there were accessible books of proper conduct for men in America.

There was, however, one book that was in print during Lincoln's time which is worth mentioning. Though not as comprehensive as Castiglione's manual, this book— *The Laws of Etiquette: Short Rules and Reflection for Conduct*, written under the pseudonym, "Gentleman," was published specifically for men as a guide to gentlemanly conduct.¹⁰⁵ Remarkably, Gentleman's concepts parallel those of Castiglione, suggesting a connection between the two books. In the book, Gentleman explains the following:

We do not pretend that a man will be metamorphosed into a gentleman by reading this book. Refined manners are like refined style, which Cicero compares to the colour of the cheeks, which is not acquired by sudden or violent exposure to heat, but by continual

¹⁰² Michael Trimmer, "The Bible is the Most Popular Book," *World News*, April 2014, accessed November 18, 2016 at <http://www.christiantoday.com/article/the.bible.is.the.us.s.most.popular.book/37118.htm>

¹⁰³ Richard Abels, "Chivalry is a Medieval Ethos that Has Evolved Over Time," *New York Times*, July 30, 2013, accessed November 18, 2016 at <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2013/07/30/can-chivalry-be-brought-back-to-life/chivalry-is-a-medieval-ethos-that-has-evolved-over-time>. In this article, writer and historian Richard Abels describes how the concept of chivalry changes over time. He argues that chivalry can either change or fade away if society deems another social event more interesting and fun. In relation to Lincoln, it seems that the interest in chivalry began to waned and gave way to a more interesting social event: expansion and prosperity.

¹⁰⁴ Perkins, *Victorian Women*, 29-30.

¹⁰⁵ Gentleman, *The Laws of Etiquette: Short Rules and Reflection for Conduct* (Philadelphia: Carey, Lea, and Blanchard, 1836).

walking in the sun. Good manners can certainly only be acquired by much usage in good company. . . . But there are a number of little forms, imperviously enacted by custom, which may be taught and learned.¹⁰⁶

The author's comments give insight to two important facts. First, to master gentility, one must practice the art, and second, that aspects of gentility can be studied, learned and understood through human engagements. Throughout his illustrious life, Lincoln was always focused on learning everything he could from books and experiences—so that he, in turn, could be successful in a proper way. In fact, Lincoln was so resolute in becoming enlightened that he once said that he couldn't sleep on an idea until he mastered it.¹⁰⁷ Lincoln's profound wit and good judgment were significant reasons why he was able to steer the country on the right path against seemingly insurmountable obstacles.

Unfortunately, his intent focus on his career made him deficient on his deportment with women. The Lincoln historian, David Hebert Donald, wrote that "sometimes Lincoln felt that he was a prisoner to his own passions," referring to Lincoln's obsession in trying to be great.¹⁰⁸ In later years, however, Lincoln was able to refine his social skills and deal with women more

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹⁰⁷ Reverend J.P. Gulliver, "Mr. Lincoln's Early Life: How He Educated Himself," *New York Times*, September 4, 1864, accessed May 5th, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/1864/09/04/news/mr-lincoln-s-early-life-how-he-educated-himself.html>. In this *New York Times* interview, Lincoln is quoted as stating to Rev. Gulliver: "when I handle a thought, [I do not stop] till I have bounded it north and bounded it south, and bounded it east and bounded it west.

¹⁰⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 82.

confidently, due in part, to his marriage to Mary Todd.¹⁰⁹ Yet deficiency in courting practices can also be attributed to the early structure of the American political system.

In the beginning, the American political system was different from that of Britain and France.¹¹⁰ Political affairs in Britain and France have always been commingled with coteries, social balls and coffee-klatch affairs.¹¹¹ The European royal court has enjoyed these types of affairs for centuries, eventually engraining these practices into the fibers of the European political system. Certainly, this is not to imply that women in Britain and France were regarded as equals, because they were not; still, more male and female interaction meant more fruitful courting practices and opportunities for men to find a spouse. In contrast, it took several years for the American political system to emulate its European counterpart in amalgamating political affairs with social gatherings.¹¹² Eventually, like its European predecessors, America became a country dependent on social interactions and gatherings. In fact, by Lincoln's time, social balls

¹⁰⁹ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 221. During his marriage, Lincoln was more at ease talking to women. Perhaps his confidence with women was bolstered by his everyday dealings with his wife, Mary Todd. Yet Elizabeth Keckley, Mrs. Lincoln's dressmaker, stated that Mrs. Lincoln was always jealous of Mr. Lincoln's interaction with other women in the White House. According to Keckley, Mrs. Lincoln would direct her husband as to which woman to talk to and which to ignore.

¹¹⁰ Cosette Hatch, "The Structure and Social Function of Assemblies, Balls, Parties, and Dancing," *Brigham Young University*, February 1, 2014, accessed November 18, 2016 at <https://byuprideandprejudice.wordpress.com/2014/02/01/the-structure-and-social-function-of-assemblies-balls-parties-and-dances/>

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² "Family: Mary Todd Lincoln," *The Lehrman Institute*, accessed November 18, 2016 at <http://www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org/residents-visitors/family/family-mary-todd-lincoln-1818-1882/>

and dances became the primary method for dialogue, courtship and politics.¹¹³ Once political events became social gatherings in America, stratification set in, thus separating the elite from the common.

In Victorian America, only those involved in high society—the elite—were given exposure to the interaction between men and women in sociopolitical affairs. Lincoln, who was lowly born, rose to eminence only when he became a politician for the United States. It was here, especially as president, that he became efficient and confident with women. Arguably, it can be suggested that the sociopolitical gatherings within the White House served as a training ground for Lincoln as he learned his way around women.¹¹⁴ Deportment was a very essential characteristic in Victorian America as authors carefully put to paper various tips and suggestions on how to be a refined gentleman.

One book that was in print shortly after Lincoln's death illustrates the importance of gentility in America and the subsequent inclination to write more books on proper conduct in the

¹¹³ "Abraham Lincoln and Women," *The Lehrman Institute*, accessed November 18, 2016 at <http://www.abrahamlincolnsclassroom.org/abraham-lincolns-contemporaries/abraham-lincoln-and-women/>

¹¹⁴ Daniel M. Epstein, *Portrait of a Marriage: The Lincolns* (New York: Random House, 2008), 8. Mary's father, Robert Todd, was a very refined and wealthy man. As a result, Mary came from wealth and enjoyed all of the amenities of high society. She attended numerous cotillions and was courted by several men. In a phrase, she knew how to deal with "high society." Regrettably, Lincoln came from humble means and was not well tuned with formalities, especially those exhibited in elite gatherings. It was Mary who instructed Abraham on proper etiquette during political parties. In a well-orchestrated ballad, the bard, William Riley, once sang a poetic love song to commemorate Mary and Abraham's love for each other. The ballad reads as follows:

*A wealthy squire, he lived in our town,
And he was a man of high renown.
He had a daughter, a beauty bright,
And the name he called her was his heart's delight.
Oh, many a young man for to court her came,
And none of them could her favor gain.
And then there came one of low degree
And of all of them, she did fancy he.*

years following his death. In his book, *Our Deportment; or The Manners, Conduct and Dress of the Most Refined American Society* (1877), John H. Young explains how to master properly the rules of gentility. Young begins by stating,

No subject is of more importance to people generally than knowledge of the rules, usages, and ceremonies of good polite society, which are community expressed by the word “etiquette.” Its necessity is felt wherever men and women associate together, whether in city, village, or country, at home or abroad. To acquire a thorough knowledge of these matters and to put knowledge into practice with perfect ease and self-complacency, is what people call good breeding. To display an ignorance of them is to subject the offender to the opprobrium of being ill-bred.¹¹⁵

The book became an explicit and comprehensive guideline to the rules of gentlemanly behavior and conduct. Unlike *The Book of the Courtier*, written during the Renaissance, Young’s book was contemporaneous with the Victorian era and agreeably complimented the viewpoints of “Gentleman’s” earlier analysis on deportment. Young’s book, though not as popular and prominent as Castiglione’s work, was exclusively meant to educate Americans on comportment and courting practices. Young explains:

In the compilation of this work, the object has been to present the usages and rules, which govern the most refined American society, and to impart that information which will enable any one, in whatever circumstances of life the perfect ease and comportment of a gentleman. . . . [In fact,] the work is so arranged that every subject is conveniently classified and subdivided; it is thus an easy matter to refer at once to any given subject.¹¹⁶

Young’s work is evidence that etiquette was, and continues to be, a subject with a strong attachment to the Great Chain of Being that makes us civilized and orderly. It also shows that

¹¹⁵ John H. Young. *Our Deportment; or The Manners, and Conduct, and Dress of the Most Refined American Society* (Springfield, Massachusetts: W.C. King and Company Publishing, 1882), 8.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 8.

mannerisms continue to persist even when political, economic and societal changes occur.¹¹⁷

Young argues that the concept of propriety is resilient, and although evolution changes our priority in life, gentlemanly conduct continues to exist within the framework of a civilized world. Therefore, a man's responsibility is to learn these simple rules of refinement so that he could not only court women with confidence, but also continue to be civilized.¹¹⁸

To demonstrate the resilience of propriety all one needs to do is to compare Castiglione's book with Mrs. Humphrey's *Manners for Men* (1897). Though written three hundred and sixty-nine years apart, both books have recurring themes. They both speak about chivalry, fine conduct, proper decorum, compassion and good will.¹¹⁹ Both books also instruct men how to properly capture a woman's heart through long established courting rituals and behavior.¹²⁰ It seems that Young's observation of the Great Chain of Being is correct, as we can trace our perception of courting to the distant past.

In further analyzing Young's theory, it is evident that his book provides some valuable insight and information about the era. First, that there was a book in print during the latter part

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 15.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 33. In his study, Young writes that propriety can lead to the improvement of other human deficiencies. According to Young, possessing propriety enables a person to dress and eat appropriately at the dinner table, which in turn, leads to being recognized and respected by both men and women. Equally true, providing good services to the ladies, such as carrying their luggage, opening their doors, or carrying their umbrellas, is an attractive gentlemanly quality to many women. In short, Young proclaims that all manners of proper conduct leads to the polishing of other less refined qualities, thus a man gain from learning these behavioral patterns. By the time this book was written, the Gilded Age (1865 to 1900)—a period when a newly elite class emerged as a result of industrialization—was in full swing. This period witnessed a profound immersion in refine deportment that, in actuality began to bloom during Lincoln's time, but became more intense during this era.

¹¹⁹ C.E. Humphrey, *Manners for Men* (London: James Bowden, 1897), Google Books.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

of the Victorian era geared toward the behavior and proper courting practices of men, and secondly, that the book was exclusively directed to an American male audience. Furthermore, the author asserts that the book provides essential information on how to comport oneself, especially in the presence of women. Unfortunately, the book was written fourteen years after Lincoln's death and, of course, it was impossible for Lincoln to have read it.

Another question that arises is whether Lincoln would have been interested in reading this type of literature. A quick overview of Lincoln's reading list reveal that his interest was more geared towards reading entertaining, stimulating and thought-provoking literature as opposed to books explaining proper behavior.¹²¹ Equally true, Lincoln enjoyed reading books that would elevate his understanding of a particular subject. According to Miller, "not all presidents would get books on military science from the Library of Congress, studying the subject [of warfare] in order to deal with his generals [more effectively]."¹²² This highlights important questions. If Lincoln was as interested in learning about women as he did generals, then why did he not read and study a book on gentility? Did he not once utter that "the things he wants to know are in books"?¹²³ Did he not walk several miles to borrow from a schoolmaster a grammar book to improve his language and diction?¹²⁴ Did he not predict, on numerous occasions, that his future and successes were going to be dependent on books?¹²⁵ Later in life,

¹²¹ Donald, *Lincoln*, 38.

¹²² Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 53.

¹²³ "Abraham Lincoln." *Brainy Quote*, accessed June 02, 2014, <http://www.brainyquote.com>

¹²⁴ Harold Holzer, *The Lincoln Anthology: Great Writers on His Life and Legacy from 1860 to Now* (New York: Literary Classics, 1989), 335.

¹²⁵ William E. Barton, *The Women Lincoln Loved* (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1927), 136. As a boy, Lincoln wrote the following: "Good boys who to their books apply will all be great men bye and bye."

Lincoln stated that his best friends were those who brought him books that he had never read.¹²⁶

In fact, as a surveyor, Lincoln spent several months reading Euclid's abstruse principles of geometry in order to understand ways to better serve his clients. By the end of his career as surveyor, Lincoln mastered the six books of Euclid.¹²⁷ Holzer explains that Lincoln was an autodidact and would teach himself any subject that he believed was necessary for his advancement.¹²⁸ In years prior, the French naturalist, the Comte de Buffon, writing in the eighteenth century, believed that along with other dignifying traits, a gentleman should possess a strong education.¹²⁹ Buffon believed that education was the mainstay that would elevate men in the years to come. By the turn of the century, this idea became the impetus for some members in society. This was truly the case with Lincoln who chose a law career to elevate his status in society.

Education, in Lincoln's time, was pivotal. Victorian America was a very complicated era which needed the immediate attention of the learned members of society to steer the country in the right direction. To many, including Lincoln, preoccupation with education was a time well spent, for it ensured prosperity and advancement in political circles. This social mobility was most evidently seen in the field of law. Law allowed practitioners the opportunity to enter high society through political affiliations. As a result, Lincoln spent numerous hours daily trying to

¹²⁶ Candance Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary* (New York: Schwartz and Wade Publishing, 2008), 8.

¹²⁷ Donald, *Lincoln*, 178.

¹²⁸ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 44. One can argue that Lincoln should have approached courting techniques as attentively as he did political and social matters. If Lincoln's was willing to learn Euclidian geometry, why not learn gentility (which, too many people, is a much simpler subject to master).

¹²⁹ Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Book, 1991), 37.

educate himself as a way to elevate his status among the intellectual members of society.

According to Isaac Cogdal, a friend of Lincoln, “Abraham read hard—day and night—terribly hard.”¹³⁰ As will be revealed later, Lincoln’s time constraints, coupled with his desires to rise to prominence and recognition, were the contributing factors to his lack of knowledge in courting practices and procedures. Seemingly, his decision to focus intently on his education and career caused him to be ill at ease around women, thus giving support to historian George McGovern’s claim that more than any other issue, “education was the key to improving [Lincoln’s] life.”¹³¹

When reviewing a person’s life, it is crucial to look at the historical record to determine the cultural and social influences affecting an individual’s actions. In other words, to unlock the *zeitgeist* of a particular era, one must identify and trace where that social climate originated. By implementing this type of investigation, a clearer picture into the lives of people living in that era will unfold. This is especially true in America and Britain, where social and cultural ties are deeply interlinked with each other.

In America during the nineteenth century, Lincoln adhered to a strict set of social rules that was established centuries before his time. It is commonly believed by some scholars that American traditions came from England and English traditions originally came from Rome. As a result, American conventions became products of a long chain of being that connect us with our cultural Roman ancestors. For this reason, and many others, Castiglione’s book is essential in understanding courting practices and behavior. Considered by many historians as the most comprehensive guide to gentlemanly conduct, Castiglione’s book serves as a reference guide to

¹³⁰ Joshua W. Shenk, *Lincoln’s Melancholy* (New York: Houghton Mufflin Publishing, 2005), 18.

¹³¹ George McGovern, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Henry Holt Company, 2009), 2.

what defines a true gentleman.¹³² It is from this book that subsequent writers and researchers have taken ideas to further explore and research the subject.

In analyzing Castiglione's work, it becomes apparent that he writes the book in a similar fashion to Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1350) and Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (1478).¹³³ Castiglione's focus is to educate the populace by explaining courtship through storytelling. By doing this, Castiglione is able to instruct and entertain readers on issues of gentlemanly conduct and courting procedures. In all, the book is about a group of men who congregate in the Palace of Urbino to compete for four days to discover who possesses the best courting abilities. Their objective is to woo women with their charm and convince the world that their courting habits are the best. Their ultimate goal is to embody the epitome of manhood.¹³⁴ The schematics of Castiglione's book are simple: a well-cultivated man should possess certain stellar traits to dignify himself as a gentleman. Interestingly, Lincoln fits many of these traits, with the exception of the qualities needed to be a refined dancer and a true romantic lover.

In his book, *The Women Lincoln Loved*, the historian William E. Barton states the following about Lincoln:

The Johnston girls admired and loved him; probably he could have married either of them if he had chosen. But he was not a precocious lover.¹³⁵

¹³² Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (New York, Penguin Books, 1967), Introduction.

¹³³ Jared Holloway, "The Decameron and The Book of the Courtier-A Discovery of Society," *Weblog of J. Holloway*, May 4, 2009, accessed November 18, 2016 at <https://jzholloway.wordpress.com/2009/05/04/the-decameron-and-the-book-of-the-courtier-a-discovery-of-society/>

¹³⁴ Randall Albury, "The Book of the Courtier: Unveiling Courtly Philosophy," *Philosophy Now*, October 2016, accessed November 18, 2016 at https://philosophynow.org/issues/107/The_Book_of_the_Courtier_by_Baldassare_Castiglione

¹³⁵ Barton, *The Women Lincoln Loved*, 115. The Johnston girls were Sally Bush Johnston's daughters and the step-sisters of Abraham.

Lincoln's inability to court women began at an early age and continued throughout his lifetime. As a young man, Lincoln could not attain "gentlemanly status," because the title belonged exclusively to the social elite. However, his lack of affluence and privilege did not deter him from attaining other characteristics associated with the social elite. According to Castiglione, a genteel man should possess the following characteristics: he should be educated, strong, and daring; able to speak and write with force and conviction; able to dance gracefully; he should avoid offensive and vulgar language; be able to write poetry, dress well, be courteous at all times and to all people, as well as being able to have brilliant conversations with women.¹³⁶ Arguably, it seems that Lincoln possessed all these characteristics with the exception of two. Lincoln was educated, a great writer and orator, a man who abstained from diatribes and harmful habits, and a man who was strong and reasonably courteous to most people. Yet he lacked the essentials to be a great dancer and romantic lover perhaps because he was not physically coordinated.¹³⁷ Lincoln was untidy, gawky and exceedingly tall. Lincoln was not able to hold a basic conversation with young women without being stricken by timidity.¹³⁸ He also lacked good manners and would often be critiqued for his lack of concerns with women.¹³⁹ Mary Owens, a woman who dated Lincoln, explains:

¹³⁶ Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier* (London: Internet Archive, 1606), accessed online March 2, 2015 http://www.archive.org/stream/bookofcourtier00castuoft/bookofcourtier00castuoft_djvu.txt

¹³⁷ Kimberly J. Largent, "The Life of Mary Todd Lincoln." *eHistory-Ohio State University Press*, accessed November 18, 2016, <https://ehistory.osu.edu/articles/life-mary-todd-lincoln>

¹³⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 104.

¹³⁹ Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 51.

On one occasion did I say to Mr. Lincoln that I did not believe he would make a good husband, because he did not tender his services to Mrs. [Bowling] Green [a New Salem neighbor] in helping her carry her baby [during a walk].¹⁴⁰

Though it can be argued that Lincoln's early lifetime was blemished with living in seclusion, and that books were difficult to attain, by the time he was a young man he could have read, or tried to read, a book on proper courting practices. As a young adult, Lincoln only sought the advice of friends, especially Joshua Fry Speed, as to how to captivate a woman's affection. Speed, though a good friend and trusty advisor, was himself not well familiarized with courting practices and procedures.¹⁴¹ Together, Speed and Lincoln would rely on each other as they attempted to find the key to a women's heart.

Nevertheless, if Lincoln was very concerned with unlocking the intricacies of a woman's heart, why did he not read a book to teach himself the rudiments of courting procedures? The answer is simple: Lincoln was lost in thought with other matters. This is not to imply that he was uninterested in reading books on courting, or that he was completely apathetic about the subject. Instead, Lincoln was so preoccupied with trying to elevate his status that attention was spent more on his career than to women. To put it more strongly, his main ambition was to acquire political and social distinction and respect. This is how men achieved status in Colonial times and, in the Victorian era, the rules were no different.¹⁴² Great men, it was believed, achieved status by being educated, ambitious, courteous, and attentive to their female companion. In the

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 51.

¹⁴¹ Donald, *Lincoln*, 210. Donald explains how both men supported each other as they sought marriage. It seems, however, that Speed's transition with women was easier and less fearful than Lincoln.

¹⁴² Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 21-24.

Rules of Etiquette and Home Culture, Professors Walter R. Houghton and James K. Beck

describe what makes a man great:

It is the duty of a gentleman to know how to ride, to shoot, to fence, to box, to swim, to row and to dance. He should be graceful. If attacked by ruffians, a man should be able to defend himself properly, and also to defend women from their insults.¹⁴³

Written in 1886, *the Rules of Etiquette and Home Culture* postdated Abraham Lincoln, but its contents reveal important facts. In juxtaposing the works of Castiglione with those of the two professors, major similarities can be seen. Both documents seem to define great men by similar standards and represent the continuity of past and present accepted behavior. Dancing was also mentioned in both texts as an important skill and a requirement for gentlemanly status. Overall, it was these firmly established rules that elevated men to prominent, respected and desirable positions in government. For these reasons, Lincoln was determined to achieve these goals. Even as a child, Lincoln was preoccupied with being someone great and wrote the following in his “sum” book: “Abraham Lincoln his hand and pen he will be good, but God knows when.”¹⁴⁴ According to Miller, “brewed within [Lincoln] was an intense drive to make his name mean something to the world.”¹⁴⁵ Lincoln was so anxious in attaining his objective that anything not pertaining to his pursuit was set aside. When it came to attaining his dreams, Lincoln was “the little engine that knew no rest.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴³ Walter R. Houghton and James K. Beck, *Rules of Etiquette and Home Culture* (New York: Rand, McNally & Company, 1893), Google Books.

¹⁴⁴ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 8.

¹⁴⁵ Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 66.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 65. This is a phrase used by William H. Herndon to describe Lincoln's indefatigable ambition.

Though much is not known about Lincoln's dancing abilities, it is commonly believed that he did not care much for it. James C. Humes, author and presidential speechwriter, said that Lincoln's hand was able to pen elegant prose, but his long legs lacked a similar grace.¹⁴⁷ According to Donald, from an early age Abraham did not care for dancing, just as much as he did not care for gossip, profanity, horse racing, religion, and drink.¹⁴⁸ His life revolved around his books and his thirst for knowledge. In fact, it was these books that helped his unique character and mode of being. Dancing, though entertaining for some, was not on Lincoln's to-do list as he sought the art of learning over any other activities. However, there was one specific instance when he put aside his apprehension of dancing and mustered the courage to lead a woman to the dance floor. According to Fleming, Lincoln—wearing a short swallowtail coat, shabbily patched trousers, and mismatched socks—requested a dance with Mary Todd during the American House Cotillion Party in Springfield, Illinois 1839.¹⁴⁹ In his book, *The Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln: A Book on Quotation*, Humes describes the Springfield cotillion wonderfully:

At a Springfield soiree, the courting Lincoln edged over to the silk-gowned Mary Todd and offered “Miss Mary I’d like to dance with you in the worst way.” After a spin on the floor, Mary said to “Abraham, you wanted to dance in the worst way and you certainly did.”¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ James C. Humes, *The Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Dover Publication, 2005), 22.

¹⁴⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 30.

¹⁴⁹ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 32. Lincoln truly found Mary Todd very attractive. It was her beauty and wit that encouraged him to dance with her. In later years, it was Mary that taught him how to properly interact with people in public parties. It was during his years with Mary that Lincoln became more attuned and confident with his public affairs.

¹⁵⁰ Humes, *The Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln*, 29.

In Victorian America, dance halls were an essential component of formal introduction and interaction between the sexes. According to an article written by Melissa Horsley, titled “Flirting and Courting Rituals of the Victorian Era,” ballrooms were used as gathering centers for amorous talks and romantic cotillions. Horsley explains that in Victorian times, dancing became a social ritual that was necessary to determine a suitor’s worth and qualification.¹⁵¹ To Horsley, dance halls became the nucleus to the art of courting. She explains,

In Victorian times, courting usually began at balls and dances where young girls were first introduced into society during their “coming out” ceremonies. . . . At every gathering of Victorian society the young ladies were chaperoned by their mothers so that nothing improper would happen. . . . If they followed these rules to pick their mate their personal shortcomings would balance out and they would eventually marry.¹⁵²

Dancing was a very important skill that fit wonderfully in a man’s courting arsenal.

Unfortunately, Lincoln was deficient in dancing, but his lack of skills was bolstered by his educational pursuits.

In the subsequent chapters, Lincoln’s behavior around women will be analyzed in further detail, keeping in mind that Lincoln’s view was in accordance with the Victorian ethos of the time. Evidence, however, will reveal a paradox. On the one hand, Lincoln defied conventional social and political standards, while on the other, he maintained some traditional views about women. Lincoln felt that women should equally partake in education, but he did not think that women should parallel men in political and social spheres. In other words, women should be given certain rights, such as the right to be educated, but they should live in accordance to their defined roles. As will be seen throughout this study, these sentiments, along with his silly,

¹⁵¹ Melissa Horsley, “Flirting and Courting Rituals of the Victorian Era,” *An Online Dating Guide to Courting in the Victorian Era*, at <http://www.clas.ufl.edu/users/agunn/teaching/enl3251/vf/pres/horsley.htm>

¹⁵² Ibid.

reserved, and erratic behavior around women, were a direct result of his environmental influences.

Michel Foucault's Repressive Hypothesis and Sex in Victorian America

Lincoln's inability to court women rested on a series of issues. Key among these issues was his failure to sharpen his gentlemanly approach to women and counteract his father's strong influence on him. But even more detrimental than these two factors was Lincoln's social atmosphere. Sex in Victorian America was considered taboo, enigmatic and dangerous. Prurience was condemned by the church, which controlled the discourse on what is moral and immoral sexual behavior.¹⁵³ According to Joan Perkin, "Sexual love was no longer to be pleasurable or fun, but a marital duty. Women's bodies, hidden in long, voluminous clothes, were almost as much a mystery to themselves as men. . . . Sex was not a fit discussion in polite society, among women friends or between parent and daughter."¹⁵⁴ In fact, even discussing sex between long-married heterosexual couples was rare in the nineteenth-century.¹⁵⁵

Michel Foucault, in *The History of Sexuality* (1976), argues that the bourgeoisie purposely labeled sex as deleterious to help them secure their dominance in society. According to Foucault, the groups who control the discourse are the ones who influence the way we think.¹⁵⁶ The only way to escape this repression is through uncensored discourse, which leads to

¹⁵³ Elizabeth C. Stanton, "The Christian Church and Women," *American Memory Archives*, accessed November 19, 2017, at [http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field\(DOCID+@lit\(rbnawsan8346div4\)\)](http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?ammem/naw:@field(DOCID+@lit(rbnawsan8346div4)))

¹⁵⁴ Perkin, *Victorian Women*, 51.

¹⁵⁵ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 18.

¹⁵⁶ Michel Foucault, Michel, *Human Sexuality*, Vol. I (New York: Vintage, 1990) 19. Foucault believes that western society has deliberately repressed the idea of sex from the seventeenth century up to the twentieth century (Repressive Hypothesis). To Foucault, discourse and

knowledge; the combination of open discourse and knowledge leads, in turn, to power.¹⁵⁷ In this case, power entails the recognition that sexuality is not taboo and is part of a natural human embodiment. The sharing of this power across the general population can prevent a dominant group, like the church, from controlling the idea of sex.

In a recent article titled: “Female Sexuality in the Victorian Era,” author and journalist Josephine Stone seems to agree with Foucault, but with one caveat. Stone believes that knowledge of sex in Victorian times was acquired through the written word.¹⁵⁸ She believes that women alleviated their sexual frustrations by communicating through letters with one another. Stone explains the following:

Most knowledge of women's reactions to sexual behavior during the Victorian era is taken from letters, ones in which women wrote each other of their love, anger and common emotions that, at the time, weren't allowed to be openly expressed. A young Emily Austin wrote a letter describing the disappointment she felt after her wedding night, after her marriage to John Austin. She described their honeymoon as 'a nightmare of physical pain and mental disappointment' because John had intercourse quickly and without sensitivity.¹⁵⁹

Stone argues that the same way written words can hurt it can also heal.¹⁶⁰ Writing provided comfort and catharsis to sexually inexperienced women and gave them more confidence to

knowledge would strip the conventional certainty of those who repress the idea of sex as being evil and liberate humanity from sexual ignorance.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵⁸ Josephine Stone, “Female Sexuality in the Victorian Age,” *Quail Bell Magazine*, August 21, 2011, accessed November 19, 2015, <http://www.quailbellmagazine.com/the-real/female-sexuality-in-the-victorian-age>

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

express themselves freely. Overtime, it was the written word that liberated women's apprehension of sex.¹⁶¹

In Lincoln's time, the church controlled and limited the discourse about sex, greatly muting it to the extent that members of society approached the topic with consternation and confusion. Lincoln, not well attuned with courting practices from the onset, was further crippled by the strict secrecy of sex. It was this, coupled with his father's unwillingness to communicate on matters of intimacy, which truly wounded Lincoln's confidence. If only Lincoln's father would have allowed the boy to read freely, then perhaps he would have taught himself the art of courtship, instead of trying to catch up on books he always wanted to read. In Lincoln's life, he always had an urgency of purpose as he stubbornly sought to learn as much as he could from the short respite he received while working with his father. Unfortunately, it was his father's lack of encouragement in education that disgusted him most.¹⁶² Lincoln's relationship with his father affected him mentally as he refused to associate himself with his father during his adult years. Even more telling was the way he reared his children in total contrast to the way he was raised.

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Donald, *Lincoln*, 40. Donald explains that Thomas would beat Lincoln when he caught him reading instead of working the fields. Education was Lincoln's main passion, and he felt that his father was restricting his progression in life. It was during his early adolescent years that Lincoln drifted further away from his father and became alienated. At this early age, Lincoln felt at ease in isolation and studied quietly on his own.

Chapter 2: Lincoln's Youth and Marfan Syndrome

Thomas Lincoln

As a young man, Thomas Lincoln attempted to be successful by trying to acquire land. When his father, Abraham, died at the hands of marauding Indians, the land went to the eldest son, Mordecai.¹⁶³ As a result, Thomas traveled to various regions in search for land, believing that land would lead to good fortune. Regrettably, he was never successful in Kentucky. His farm in Hodgenville, Kentucky had a lien against it, and his farm in Knobs Creek was later claimed by a previous owner.¹⁶⁴ Kentucky had the strictest inheritance laws in the nation, with countless defective titles and weak property laws that fail to protect the procurer of land.¹⁶⁵ Thomas eventually found land in Indiana, but he was very lazy. According to the historian Allan Guelzo, all his neighbors remembered Thomas as “lazy and worthless . . . an excellent specimen of poor white trash who can barely read or write, a peddler always doing, but doing nothing great. . . . [He] was happy, lived easy and contented.”¹⁶⁶ In a similar fashion, Barton wrote the following about Lincoln's father: “Thomas Lincoln was an unambitious man from whom all qualities of greatness would seem to have been absent.”¹⁶⁷

One can make the argument that Thomas Lincoln resented Abraham because of his son's natural discernment and high propensity for knowledge. If Thomas was indolent in his duties,

¹⁶³ Donald, *Lincoln*, 26. Primogenitor: the land goes to the eldest son.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁶⁶ Allan Guelzo, “The Young Man Lincoln—The Mister Lincoln Lecture Series Part 1.” A Public Lecture Series Conducted at Gettysburg College.

¹⁶⁷ Barton, *The Women Lincoln Loved*, 101.

then why was he so adamant in forcing Lincoln to work? In fact, Augustus H. Chapman, grandson of Sarah Lincoln, stated, “Thomas Lincoln never . . . thought much of Lincoln as a boy,” showing evidence that he had some form of antipathy toward his son.¹⁶⁸ This indifference must have affected Lincoln in a negative way and forged Lincoln’s dismissive attitude towards his father. Sigmund Freud argued that adult neurosis stems from childhood trauma and can, at times, lead to anxiety and phobias.¹⁶⁹ Overall, it seems that Thomas purposely wanted to derail Lincoln’s focus on education because he knew that the boy had talent. Arguably, his father’s harsh ways made Lincoln bitter, and this, in turn, promoted his ill comments towards his father in his later years. According to Fleming, Lincoln said that his father “grew up literally without education. . . [H]e did nothing more than bunglingly learn to write his name. . . . there was absolutely nothing to excite ambition or education.”¹⁷⁰ Regrettably, two years after he wrote these words, Thomas died. Although he lived only seventy-five miles away, Lincoln did not attend the funeral. He commented that, because he was “unable to stimulate a grief” that he did not “feel,” he chose to “remain at home.”¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁸ Guelzo, “The Young Man Lincoln.”

¹⁶⁹ Joshua W. Shenk, *Lincoln’s Melancholy* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 238. Throughout his life, Abraham suffered from melancholy, yet it is not known whether he had phobias (although, at times, he preoccupied his mind with the concept of death). If he suffered from phobias than perhaps this could explain, in part, his inability to interact with women properly. As stated in the beginning of the research Lincoln perhaps suffered from caligynephobia—the fear of young and beautiful women.

¹⁷⁰ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 9.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 9. Thomas Lincoln died on January 17, 1851. Abraham Lincoln wrote those harsh words in 1849.

Lincoln and His Father

As an adult, Lincoln saw the utility of being a demonstrative and caring father. His love for his children was deep-seated, intoxicating and genuine. Unlike his father, who was stolid and bitter, Lincoln was affectionate, kind and open with his children. Lincoln's law partner, William Herndon, captured this profound relationship between father and sons in his biography of Lincoln. According to Herndon, "Lincoln's love for his children was liberal, generous, and always tender."¹⁷² Regrettably, Lincoln's father did not adhere to the same emotive principles and was often at loggerheads with his son. In an article entitled, "Lincoln's Legacy of Inspiration: The Surrounding of Lincoln's Birth and Childhood," Frederick Trevor Hill describes Lincoln's father in this way:

Lincoln's father was an illiterate, shiftless farmer and carpenter, without skill or training at either calling, who regarded education as a waste of time and would not permit the boy to attend school except at rare intervals.¹⁷³

From an early age, Abraham was subjected to the strong will of his father. The time was one that endorsed the paterfamilias setting, and Lincoln was forced to adhere to these rules. On several occasions, Thomas beat his son for not complying with his demands, and tension between the two intensified. At times, Thomas would destroy Abraham's books as well. Sadly, this tension lasted until Thomas died.

Though raised by an insensible and stern father, Lincoln refused to shadow his father's ways. In a conversation with his wife, Abraham said the following:

It is my pleasure that my children are free, happy, and unrestrained by parental tyranny. Love is the chain whereby to lock a child to its parents.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷² Burlingame, *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln*, 57.

¹⁷³ Frederick Trevor Hill, "Lincoln's Legacy of Inspiration: The Surrounding of Lincoln's Birth and Childhood." *New York Times*, February 1, 1909.

This is not an isolated phenomenon; in fact, many young children who are mistreated or forced to follow certain rules by their parents end up doing the total opposite.¹⁷⁵ Take for instance Martin Luther (1483-1546), the popular priest who spearheaded the Protestant movement in Europe. In many respects, Martin Luther's life parallels the life of Abraham Lincoln. Luther's father, Hans, was extremely firm and ambitious with his endeavors.¹⁷⁶ Hans wanted his son, Martin, to become a lawyer because the profession guaranteed wealth, influence and prestige.¹⁷⁷ Martin had no interest in becoming a lawyer, and, like Lincoln, he was subjected to the patriarchal culture of the times. Martin despised his father's austere rules and was often whipped and punished for his disobedience.¹⁷⁸ The constant beatings at the hands of his father influenced Martin's personality as he opted to be kind, loving and caring to his children.¹⁷⁹ Although he was forced to enter the University of Erfurt to study law, his law studies were transient, and he later decided to become a Dominican monk against his father's profound disapproval and wishes.¹⁸⁰ It was here where Martin changed the world and sparked the Protestant Reformation. Together, Martin Luther and Lincoln battled the traditional customs of their time with

¹⁷⁴ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 31-32.

¹⁷⁵ Daniel Goleman, "Sad Legacy of Abuse: The Search for Remedies," *New York Times*, January 24, 1989, accessed November 19, 2016 at <http://www.nytimes.com/1989/01/24/science/sad-legacy-of-abuse-the-search-for-remedies.html?pagewanted=all>

¹⁷⁶ "Martin Luther: The Characters," *PBS*, 2003, accessed http://www.pbs.org/empires/martinluther/char_parents.html

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

unswerving conviction and determination. In reviewing their lives, it becomes evident that both men were treated harshly by their fathers and both ended being kind and loving to their children. Both men were told that their focus in life was wrong, yet both became great men of history who were able to change the world through their memorable feats and sheer determination. It seems that the constant barrage of fatherly critique instilled within them a strong desire to avoid the behavioral pattern of their fathers. In the end, both men lived to the expectations of author Thomas Carlyle that “the history of the world is but the biography of great men.”¹⁸¹

It can be argued that the focus of Lincoln’s youth was centered on manual work for survival. Lincoln and his family lived in the wilderness—a place with no easy access to stores, neighbors or services. Kentucky and Indiana, in Victorian times, were so dense and untamed that settlers were forced to cut their way through the forest, felling trees as they went.¹⁸² Of Indiana, Lincoln once wrote the following verses when he revisited the region:

When first my father settled here,
’Twas then the frontier line:
The panther’s scream filled night with fear
And bears preyed on the swine.¹⁸³

To survive, the family had to rely exclusively on the environment for food, shelter and protection. Relying on one’s environment for sustenance took a lot of work, time and effort. As a result, Lincoln had very little time to read and study. As the American statesman and Civil War General, Carl Schurz, suggests in his essay, “Abraham Lincoln,” “when only a mere boy, Lincoln had to help in supporting the family, either on his father’s clearing, or hired out to other

¹⁸¹ “Thomas Carlyle” *Notable Quotes*, accessed June 11, 2014, <http://www.motable-qoutes.com>. Carlyle believed that decisions of individuals make memorable historical events happen.

¹⁸² Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 2.

¹⁸³ David H. Donald, *We Are Lincoln Men* (New York: Simon and Schuster Publishing, 2003), 3.

farmers to plough, chop wood, or drive ox teams.”¹⁸⁴ In fact, in an interview titled “Exploring Abraham Lincoln’s Melancholy,” the journalist Robert Siegel supported Joshua W. Shenk’s claim that the principal factors behind Lincoln’s depression were his biological makeup and environmental influences.¹⁸⁵ In the interview, Shenk explains how Lincoln’s melancholy was affected by many issues; key among them was his father’s restriction of books and learning.

According to Shenk,

Lincoln’s relationship with his father was so cold that observers wondered whether there was any love between them. The relationship was strained by a fundamental conflict. From a young age, Abraham showed a strong interest in his own education. At first his father helped him along, paying school fees and procuring books. . . . But at some point, Tom Lincoln began to oppose the extent of his son’s studies. Sometimes the boy neglected his farm work by reading. Tom would beat him for this, and for other infractions. [To Thomas,] men who had been born and expected to die on farms, book learning had limited values.¹⁸⁶

The psychologist Karen Horney explains how the behavior of parents affects the psychological development of children. Horney argues that neurosis, a mental and emotional disorder that affects human personality, is not a medical disease; instead, the condition is an illness acquired through life experiences.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Shenk explains how modern psychologists

¹⁸⁴ Holzer, *The Lincoln Anthology*, 331.

¹⁸⁵ “Lincoln’s Depression” *Exploring Abraham Lincoln’s Melancholy*, accessed June 12, 2014, <http://www.npr.org>

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ “Karen Horney—Biography.” *Famous Psychologists*, accessed, June 12, 2014, <http://www.goodtherapy.org/famous-psychologists/karen-horney.html> Karen Horney was a leading psychoanalyst who established a practice in Brooklyn, New York in the 1930s. Horney was also a faculty member at New York Medical College, where she served as advisor and conducted numerous researches on mental disorders. Horney believed that many mental illnesses, including neurosis, are not innate; instead they are developed by environmental and social experiences. She believes that childhood experiences are crucial in determining a person’s mental state as adults.

focus on harsh life events and conditions to explain how early childhood development influences adult behavior.¹⁸⁸ Shenk argues that children are more susceptible to absorbed negative feedback than adults. The idea that negative life experiences can fuel a person's desire to succeed is a concept that Shenk and Horney support.¹⁸⁹ From her clinical practices, research and experiments, Horney identifies three broad categories of a person's neurotic needs: compliance, aggression and detachment.¹⁹⁰ The latter fits Lincoln's personality pattern.

According to Horney, a person in the detachment stage may strive to become self-reliant and often considers isolation, independence, and few associations with others as the only way to succeed.¹⁹¹ These types of individuals can have family and friends, but do not rely on their support or guidance to move forward. Their determination to become influential is fueled by their negative childhood experiences and the unwillingness of becoming like their aggressive parents.¹⁹² In Lincoln's case, his father was his *bête noir*, and he adamantly refused to be like him. The experiences in the wilderness, coupled with his father's austere rearing, caused Lincoln's hatred of rural country and farm work. For this reason, among others, Lincoln preferred the city and promoted modernity over rural America. It was in New Salem, Springfield

¹⁸⁸ "Lincoln's Depression," *Exploring Abraham Lincoln's Melancholy*, October 26, 2005, accessed <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=4976127>

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., Joshua Wolfe Shenk believes that social influences, including Lincoln's melancholic state, promoted his drive to become great.

¹⁹⁰ "Karen Horney—Biography." *Famous Psychologists*, accessed, June 12, 2014, <http://www.goodtherapy.org/famous-psychologists/karen-horney.html>

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

and Washington, D.C. where Lincoln felt most comfortable, alive and at ease.¹⁹³ It was in the former town where Lincoln's restraints were finally set free. Herndon explains:

New Salem is the ground on which Lincoln walked, and talked, joked and laughed, loved and despaired, read law, studied literature and grammar, read for the first time Shakespeare and Burns, and here it was that his reason once bent to its burdens.¹⁹⁴

To Lincoln, the city provided all the necessary supportive and educational services needed for him, and later his family, to prosper.

All of Lincoln's children were reared in the city, where accessibility to literature was more frequent and books were easily available. There is some evidence suggesting that by the latter part of the nineteenth century, the education and management of children became an important theme, specifically in cities. In 1852, the educator and lecturer, Charles Davies, presented a comprehensive and informative resolution to the Michigan State Board of Education on how to instruct young children properly.¹⁹⁵ The lecture was entitled, "On the Duties and Relations of Parents, Teachers, and Pupils."¹⁹⁶ Davies explains,

The great problem of the present age is the education of the young. The diffusion of knowledge among men—the analysis of the rights of man, as an intelligent, social and accountable being—a careful examination of the laws of civil society and of social

¹⁹³William Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln and Ann Rutledge: A Public Lecture* (Indiana State Library: Digitized Internet Archive, 2010), 14. Herndon wonderfully describes the vitality of New Salem during Lincoln's arrival. According to Herndon, New Salem was a convivial and astir town where "all strangers, every newcomer, was initiated quickly, sharply and rudely, into the lights and mysteries of western civilization."

¹⁹⁴ "Karen Horney," *Famous Psychologists*, accessed <http://www.famouspsychologists.org/karen-horney/>

¹⁹⁵ Charles Davies, "On the Duties and Relations of Parents, Teachers, and Pupils: Public Lecture" The Online Book Page, at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=moa;idno=AHK9722>

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

relation, have awakened humanity from the slumber of ages, and it now appears on the stage of human action.¹⁹⁷

This short but powerful treatise was followed by a series of pamphlets and books on the topic of education and children. One book, by writer Jacob Abbott, stood out as one of the most elaborate step-by-step examinations on the rearing and education of children. Abbott's *Gentle Measures in the Management of the Young* (1871) states the following:

The principle on which a firm parental authority may be established and maintained, without violence or anger, and the right development of the moral and mental capacities be promoted by methods in harmony with the structure and the characteristics of the juvenile mind.¹⁹⁸

In other words, instead of being draconian and insolent with children—as was the case with many parents of the eighteenth century—parents were urged to be sensitive, caring and understanding.¹⁹⁹ By employing these means, parents were assured a more productive and caring child will emerge. Though Abbot's book postdates Lincoln, the lecture by Davies parallels his lifetime and gives evidence to the idea that the role of children was gradually changing for the better. To put it more strongly, Abbot's and Davies' works highlighted some of the active and prolific movements for the education and treatment of children. Their objective was to promote parental participation in the lives of children so that their offspring could flourish

¹⁹⁷ Charles Davies, "On the Duties and Relations of Parents, Teachers, and Pupils: Public Lecture" The Online Book Page, at <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=moa;idno=AHK9722>

¹⁹⁸ Jacob Abbott, *Gentle Measures in the Management of the Young* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1872).

¹⁹⁹ Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution*, 49. Wood wonderfully describes child-rearing in Colonial America in the following terms: "Nearly all of the traditional child-rearing manuals advocated the physical punishment of children. Heads of households expected their authority to be instantly acknowledged, and they beat their children and other dependents with a readiness and fierceness." Perhaps Abraham's father, Thomas, followed this child-rearing technique.

and strive. The literature also hinted at the possibility that there were foreseeable problems with Victorian youths that needed to be rectified through education and proper rearing.

Lincoln's Youthful Experiences

As a boy in a southern state, Lincoln was expected to follow the conservative rules of manhood. Raised in a farm in rural Kentucky, and subsequently in Indiana, Lincoln was responsible for helping his father rear his family. Along with his cousin, Lincoln would work many hours in the sweltering heat in an effort to feed his family and secure their well-being.²⁰⁰ Unquestionably, farm work was difficult, tedious and demanding, but remarkably, Lincoln was able to find some time to devote to his reading, although such times were often fleeting. Reading was Lincoln's greatest passion, as he was sometimes known to shirk work in order to read.²⁰¹ According to his stepmother, Sarah Bush Lincoln, "Abe didn't like physical labor—he was diligent for knowledge. . . . he would sometimes take a book and retire aloft—go to the stable or field and read."²⁰² His cousin, Dennis Hank, confirmed this fervor when he stated that "Abe was a constant and stubborn reader. . . . often neglecting his work by reading [books]."²⁰³ Lincoln's thirst for knowledge was mistakenly equated with idleness and selfishness. Hank described Lincoln as "a lazy—a very lazy man."²⁰⁴ Yet if one examines what made Lincoln lazy and selfish, it is simply being a bibliophile. According to Miller, a disinclination for manual labor and an interest for reading, was, in those times, considered being lazy.²⁰⁵ On the contrary, if we

²⁰⁰ Donald, *Lincoln*, 31-32.

²⁰¹ Shenk, *Lincoln's Melancholy*, 14.

²⁰² Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 14.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 20.

²⁰⁴ Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 30.

apply author Douglass L. Wilson's definition of manhood, Lincoln is the epitome of masculinity for his vigor and competitive nature. According to Wilson, "a man entailed more than simply reaching a certain age; in practice it meant proving oneself physically in contest with other boys and eventually with other men."²⁰⁶ Lincoln's masculinity was seen in an arm wrestling match victory against Jack Armstrong, the mightiest and biggest member of the Clary Grove Boys gang.²⁰⁷

This observation is very important because it provides another interpretation to what makes a person a man. While Lincoln was both studious in his reading and indifferent about manual labor, he was also strong and fiercely competitive. Therefore, was he masculine or not? The answer lies on how one interprets manhood. The same idea can be applied to Lincoln's view of women. Lincoln's lack of proper etiquette with women has been an issue of discussion by scholars who each interpret their findings differently. Nevertheless, as the evidence presented here will attempt to prove, Lincoln's courting incapability was caused by social influences and personal shortcomings.

There is an old saying that the apple does not fall far from the tree, and although the statement is far from the truth when considering most traits of Thomas and Abraham Lincoln, there is a slight overlap that connects both men to a specific common behavior: which is, the inability to court women successfully. *In the Women in Lincoln's Life*, the historian Donald Winkler argues that Thomas cared nothing for proper forms, etiquette, and customs.²⁰⁸ Winkler believes that Thomas' reason for marriage rested on the same old traditional belief that women

²⁰⁵ Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 31.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 31.

²⁰⁷ Donald., *Lincoln*, 50.

²⁰⁸ Donald Winkler. *The Women in Lincoln's Life* (Tennessee: Rutledge Hill Press, 2001), 3.

are responsible for the domestic chores and the nurturing of children. From the onset, Thomas had no ambition to court his eventual wife, Nancy, and felt that such endeavors were pointless and onerous. In his book, *The Women Lincoln Loved*, William E. Barton describes how Thomas merely looked at Nancy during a courting session and rarely muttered a word.²⁰⁹ This lack of courtship can also be seen when Thomas sought the hand of Sarah B. Johnston upon the death of his wife, Nancy. According to historical records, Thomas approached Miss Johnston and said the following:

“Well, Miss Johnston, I have no wife and you have no husband. I came to marry you [and] I have no time to lose; if you are willing let it be done straight off.”²¹⁰

Clearly, there was not an ounce of courting etiquette in Thomas’s soul—just plain contract propositions. Barton describes how Thomas merely approached Sarah B. Johnston directly and asked her for marriage.²¹¹ Thomas did not care for romantic formality and married more for necessity than for love. As a result, Abraham was never instructed on how to court women and, in turn, was never able to fully immerse himself in the practice. This resulted in his lack of confidence and ultimately led to his depression and melancholy. But before discussing Lincoln’s behavior around women, let us briefly analyze his biological makeup because, this too, in varying degrees, contributed to the way he felt women perceived him.

Lincoln and Marfan Syndrome

In an article written by Harold Schwartz entitled, “Lincoln and Marfan” (1964), Schwartz speculates that Abraham Lincoln’s physical makeup and weariness was caused by this congenital disease. According to Schwartz, Marfan is a disease of the connective tissues that

²⁰⁹ Barton, *The Women Lincoln Loved*, 70.

²¹⁰ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 6.

²¹¹ Barton, *The Women Lincoln Loved*, 100.

leads to all sorts of physical complications and abnormalities. Marfan, he argues, distort the normal human framework by elongating certain body parts and loosely connecting tissue to muscles.²¹² The syndrome ranges from mild to severe and has no cure. Individuals with this disease manifest all sorts of physical abnormalities, such as long limbs, rawboned facial features, sunken chest, myopia, dark circles under eyes, tiredness, skin trouble and depression.²¹³ Schwartz's clinical diagnosis, based on a visual inspection of the physical abnormalities in Lincoln's body, is that he had the characteristics associated with Marfan Syndrome.²¹⁴ Of course, his diagnosis was conducted by examining Lincoln's photographs, a posthumous investigation. Schwartz elaborates on the reasons for his diagnosis in this way:

Many well-documented and repeated descriptions show that Abraham Lincoln was unusually tall as a child and that, beginning at 11 years of age, he experienced a period of rapid growth which brought him to his full height of 76 inches at 17 years of age. His extremities were disproportionately long as compared to his overall height; his fingers were elongated and bony, and he had unusually large feet. . . his leanness and lack of subcutaneous fat accentuated his linear proportions. The skin was leathery and sallow. His head, while relatively small for his body, was thin and elongated, with large ears set

²¹² "Dr. Harold Shwartz on Lincoln and the Marfan Syndrome." *Abraham Lincoln and Marfan Syndrome*, accessed June 18, 2014, <http://history.furman.edu/benson/fyw2010/graham/grahamcharactersource4.htm>. Marfan syndrome is a hereditary ailment that is known to skip various generations. This could explain why Lincoln's sons did not have their father's physical makeup.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid. In 1959, Dr. Schwartz was caring for a young patient that was later revealed to be a descendant of the Lincolns. Like Abraham, the young man was exceedingly tall for his age with long and bony fingers and leathery skin. The boy was diagnosed by Dr. Schwartz as having Marfan syndrome. Being enthralled by the case, Dr. Schwartz decided to diagnose Lincoln posthumously. Through various pictures taken of Abraham, Dr. Schwartz deduced that the sixteenth president had Marfan syndrome. Archival health records also revealed that Lincoln's great-great grandfather, Mordecai Lincoln II, had an unknown genetic disease that caused him to be lanky and physically disproportionate. Dr. Schwartz believes that Mordecai was suffering from Marfan syndrome, but was not classified with the disease because the disease was not known during those times. In fact, it was in 1896 when patients with these physical abnormalities were first classified as having Marfan syndrome. Dr. Shwartz's diagnosis was that Lincoln's unusual morphological organization is indicative to Marfan syndrome.

at wide angles. The eyes were small, blue-gray; the eyelids were heavy with a tendency to droop. It was frequently noted that there was an intermittent squint of the left eye, and it has been established that he was hyperopic. . . Standing he had a slight sloop, which emphasized the narrowness of his sloping shoulders and when seated he has spiderlike legs. . . When moving about he was characteristically loose-jointed in all his actions and motions.²¹⁵

Further, Charles J. Bruce, an attending physician in the Marfan clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, believes that Lincoln had all the attributes of Marfan syndrome.²¹⁶ According to Bruce, Lincoln's tall, lanky and cadaverous features are indicative to the disease.²¹⁷ Though no genetic testing existed to prove that Lincoln was afflicted by the illness, portraits of Lincoln reveal possible attributes to Marfan.

If true, then biologically Marfan must have affected Lincoln's physical state, but psychologically, it could also have stripped away his confidence with women. In part, it was this negative self-concept which led to various bouts of melancholy. Arguably, Lincoln's uneasiness and apprehension with women was due, largely in part, to his physical looks. In fact, one observer proclaimed that Lincoln was "as ruff a specimen of humanity as could ever be found."²¹⁸ The American author, Nathaniel Hawthorne, describes Lincoln in the following way:

He was dressed in a rusty black frockcoat and pantaloons, unbrushed, and worn so faithfully that the suit had adapted itself to the curves and angularities of his figure, and had grown to be an outer skin of the man. He had shabby slippers on his feet. His hair was black, still unmixed with gray, stiff somewhat bushy, and had apparently been acquainted with neither the brush nor comb, that morning, after the disarrangement of the pillow; and as to a night cap, Uncle Abe probably knows nothing of such effeminacies. His complexions and swallow, betokening, I fear, an insalubrious atmosphere around the

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Mayo Clinic. "Marfan Syndrome Diagnosis and Treatment-Mayo Clinic". Filmed [November 20, 2009] You Tube video, 12:04. Posted [November 20, 2009]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y21C7gc-jFg>

²¹⁷ Ibid.

²¹⁸ Donald, *We Are Lincoln Men*, 11.

White House; he has thick black eyebrows and an impending brow; his nose is large, and the lines about his mouth are very strongly defined.²¹⁹

Though written during his presidency, the description captures Lincoln's dressing style and physical looks. In an era where proper courting practices and comeliness were essential to capture a girl's heart, Lincoln seemed unkempt, awkward, bemused and uncomfortable.²²⁰ In fact, it seems that Lincoln's lack of appeal caused him to fill that void with his humor, intelligence and behavior. Donald explains that Lincoln's threadbare clothing, disagreeable physical appearance, and social deficiencies around women were compensated for his honesty, aptitude, good-humor and consideration.²²¹ Arguably, it was mainly through these charismatic means that Lincoln was able to attract women. On the other hand, Lincoln's inability to court women suitably led some to believe that he was gay. Among the fiercest advocate of this belief was the psychologist Clarence Author Tripp, who will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

In an article written by *New York Times* journalist Warren Leary, he describes how Professor Victor A. McKusick and his nine research assistants attempted to obtain tissue samples from Lincoln's relics.²²² The group wanted to gain access to Lincoln's hair, bone fragments, and bloodstained artifacts in an attempt to clone Lincoln's genes and prove whether or not he had Marfan syndrome.²²³ Though interesting and daring, the proposed research was received by a

²¹⁹ Harold Holzer, *The Lincoln Anthology*, cover page.

²²⁰ Donald, *Lincoln*, 104.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 106.

²²² Warren E. Leary. "Panel Backs DNA Tests on Lincoln's Tissue," *The New York Times*, May 3, 1991, November 19 2016 accessed <http://www.nytimes.com/1991/05/03/us/panel-backs-dna-tests-on-lincoln-s-tissue.html>

²²³ *Ibid.*

barrage of criticism. Most of Lincoln's admirers believed that it was unethical and boorish to defile the remains and clothing of an American icon.²²⁴ As a result, the Justice Department, pending further advancement in DNA research, immediately postponed the research.²²⁵

Remarkably, more than twenty-four years has passed since the article was first written, and no attempts have been made to reverse the decision of the courts.²²⁶ Though it has not been definitively proven whether Lincoln had Marfan syndrome, his physical characteristics are suggestive of it, and this further suggests that there is a correlation between Lincoln's biological makeup and his psychological disposition. There is no denying that Lincoln's physical appearance was not representative of average human features, and this alone might have led to his depression and anxiety. Take for instance a tea gathering between Henry C. Whitney—a friend of Lincoln's—the mayor of Urbana, Illinois, and his beautiful wife.²²⁷ During the whole informal gathering, Lincoln was uncomfortable with his hands and arms, often trying to conceal them from the sight of the mayor and, especially, his wife.²²⁸ Seeing Lincoln's anxiety and physical mannerisms, Whitney decided to shorten their stay at the mayor's house in order to alleviate Lincoln's insecurities.²²⁹ In fact, throughout his life, Lincoln had always been

²²⁴ Ibid.

²²⁵ Glen W. Davidson, "Abraham Lincoln and the DNA Controversy," *The Journal of Abraham Lincoln Association*, Winter 1999, November 18, 2016
<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0017.103/--abraham-lincoln-and-the-dna-controversy?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Burlingame, *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln*, 125. Burlingame explains how Henry C. Whitney knew that Lincoln was very bashful around women and preferred to interact with men in political matters.

²²⁸ Ibid., 125.

²²⁹ Ibid., 125-126.

conscious of his physical makeup; these anxieties led to his preferring to associate with intimate friends as opposed to with unknown individuals.

Unfortunately, over the course of time, Lincoln's insecurities led to a series of problems; key among them was a low self-concept, depression and a deep recognition of his ill-favored physical appearance. Adding to this psychological dilemma was the consistent utterance of disparaging comments by his friends, families, and foes. The end result was a debilitating and negative influence on Lincoln's psyche. Words such as "lazy," "ugly," and "gawky" were consistently used to describe Lincoln's physical appearance and behavior. It was these types of words which, over a period of time, had a psychological effect on him. This very well could be the reason why Lincoln felt ugly, inferior and undeserving of women. Take as an example the description given to him by William Howard Russell, a foreign correspondent:

Soon afterward there entered, with a shambling, loose, irregular, almost unsteady gait, a tall, lanky, lean man, considerably over six feet in height, with stooping shoulders, long pendulous arms, terminating in hands of extraordinary dimensions, which however, were far exceeded in proportion by his feet. He dressed in an ill-fitting, wrinkled suit of black, which put one in mind of an undertaker's uniform at a funeral; round his neck a rope of black silk was knotted in large bulb, with flying ends projecting beyond the collar of his coat; his turn-down shirt collar disclosed a sinewy muscular yellow neck, and above that, nestling in a great black mass of hair, bristling and compact like a ruff of mourning pins, rose the strange quaint face and head, covered with its thatch of wild republican hair, of President Lincoln.²³⁰

In his book, *Lincoln's Melancholy*, Joshua W. Shenk describes Lincoln as a man with an ebb and flow depressive cycle.²³¹ Throughout his life, Lincoln suffered from severe melancholy, with some of these depressive spells were so egregious that it took several months for Lincoln to

²³⁰ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 124.

²³¹ Joshua W. Shenk, *Lincoln's Melancholy* (New York: First Mariner Books, 2005), Chpt 1.

recuperate.²³² In her article on Marfan syndrome, Anna Krigel explains that Marfan patients, at times, exhibit permanent melancholic eyes and somber facial expressions.²³³ In fact, the historian George McGovern mentions heredity as a possible factor to Lincoln's melancholy, believing that unpredictable depressive bouts are usually associated with one's biological makeup.²³⁴ This idea was also supported by Shenk. Shenk states,

Depression and other mood disorders run in families, not only because of what happens in those families, but because of the genetic material families share. . . A person who has one parent or sibling with depression is one and a half more likely than the general population to experience it.²³⁵

Over the years, medical research has proven that Marfan syndrome produces depression and anxiety in most people afflicted with the disease.²³⁶ Therefore, if Lincoln had Marfan syndrome,

²³² Ibid., Chpt 3.

²³³ Anna Krigel, "Did Abraham Lincoln Have Marfan Syndrome?" *Clinical Correlations*, at <http://www.clinicalcorrelations.org/?p=6110>. People with Marfan syndrome and MEN2B suffer from Skeletal Muscle Hypotonia which leads to the melancholic face seen in people like Lincoln.

²³⁴ McGovern, *Abraham Lincoln*, 4. McGovern also mentions death in the family, failed romance, business failures, elections defeats, and even bad weather as possible factors for Lincoln's depression.

²³⁵ "Lincoln's Depression," *Exploring Abraham Lincoln's Melancholy*, accessed June 12, 2014, <http://www.npr.org>.

²³⁶ Anna Krigel, "Did Abraham Lincoln Have Marfan Syndrome?" *Clinical Correlations*, at <http://www.clinicalcorrelations.org/?p=6110>.

than perhaps this explains his intermittent depressive cycles.²³⁷ As Herndon once said of his former law partner, “Lincoln’s melancholy dripped from him as he walked.”²³⁸

The depression can also explain his haggard and wizened looks. In numerous pictures, Lincoln looks older than his actual age. Fleming describes a picture taken of the president in 1865, remarking,

Although he was only fifty-six at the time of this 1865 photograph, people often noted how old Lincoln looked. Thirty-five pounds underweight, he was so weak and jaded that he often let his driver help him out of his carriage.²³⁹

Though it is proven that Marfan syndrome causes depression and affects the skin, this does not mean that the syndrome caused Lincoln’s old appearance. In the first picture ever taken of Lincoln in 1846, the young man’s face looks convivial with no signs of trauma or distress. However, over the course of his presidency, the young face became jaded by the constant stresses of the American Civil War (1861-1865). In fact, even Mary—in a portrait taken of her in the same year—shows signs of melancholy. After the death of her husband and two sons, she was diagnosed as suffering from chronic “nervous affliction” and was later committed to an asylum.²⁴⁰ The historian, James Swanston, describes the scene vividly:

Mary continued to live as an unsettled wanderer, spending much of her time in Europe. Irrationally, she believed herself destitute. She made mad, vicious accusations of

²³⁷ Ibid. Krigel explains that without DNA testing, we may never know whether Lincoln had Marfan. In recent articles, Dr. John Sotos, a cardiologist and medical historian, believes that Lincoln did not have Marfan, instead he suffered from MEN2B—a genetic disorder with similar characteristics to Marfan. Both syndromes manifest weakness, depression, loss of sexual drive, and abnormality in growth. One of the only differences is that people with Marfan look more physically disproportioned than those afflicted with MEN2B.

²³⁸ McGovern, *Abraham Lincoln*, 4.

²³⁹ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 126.

²⁴⁰ Ibid., 126. The death of her husband, and three children, truly affected the mental status of Mary, as she began to experience paranoia.

dishonesty and theft against her son Robert, which led him to have her committed to a sanitarium for four months in 1875. . . . She posed for the notorious spirit photographer Mumler, who supplied her with the expected image of the ghosts of Abraham Lincoln and Willie hovering above her. . . . She finally moved to Springfield and died on July 16, 1882.²⁴¹

Perhaps, Mary did not suffer from Marfan syndrome but was affected by the times. Therefore, to say that Lincoln's appearance was caused by natural depression and not Marfan syndrome is a lucid, valid and credible response. As the poet Charles Bukowski once said, "at times, it is not the large things that send a man to the madhouse . . . [Instead] it is the continuing series of small tragedies . . . a shoelace that snaps, with no time left."²⁴² Nonetheless, the idea that Marfan syndrome caused these problems cannot be ignored either. Both arguments can stand up under criticism or analysis.

It is a medically accepted belief that Marfan syndrome can be inherited. The syndrome is known to transfer from parents to children, at times skipping an entire generation. In fact, a child of a person with Marfan syndrome has a fifty percent chance of inheriting the disease, but some cases are different.²⁴³ Different mutations of the affected gene exist, and not all people experience the same physical and mental dilemmas. In other words, the defective gene expresses itself in different ways in different people.²⁴⁴ Lincoln had four male children, and all died young with the exception of Robert, the eldest son. Edward died first; he was only four years old.²⁴⁵

²⁴¹ James Swanson, *Bloody Crimes* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), 389.

²⁴² Shenk, *Lincoln's Melancholy*, 20.

²⁴³ "Marfan Syndrome." *Medicine.Net*, accessed June 21, 2014, http://www.medicinenet.com/marfan_syndrome

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 43-44.

His death was followed by eleven-year-old William and then eighteen year old Thomas.²⁴⁶

Edward and Thomas were said to have died of tuberculosis, and William, of typhoid fever.²⁴⁷

Marfan syndrome was first diagnosed in 1896, years after the death of Lincoln's three sons.²⁴⁸

Though none physically manifested signs of Marfan syndrome, it was said that the youngest of the Lincolns, Edward, was always sick, fragile with constant fits of cough and fever.²⁴⁹ There is a good possibility that none of his sons had the syndrome, but Schwartz discovered in 1959 that one of his young male patients with the syndrome was connected with the Lincoln's genealogical tree.²⁵⁰ Further study revealed that Marfan syndrome was found in a male descendant of Mordecai Lincoln II, the great-great-grandfather of Abraham Lincoln.²⁵¹ Therefore, Dr. Schwartz concludes,

The common ancestry of the patient and the sixteenth president appears to establish genealogically that Lincoln's unusual morphological characteristics were manifestation of the genetically determined arrangement of connective tissue describe by Marfan in 1896.²⁵²

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 44.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 44.

²⁴⁸ "Marfan Syndrome," *Encyclopedia.com*, 2006, November 19, 2016
<http://www.encyclopedia.com/medicine/diseases-and-conditions/pathology/marfan-syndrome>

²⁴⁹ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 44.

²⁵⁰ "Dr. Harold Shwartz on Lincoln and the Marfan Syndrome." *Abraham Lincoln and Marfan Syndrome*, accessed June 18, 2014, <http://history.furman.edu/benson/fyw2010/graham/grahamcharactersource4.htm>.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² "Dr. Harold Shwartz on Lincoln and the Marfan Syndrome," *Abraham Lincoln and Marfan Syndrome*, accessed June 18, 2014, <http://history.furman.edu/benson/fyw2010/graham/grahamcharactersource4.htm>.

Chapter 3: Lincoln and Women

Lincoln's Behavior Around Women

When it came to women, contemporaries and scholars also mistook Lincoln's views and demeanor towards them. According to Sarah Lincoln, "Abe was not very fond of girls."²⁵³ Cousin John Hanks proclaimed that he never saw Lincoln with women and that he did not seek their company.²⁵⁴ His female cousin, Sophie Hanks, stated that Abraham did not like the company of girls.²⁵⁵ Mary Owen, a woman who briefly dated Lincoln, describes him as "deficient in those little links which makes up the great chain of woman's happiness."²⁵⁶ Even Mary Todd's sister, Elizabeth Todd Edwards, added that Lincoln "could not hold a lengthy conversation with a lady—was not sufficiently educated and intelligent in the female line to do so."²⁵⁷ The American historian, Michael Burlingame, said that Lincoln's callous behavior with his wife suggests his profound lack of interest in the marriage.²⁵⁸ The psychologist Clarence Author Tripp took it a step further by suggesting that Lincoln had a clandestine affair with a

²⁵³ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 17.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 23.

²⁵⁵ "The Women," *Mr. Lincoln and Friends*, accessed June 22, 2014, <http://mrlincolnandfriends.org/inside.asp?pageID=11&subjectID=11>

²⁵⁶ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 50.

²⁵⁷ Donald, *Lincoln*, 106.

²⁵⁸ "The Women," *Mr. Lincoln and Friends*, accessed June 22, 2014, <http://mrlincolnandfriends.org/inside.asp?pageID=11&subjectID=11>

Civil War captain and was not interested in women.²⁵⁹ Harold Holzer, historian and editor, stated that there were rumors of Joshua Speed and Lincoln being paramours. Holzer states,

In 1999, a well known playwright claimed to have uncovered a long-hidden Speed diary containing explosive evidence that the two friends were actually homosexual lovers. The revelations ignited a sensation, but no diary evidence was ever presented.²⁶⁰

It is clear that the reputation of Lincoln has been posthumously marred by his treatment of women. But like his misinterpretation of manhood, his dealings with women are also not accurately presented. In fact, Edmund Wilson wrote that “more rubbish has been written about Lincoln than about any [other] American [figure in history].²⁶¹ The truth is that Lincoln was a product of his environment, an environment laden with work, duties, and responsibilities. The puzzling and complicated social structure of Victorian America depended on the resilience and acumen of great men to shift its course. As a result, men, like Lincoln—who took on the responsibility to improve society—were heavily affected by it. As the evidence will suggest, Lincoln’s personality was molded by social factors beyond his control. Furthermore, his alleged homosexual feelings, as depicted by C.A. Tripp, are unlikely, unsubstantiated, and improvable. Nevertheless, the notion will be briefly addressed.

Synthesizing Lincoln’s Early Experiences and How They Influenced His View of Women

There was practically nothing in his surroundings in Kentucky, or at Gentryville, Indiana, where he lived after his mother’s death, to touch the imaginations of a growing boy or quicken his ambition. . . The country was sparsely settled and life was not really living—it was a deplorable animal-like existence.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 15.

²⁶⁰ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 40. Larry Kramer apparently found the secret diary of Joshua Speed but was never able to produce it.

²⁶¹ Miller, *Lincoln’s Virtues*, 18.

As stated earlier, Lincoln grew up in extreme isolation in a farm far away from the vitality of city life. His father, Thomas, expected him to work diligently in the farm for numerous hours a day. He lost his mother at an early age and was often ridiculed as lazy by his father and cousins.²⁶³ On numerous occasions, his father whipped him for reading.²⁶⁴ According to Candace Fleming, whenever Thomas found “his son in the field reading, he would slash him and destroy the books.”²⁶⁵ All these experiences affected the young Lincoln in various ways.

First, the idea of living in social isolation in a quiet farm miles away from a town must have influenced Lincoln’s character. It is a psychological fact that loneliness can alter a person’s mental status.²⁶⁶ Loneliness, psychologists argue, can negatively affect a person’s capability to interact properly with other people.²⁶⁷ Take for instance solitary confinement as an example. According to social psychologist Craig Haney, prisoners in solitary confinement suffer from mental health problems including anxiety, panic, insomnia, paranoia, aggression and

²⁶² Hill, “Lincoln’s Legacy to Americans.”

²⁶³ Donald, *Lincoln*, 42.

²⁶⁴ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 9.

²⁶⁵ Ibid., 9. Fleming explains that Abraham probably would have not resented these beatings if they were balanced with fatherly love and affection. Regrettably, Thomas was a stolid man with little emotions for his son. Upon Thomas’ death, Lincoln did not attend his funeral. He felt no grief for him.

²⁶⁶ “What Extreme Isolation Does to Your Mind,” *Mother Jones*, accessed June 27, 2014, http://search.yahoo.com/search;_ylt=AiyjgJN5FVc5lr3oTh.Am2ebvZx4?p=psychologist+on+isolation&toggle=1&cop=mss&ei=UTF-8&fr=yfp-t-901

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

depression.²⁶⁸ In Lincoln's case, however, the effects were bifurcated. On the one hand, severe isolation was the furnace that empowered Lincoln's will to read with profound determination; on the other hand, it stripped him from the qualities needed to interact socially with women through courtship and dialogue.²⁶⁹

The fact that Lincoln's father kept him on the farm for hours and limited his free time was also a debilitating factor to his courtship manners.²⁷⁰ Lincoln had to choose which was more important: books or girls? By the evidence, he chose the former. One can argue that his profound preoccupation with books led him to become a genius with an Achilles heel—his weakness being the improper etiquette and courtship of women. This, coupled with his father's stolidity and incapability to teach him the “wooing techniques” of manhood, all culminated in the way he responded to women.

Furthermore, the untimely death of his mother damaged his spirit and well-being.²⁷¹ According to some psychologists, parental death has been found to be the greatest stressor of children:²⁷² “Psychoanalysts agree that when a parent dies, a child needs most the comforting presence of his surviving parent, but the impassive Thomas Lincoln, who had struggled to keep food on the family table, was not a man who could extend such comfort to his children.”²⁷³

²⁶⁸ Kristen Weir, “Alone in the Hole: Psychologist Probe the Mental Health effects of Solitary Confinement,” *American Psychological Association*, May 2012, November 20, 2016 accessed <http://www.apa.org/monitor/2012/05/solitary.aspx>

²⁶⁹ George McGovern, *Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2009), 4.

²⁷⁰ Donald, *Lincoln*, 41-42.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 33.

²⁷² “The Lifelong Effects for a Child After the Death of A Parent,” *The Good Therapy Blog*, accessed June 27, 2014, <http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/parent-death-during-childhood/>

²⁷³ Donald, *We are Lincoln's Men*, 6.

Psychologists believe that most children, who are neglected by their living parent, become existentialists and seek to find their own way to cope with their despair.²⁷⁴ The childhood researcher and psychologist, Angela Nickerson, states,

There is strong evidence that aspects of the family environment, such as quality of parental care and relationship with the surviving parent, are important in affecting long-term psychological reactions and personal development following parental loss.²⁷⁵

The death of Lincoln's mother affected him emotionally, but whether it affected the way he treated women in general, is not known. What is known, however, is that Lincoln's relationship with his father declined after his mother's death.²⁷⁶ Therefore, on this end, we can only infer that the death of his mother induced his melancholy and perhaps influenced the way he viewed women. Luckily for Abraham, the introduction of his step-mom—Sarah, to the family alleviated some of his angst and depression. In *Lincoln's Melancholy: How Depression Challenged a President and Fueled His Greatness*, Joshua Wolf Shank contends that negative social factors in Lincoln's life were the catalyst that elevated him to heightened proportions.²⁷⁷ In other words, Lincoln's tragedies became the building-blocks to his unique character. The same concept can be applied to Lincoln's view on women. Lincoln's decision to focus on books instead of girls and the negative labels put on him by his father and cousins for being lazy were all contributing factors to his character. Add to this dilemma the untimely death of his mother and his lack of courtship manners, and the end result yields a reserved, shy, and intimately awkward person.

²⁷⁴ "Existentialism," *All About Philosophy*, November 20, 2016 accessed at <http://www.allaboutphilosophy.org/existentialism.htm>

²⁷⁵ "The Lifelong Effects for a Child After the Death of A Parent," *The Good Therapy Blog*, accessed June 27, 2014, <http://www.goodtherapy.org/blog/parent-death-during-childhood/>

²⁷⁶ Donald., *Lincoln*, 42.

²⁷⁷ McGovern., *Abraham Lincoln*, 4.

Other Factors that Influenced the Way Lincoln Dealt with Women

Along with these negatives, there were other factors that influenced how women viewed Lincoln. In terms of physical appearances, Lincoln was exceedingly tall (6'4" in height) and, to some critics, his body resembled a spider.²⁷⁸ As a young rail worker for Major William Warnick, Lincoln became enthralled by the beauty of his daughter, Polly Warnick. She had fair skin with beautiful long hair and blue eyes.²⁷⁹ She had numerous suitors, and all were well accomplished.²⁸⁰ Lincoln, being aware of his unpolished physical image, knew that he did not have a chance to court her. According to Barton, Peggy looked once at Lincoln, but never looked twice, thus bringing an end to Lincoln's prospective attempts.²⁸¹ Regrettably, these types of rejections were a reality in Lincoln's life that, in some ways, shaped the way he dealt with women.

Along with his elongated limbs, Lincoln's mode of dressing was awkward and unsuited for his height.²⁸² His face was jaded with signs of melancholy. From an early age, Lincoln was scoffed at by ladies. The historian, Donald Winkler, recounts how Lincoln tried to go out with some girls, but was immediately rejected by them.²⁸³ According to Polly Richardson, a female acquaintance of the teenage Lincoln, "all the girls [her age] made fun of him . . . they even laugh

²⁷⁸ "Did You Know?" *Men of Carnegie*, February 2005, November 20, 2016 accessed <http://www.departments.bucknell.edu/history/carnegie/lincoln/didyouknow.html>

²⁷⁹ Barton, *The Women Lincoln Loved*, 164.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 164.

²⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 164.

²⁸² Holzer, *The Lincoln Anthology*, Cover Page.

²⁸³ Winkler, *Lincoln's Ladies: The Women in the Life of the Sixteenth President*, 16.

at him right before his face.”²⁸⁴ His best friend, Joshua Speed, describes Lincoln as “a long, ugly, and shapeless man.”²⁸⁵ According to historian David Herbert Donald,

Lincoln, thin to the point of emaciation, seemed always to be hastily dressed, usually in a bobtailed sack coat and jeans that did not come within inches of his feet.²⁸⁶

It was said that Lincoln himself criticized his own looks.²⁸⁷ Perhaps his ungainliness affected the way he approached women and interacted with them. Lincoln would often make fun of himself, a human coping mechanism to soften critiques and stereotypes. Being a jokester allowed him to make friends and lessen the fear of rejection.²⁸⁸ In fact, when he critiqued Mary Owens’ rotund figure, it was done more for humor than malice. The historian, David Herbert Donald, explains that Lincoln became depressed after his engagement with Ms. Owens was annulled.²⁸⁹ If Lincoln was truly disgusted by Owens’ physical appearances, he would have never felt remorse when they parted ways. To Lincoln, his statements on Ms. Owens’ weight had a hint of frivolity as he equates her size with Falstaff, a Shakespearean character whom he liked and admired. In

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 16. According to Winkler, several girls teased Lincoln because of his looks. There was one girl name Anna Roby who liked Lincoln, but by this time Lincoln was so preoccupied with books and learning that every time he met with Anna it was to teach her something. Winkler explains, “Abe have improved Anna’s intellect, but ignored her heart.” In the end, the relationship drifted apart. It was during this time that Abe did not wanted to know nothing about girls and began to voraciously focus on reading and studying.

²⁸⁵ Miller, *Lincoln’s Virtues*, 4.

²⁸⁶ Donald, *Lincoln*, 183.

²⁸⁷ Linton Weeks, “Lincoln’s Private Side: Friend, Poet, and Jokester,” *NPR History Department*, April 14, 2015, November 20th, 2016 at <http://www.npr.org/sections/npr-history-dept/2015/04/14/399495324/lincolns-private-side-friend-poet-jokester>

²⁸⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 49.

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 84-85.

fact, Donald explains that all of the women Lincoln loved were plump.²⁹⁰ In a weird sense, Lincoln was trying to woo Mary with his humor, a practice he often used to win the affection of the people. His humorous ways can be examined in other documented encounters with Mary Owens. Owens explains:

There was a company going to Uncle Billy Green's [house], Mr. Lincoln was riding with me, and we had a very bad branch to cross; the other gentlemen were very officious in seeing that their partners got over safely; we were behind, he riding in front never looking back to see how I got along; when I rode beside him, I remarked, you are a nice fellow; I suppose you did not care whether my neck was broken or not. He laughed and replied, you are plenty smart to care for yourself.²⁹¹

Time and again, Lincoln would mask his timidity and insecurities with humor to deflect unwanted blows. His relationship with Owens, at times, comes across as Lincoln being insensitive, offensive and cruel, but the truth is that his lack of knowledge in proper courtship, personal insecurities, shyness, and fear of marriage were the culprit that ended their relationship and caused it to collapse.

Lincoln and Mary Owens

From the beginning, Lincoln found Mary Owens attractive, and although her physical disposition changed over time, Lincoln continued to be smitten by her. In general, their relationship was intermittent and, at times disagreeable, but also at times genuine.²⁹² It seems that it was Owens who was less inclined to continue a romantic relationship with Lincoln than

²⁹⁰ Donald., *Lincoln*, 69.

²⁹¹ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 51.

²⁹² Richard Lawrence Miller, "Lincoln's Missouri Girlfriends," *Missouri Life: The Spirit of Discovery*, March 26, 2014, November 20, 2016 at <http://www.missourilife.com/life/lincolns-missouri-girlfriends/>

Lincoln was with her.²⁹³ Owens was a Southern woman who admired the code of manly conduct.²⁹⁴ According to historian David Blight, Southerners, in those days, valued a gentlemen understanding of courtly behavior.²⁹⁵ A gentleman, he argues, had to be honest, trustworthy, and posses class and rank.²⁹⁶ It seems that of all these requisites, it was Lincoln's idiosyncrasies and ungentlemanly conduct that Mary did not like.²⁹⁷ On one occasion, Lincoln explained how he saves a mired hog from dying, yet he was unable to manifest sensitivity with Owens. The historian and poet, Carl Sandburg, writes,

Miss Owens had ideas about chivalry and wondered how a man could be so thoughtful about a mired hog and be so lost in his own feelings that he couldn't stay alongside his woman partner when riding across a dangerous creek.²⁹⁸

Some historians, including Tripp, believe that Owens' physical appearances appalled Lincoln and that he adamantly sought to end the relationship.²⁹⁹ But numerous letters written to her suggest otherwise. After their first abrupt separation, Lincoln wrote a letter to her, but she did

²⁹³ Donald, *Lincoln*, 85.

²⁹⁴ Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years* (Connecticut: The Easton Press, 1966), 54.

²⁹⁵ Yale Course. "Southern Society: Slavery, King Cotton, and Antebellum America's "Peculiar" Region. Filmed [2014]. You Tube Video, 52:06. Posted [2014]. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PunB5vPj2sE>

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

²⁹⁷ Richard Lawrence Miller, "Lincoln's Missouri Girlfriends," *Missouri Life: The Spirit of Discovery*, March 26, 2014, November 20, 2016 at <http://www.missourilife.com/life/lincolns-missouri-girlfriends/>

²⁹⁸ Carl Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*, 54.

²⁹⁹ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 107. Tripp believes that Lincoln did not like women, especially fat women. His love interest was men, but he could not expose his true feelings to a society who condemned the practice. Therefore, he kept it private.

not write in return.³⁰⁰ A second letter was sent on December 13th, 1836 with the following message:

Mary,

I have been sick ever since my arrival here or I should have written sooner. It is but little difference, however, as I have very little even yet to write. And more, the longer I can avoid the mortification of looking in the Post Office for your letter and not finding it, the better. You see I am mad about that *old letter* yet I don't like very well to risk you again. I'll try you once more anyhow . . . You recollect I mentioned in the outset of this letter that I had been unwell. That is the fact, though I believe I am about well now; but that, with other things I cannot account for, have conspired and have gotten my spirits so low, that I feel that I would rather be any place in the world than here. I really cannot endure the thought of staying here ten weeks. Write back as soon as you get this, and if possible say something that will please me, for really I have not [been] pleased since I left you.³⁰¹

Arguably, this was a cryptic letter of loneliness and a deep longing to be with Owens.

Apparently, Owens sent him a letter with the prospect of her moving with him to Springfield, Illinois. But Lincoln, having an extremely methodical personality, wanted to make sure she was satisfied with that decision. Lincoln wrote a third letter to Owens on May 7th, 1837 with the following message:

Friend Mary,

I am often thinking of what we said of your coming to live at Springfield. I am afraid you would not be satisfied. There is a great deal of flourishing about in carriages here, which it would be your doom to see without sharing in it. You would have to be poor without the means of hiding your poverty. Do you believe you could bear that patiently? Whatever woman may cast her lot with mine should any ever do so, it is my intention to do all in my power to make her happy and contented; and there is nothing I can imagine, that could make me more unhappy than to fail in the effort.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ Donald, *Lincoln*, 84.

³⁰¹ Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*, 54-55.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 57.

In the letter, it is obvious that Lincoln wants to do right by Owens. He wants to live to the expectations of what men need to do to secure a wife and family. He is very cautious in his writings and tells Mary that he will try his hardest to make her happy and content.

In the letter he also shares his uncertainty with women when he said the following: “Whatever woman may cast her lot with mine should any ever do.”³⁰³ Clearly, Lincoln has a negative self-concept when it comes to women, and this truly affected the way he interacted with them. Unfortunately, by this time, it seems that Owens became completely disillusioned with Lincoln and refused to continue the relationship.³⁰⁴ As Owens later suggested in one of her writings: “[our relationship] differs as widely as the North differs from the South.”³⁰⁵ It was at this time that Lincoln was heart-broken and wrote a letter to Mrs. Orville H. Browning for catharsis.³⁰⁶ In the letter, he explains his whole ordeal with Owens, at times ridiculing her physical appearance out of anger as opposed to malice. Over the years, however, the true story was bogged down by innuendos and half-truths. It seems that scholars refused to realize that this was a man who was angry, hurt, and frustrated. Lincoln was unable to court women properly, and all his efforts seemed futile. As a result, he wrote with vitriol and disappointment. The

³⁰³ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 32.

³⁰⁴ Richard Lawrence Miller, “Lincoln’s Missouri Girlfriends,” *Missouri Life: The Spirit of Discovery*, March 26, 2014, November 20, 2016 at <http://www.missourilife.com/life/lincolns-missouri-girlfriends/>

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook look at Abraham Lincoln and Mary*, 33. It is obvious that Lincoln was afraid to marry Owens. He did the very same thing to Mary Todd days before the wedding. It took one year after the break-up for Simeon Francis, a good friend of Abraham, to rekindle the relationship. During those years apart from each other, Lincoln became very depressed and suicidal.

following is an excerpt from a letter written on April 1, 1838 to Mrs. Browning, a wife of a colleague and friend of Lincoln.

Dear Madam:

Without apologizing for being egotistical, I shall make the history of so much of my own life, as has elapsed since I saw you, the subject of this letter. And by the way I now discover that, in order to give a full and intelligible account of the things I have done and suffered since I saw you, I shall necessarily have to relate some that happened before. [Lincoln goes into detail as to how he met Miss Owens and in the end of the letter said the following] . . . I determined to make her my wife; and this done, all my powers of discovery were put to the rack, in search of perfections in her, which might be fairly set-off against her defects. I tried to imagine she was handsome, which, but her corpulence, was actually true. Exclusive of this, no woman that I have ever seen has a finer face. I also tried to convince myself, that the mind was much more to be valued than the person; and in this, she was not inferior, as I could discover, to any with whom I had been acquainted.³⁰⁷

Through Lincoln's personal letters, it becomes evident that he longed to be with Owens. She was pleasant in appearance and smart, two personal traits that Lincoln admired in women. His letter to Browning is laden with levity in an effort to minimize the great disappointment he underwent. In fact, throughout his life, Lincoln was a humorist—a man who entertained and relied on the laughter of others to mask his vulnerability and depression.³⁰⁸ In studying the life of comedians, the journalist, Robert Mamkoff of *The New Yorker*, states, "The core of all humor, the reason for it all, is unhappiness."³⁰⁹ Through most of his life, Lincoln was bogged down with depression and sadness, yet he used humor as a way to assuage his emotional discomfort and bolster his

³⁰⁷ Ibid., 59.

³⁰⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 457.

³⁰⁹ Shenk, *Lincoln's Melancholy*, 114. The belief that comedians are afflicted with depression and anxiety is a true reality. One needs only to look at the suicide rate of comedians in America to come with a sound conclusion. Among some American comedians who have taken their lives are Freddie Prinze, Paul McCullough, Charles Rocket, Drake Sather, and Robin Williams.

self-confidence.³¹⁰ Similarly, his critique on Owens' physical characteristics was done more as a way to amend a broken heart than to besmirch her image. Even Martinette Hardin—whom Lincoln briefly courted—said, “he never seem to know what to say in the company of women.”³¹¹ As Sandburg suggests, in this period of his life, and a little after, Lincoln felt shame and humiliation while with all types of women, but soon he would have a wiser reading and keener understanding of all people he met.³¹²

After Owens, Lincoln met the woman that would later become his wife, Mary Todd. From the beginning, their relationship was rocky, as they both were indecisive about each other.³¹³ Eventually they decided to part ways; it was during this brief hiatus in 1841 that Lincoln met another young woman, Sarah Rickard. Rickard, a refined woman, was not impressed with Lincoln's wooing practices and comments,

³¹⁰ Donald., *Lincoln*, 126.

³¹¹ Burlingame, *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln*, 124. Harding felt sorry for Lincoln because his efforts to court women led to failure. Lincoln, with all his modesty and levity, ended being either misunderstood or disliked by a few of the women he met.

³¹² Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*, 60. Sandburg suggests that Abraham Lincoln was emotionally affected by the sudden departure of Owens. Although he tried to capture her with his jokes and letters, his wooing practices were deficient and weak. His letters to Mrs. Browning was more of a man with a broken-heart looking for catharsis than a man hell-bent in destroying a woman's reputation. In the letter, Lincoln mentions the relationship with details, but never mentions Owens by name. Lincoln was very careful not to besmirch her image or generate gossip. In Victorian America, any deviation of conventional behavior was quickly put to light and viciously denounced. Sandburg believes that it was his marriage to Mary Todd that solidified Lincoln's confidence when addressing women, although Mary at times was jealous. The historian, Harold Holzer, explains how Elizabeth Keckley, Mrs. Lincoln's Dressmaker, described how Mary Todd behaved at home. Keckley stated that Mrs. Lincoln was a very jealous and unsecured woman. She would often get angry when the president was seen talking to women in the White House. Keckley's statement angered Mary and the two friends parted ways. Mary referred to Keckley as a libelous and dangerous woman.

³¹³ Donald, *Lincoln*, 108.

His peculiar manner and his general deportment would not be likely to fascinate a young girl just entering the society world.³¹⁴

Rickard indirectly provides an invaluable insight into how Victorian society viewed women at the time, and how men, like Lincoln, had to comport themselves within these strict and define rules of gentility.

Gentility in Victorian America

In Victorian America, and especially among young women, genteel appearance was pivotal in defining a person's sophistication. Emily Thornwell, a privileged nineteenth-century homemaker, created a guide to assist women on how to refine themselves correctly and perfect the feminine craft of civility. The reference book, titled *The Lady's Guide to Gentility* (1856), was specifically aimed at aristocratic women and provided instruction on how to behave, maintain cleanliness, speak, dress, eat and converse. The book was in wide circulation and was an extremely fashionable and referential manual for women. Thornwell stated,

[Women] of refinement are the most apt to detect inelegance. They are instantly offended at a deportment which is connected with vulgarity. Their organization is peculiarly delicate and they can perceive inadequacies.³¹⁵

Thornwell believed that guidebooks such as hers were necessary to define the role of women in society and keep them grounded within the confines of their craft. Her sentiments were generally the consensus among women who accepted the Victorian idea that male and female were at opposite ends and should be treated and managed differently.

³¹⁴ Michael Burlingame, *Abraham Lincoln: A Life. Vol. I* (New York: Johns Hopkins University, 2013), 74.

³¹⁵ Emily Thornwell, *The Lady's Guide to Gentility* (New York: Huntington Library and Art Gallery, 2008).

Godey's Lady Book (1830-1898) was a popular magazine across America during this period as well.³¹⁶ The magazine was predominantly for women and contained descriptions of fashion along with literature and poems.³¹⁷ Its chief editor, Sarah Josepha Hale, was an aficionado of Victorian elegance and customs.³¹⁸ Hale believed that Queen Victoria epitomized all that is feminine, pure, and proper in society.³¹⁹ As a result, she hired a fashion stylist to travel to London and serve as a correspondent, providing written insight as to the latest fashions of the queen. In 1860, this magazine was the most popular publication in America.³²⁰ Young women, especially those of the upper class, wanted to emulate the style and refinement of British polite society and relied on Hale's writings to show them the way.

In Victorian times, sense and sensibility were crucial elements. Women spent hours trying to perfect the trade of refinement to impress men and suitors, sometimes in ways that negatively affected their physical health. The preferred style among women included a small waist and a seemingly protruding rump.³²¹ To achieve this ostentatious fashion, women used a

³¹⁶ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 22. According to Fleming, Mary Todd loved to read *Godey's Lady's Book* and got lots of ideas from it. In later years, Mary Todd took patterns from *Godey's Lady's Book* to make clothes.

³¹⁷ Peggy M. Baker, "The Mother of Thanksgiving: The Story of Sarah Josepha Hale," *Pilgrim Hall Museum*, 2007, November 20, 2016 at http://www.pilgrimhallmuseum.org/pdf/Godmother_of_Thanksgiving.pdf

³¹⁸ "Sarah Josepha Hale," *Boston Women's Heritage Trail*, accessed November 20, 2016 at <http://bwht.org/sarah-josepha-hale/>

³¹⁹ Peggy M. Baker, "The Mother of Thanksgiving: The Story of Sarah Josepha Hale," *Pilgrim Hall Museum*, 2007, November 20, 2016 at http://www.pilgrimhallmuseum.org/pdf/Godmother_of_Thanksgiving.pdf

³²⁰ Ibid.

³²¹ "Victorian Bustle," *Victoriana Magazine*, 1996, accessed November 20, 2016 <http://www.victoriana.com/Victorian-Fashion/victorianbustles.html>

lace to aggressively tighten the waist. The long-term use of this style caused a series of ailments, such as stomach ulcers, gallstones, back pains, nausea, dizziness, and curvature of the spine.³²²

In all, Victorian America was a crystallization of British mores, traditions, and fashion; it was an heirloom that the British had passed down to Americans. These proprieties were essential in maintaining tradition and the social structure. As Joan Perkin has explained, “It was nearly impossible for a ‘fallen woman’ to rejoin respectable society” without being lambasted and stigmatized by her equals.³²³ This exactly was the fear of Ms. Sarah Rickards who refused to continue her fleeting relationship with Lincoln. Rickards believed that Lincoln was not adhering to the conventional rule of gentlemanly conduct and feared that her lustrous reputation could have been tarnished by his actions.³²⁴ Furthermore, she felt Lincoln was too old for her.³²⁵ As a result, she discontinued the relationship.

Time and again, Lincoln was deficient in his relationship with women. Throughout his lifetime, he has been spurned by several women and only found true comfort with two. The first was Ann Mayes Rutledge, a beautiful young woman who Lincoln admired and loved during his days in New Salem, Illinois.³²⁶ According to some historians, including John Y. Simons,

³²² Perkin, *Victorian Women*, 94.

³²³ *Ibid.*, 229.

³²⁴ Jesse W. Weik, *The Real Lincoln: A Portrait* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), 67-68.

³²⁵ Richard Lawrence Miller, “Lincoln’s Missouri Girlfriends,” *Missouri Life: The Spirit of Discovery*, March 26, 2014, November 20, 2016 at <http://www.missourilife.com/life/lincolns-missouri-girlfriends/>

³²⁶ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, According to Fleming, no single letter of Ann exists, and in the thousands of pages of correspondence Abraham left behind, there is no mention of her name. On the contrary, Author Edward Steer Jr. in his book, *Lincoln Legends: Myths, Hoaxes and Confabulations* explains that a letter, supposedly written by Lincoln, emerged in the diary of Ann’s cousin, Matilda Cameron. The letter was addressed to

Lincoln immediately became smitten by Rutledge and truly suffered upon her death (1835).³²⁷

Other historians, such as David Herbert Donald, question the validity of the relationship. Donald believes that there was an Ann Rutledge and that Lincoln took a liking to her, but cautioned the reader that no records existed on the romantic relationship.³²⁸ Instead, the only source of Rutledge and Lincoln came from the oral history of his law partner—William Henry Herndon, who did not know Abraham Lincoln at the time of this supposed love affair.³²⁹ According to Herndon, upon Rutledge's death Lincoln did the following:

He sorrowed and grieved, rambled over the hills and through the forest, day and night. . . He slept not; he ate not, he joy not. This he did until his body became emaciated and weak. His mind wandered from its throne. . . It has been said that Mr. Lincoln became and was totally insane at that time and place.³³⁰

“My Beloved Ann” and proclaimed to have been written by Lincoln. In an effort to prove its authenticity, Historian Ellery Sedgwick commissioned a forensic chemist to test the material. The paper and ink comes from Lincoln's time, but the writing cannot be determined.

³²⁷ Winkler, *Lincoln's Lady*, 18.

³²⁸ Edward Steers, Jr., *Lincoln Legends: Myths, Hoaxes and Confabulations* (The University Press of Kentucky, 2007), 40-41. Steers believes that evidence found in Matilda's diary contains a love letter from Lincoln. In the letter, Lincoln refers to Ann as “my beloved.” This is the only letter believed to have been written by Lincoln. On the flip side, some scholars believe that no letter ever existed between the two.

³²⁹ Herndon, *Abraham Lincoln and Ann Rutledge: A Public Lecture*, 5-6. In this public lecture, Herndon elevates Ann Rutledge to divine status calling her the only true love and motivating agent into Lincoln's rise to fame. According to Herndon, Ann's death shattered Lincoln's purposes and tendencies in life and that he threw off this infinite grief and sorrow by leaping wildly into the political arena as a refuge from his despair. This is truly a superficial suggestion of Lincoln's rise to fame. By far, Lincoln's biggest motivator was himself followed by his wife, Mary Todd. To suggest that Rutledge was his only springboard is inaccurate and absurd. Herndon once said, “truth in history is my sole and only motive for making this sad story now public for the first time. . . . I do not wish to awaken or injured the dead, nor to wound or injure the feelings of any living man or woman.” On two counts, Herndon was wrong. First, to purposely disregard Mary's pertinent role in Lincoln's life is not to grant a bird's eye view of history, and second, his profound vitriol against Mary offended and injured her immensely. Many historians, including Donald, warn that while reading Herndon, one must be careful and analyze the facts accurately.

³³⁰ Winkler, *Lincoln's Ladies*, 15.

Though many historians agreed that Herndon was in the best position to describe Lincoln's early years, his hatred of Mary Todd makes the Rutledge-Lincoln romance hagiographical and biased. Herndon describes the marriage as "a burning, scourging hell as terrible as death and as gloomy as the grave."³³¹ For these reasons, historians and scholars have fiercely debated the romance's authenticity for decades.

One book that is fascinating and interesting is Donald Winkler's *The Women in Lincoln's Life*. According to Winkler, Lincoln suffered immensely for his first true love, Ann Rutledge. Rutledge, he argued, was Lincoln's soulmate and upon her death, he spiraled into a deep and life-threatening melancholy.

The same story is told by David Herbert Donald, who says ,

[After Rutledge's death] Lincoln was devastated. . . . His nerves already frayed by overwork and, too much study began to give way, and he fell into a profound depression. He managed to hold himself together for a time, but after the funeral it began to rain again and his melancholic deepened.³³²

Both Donald and Winkler take their account from Herndon, but unlike Donald, who admonishes his readers that Herndon's account should be taken lightly, Winkler is an ardent believer.³³³ Like Herndon, Winkler believes that Lincoln married Mary Todd for convenience and that he really did not love her.³³⁴ This idea is also espoused by Michael Lend in his book, *What Lincoln*

³³¹ Winkler, *Lincoln's Ladies*, back cover.

³³² Donald, *Lincoln*, 71. Donald explains that depression was a lifetime factor for Lincoln. He first experienced the death of his mother, Nancy, and his sister, Sarah. These shortcomings were followed by the death of Ann, numerous intimate friends, and young sons.

³³³ Ibid., 760. Donald explains that the Ann Rutledge story, taken from letters and statements after Lincoln's death, is highly controversial. He suggests and recommends the reader to read other accounts of the Lincoln-Rutledge romance besides Herndon's account.

³³⁴ Winkler, *Lincoln's Ladies*, 210.

Believed. Lend argues that Mary Todd's unstable personality caused much distress to the president.³³⁵ Both Lend and Winkler believed that Mary was excessively peppery, extravagant, selfish and unsuited to be a wife for the sixteenth president.³³⁶ Winkler goes as far as to call Mary a deceitful and wicked hellion.³³⁷ This is in complete contrast with the works of Daniel Mark Epstein, *Portraits of a Marriage: The Lincolns*, and Jean H. Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*.

Among the authors who shed light on the relationship between Abraham and Mary is Daniel Mark Epstein. In *Portraits of a Marriage: The Lincolns*, Epstein explains that the Lincolns had a healthy, productive, and normal marriage.³³⁸ Like all relationships, the Lincoln's experienced good times and bad times. It was truly an ebb and flow marriage that worked. Yet the idea that Abraham was submissive and that Mary consistently affronted her husband with her overbearing and nagging ways is not true. What is true, however, is that their personalities were polar opposites. For one, Mary had a fiery spirit, and Lincoln was reserved and quiet. He was modest, humble, and contented with his surroundings, and she was materialistic, exuberant, and

³³⁵ Michael Lend, *What Lincoln Believed* (New York: Doubleday Publishers, 2004), 67.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

³³⁷ Winkler, *Lincoln's Ladies*, 210. Like Herndon, Winkler does not care much for Mary Todd and devote Chapters Nine to debase her. But Winkler's critique should be taken lightly because it is completely biased. Winkler is a first cousin of Ann Rutledge. Upon discovering that Ann was his cousin, Winkler decided to write a book to honor and elevate her to celebrity status by following the steps of Herndon in debasing Mary Todd.

³³⁸ Daniel M. Epstein, *Portrait of Marriage: The Lincolns* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2005), 10-20. Epstein argues that Abraham and Mary had strong loving relationship that would have lasted absent the president's death. Lincoln and Mary, according to Epstein, traversed through inconceivable obstacles throughout the American Civil War (1861-1865). Yet, at the end of the turmoil, their marriage remained intact and strong.

always in need for fashion.³³⁹ This made for a good match because one was able to calm or stimulate the other when necessary. In truth, each had a unique personality that distinguished and added much allure to their relationship. Besides some disagreements, each loved the other.³⁴⁰ According to Epstein, on numerous occasions Mary was tenderly comforted by Abraham during her pregnancies. Epstein states,

Abraham spent a great deal of time at home with her during the week before and after the deliveries. They loved to read poetry to each other. He split wood and hauled the water and kept the fires burning, and when she was resting he would return to write his poems.³⁴¹

Perhaps no historian captures this love more accurately than George Mc Govern when he describes what each partner saw in the other:

While Mary had her pick of all those Springfield men who flocked around her, she was attracted to Abraham Lincoln for his gentle style, his sincerity of affection, and his ability to remain humble yet confident. She looked past his crude manners and saw great possibilities. He, in turn, was fascinated by her beauty and equally impressed by her intellect. She spoke several languages and could discuss current events and politics as intelligently as fashion and designed. They became a couple, spending hours chatting on their horsehair sofa in the Edwards home, taking carriage rides into the country, and attending Springfield social events.³⁴²

³³⁹ Ibid., 4-6.

³⁴⁰ Justin H. Turner and Linda L. Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf Publishing, 1972), 33. According to the Turners, one of the biggest disagreements between Mary and Abraham was over her husband's profound allegiance and friendship with William Herndon. This relationship brought many arguments between the two couples.

³⁴¹ Epstein, *Portrait of Marriage*, 97.

³⁴² McGovern, *Lincoln*, 26. McGovern explains that Mary and Lincoln were engaged to be married in the fall of 1840, but they separated. It is speculated that Lincoln became jealous of Mary's flirtatious ways with other men. Other sources, however, believe that Lincoln had amorous feelings towards Matilda Edwards, but she did not return his feelings of affection. The separation caused angst on both Mary and Lincoln, the latter falling into a deep depression with borderline suicidal tendencies. Eventually both parties reconciled their differences and married on November 4, 1842.

In the end, Epstein concluded that they both were in love and supported each other immensely.³⁴³

In a similar vein, Baker does an incredible job restoring and elevating the image of Mary Todd Lincoln. In this illuminating biography, Baker explains Mary's personality from stem to stern—showing both her good qualities and bad. As Baker explains, "I wanted to view Mary's life from her own perspective, not one that developed from the unfavorable comments of her critics."³⁴⁴ In the book, Baker's objective was to challenge the myths that had encrusted Mary's personal and public reputation for decades. Unlike Winkler's work, which can hardly be called scholarship, Baker's research centers exclusively on Mary's life without the added critiques.

Baker's explains,

As a beneficiary of modern feminism and the developing field of women's history, I came to believe that Mary Lincoln was a victim of bias. She was configured into a one-dimensional human being, a stereotype of the best-hated faults of all women. Cast as a villainous termagant with no redeeming characteristic, she prompted the question of why anyone would want to marry her, and with little evidence some contemporary historians insist that Lincoln did not. We know, though, that she was the belle of the ball in Lexington and Springfield, and to see her life whole requires an understanding of her beginnings as well as her endings. It demands attention to the undramatic tale of her routinized domestic years in Springfield, when she gave birth to four sons, cooked, cleaned, and beat the rugs every spring but also had the time and energy to educate her husband up to action.³⁴⁵

Throughout his early years, Lincoln had difficulty courting women. However, it is impossible to believe that Lincoln married his wife solely for convenience. On the contrary, their relationship, as Baker suggests, was strong, loving, resilient and normal.³⁴⁶ In fact, Mary played a significant role in Abraham's development and, from her, he learned how to be a more refined

³⁴³ Epstein, *Portrait of Marriage*, 29.

³⁴⁴ Jean H. Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2008), 9.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Chpt 10.

man. The historian and author, Honore Willsie Morrow, believes that without the intellectual and amatory inspiration of Mary Todd Lincoln, the world may have never known Abraham Lincoln.³⁴⁷

It is a documented fact that Lincoln always loved smart women and Mary was both smart and strong.³⁴⁸ According to Baker, Mary had an exceptional academic education in Lexington, Kentucky.³⁴⁹ Contrary to some scholars, their relationship was compatible, as they both valued education and believed in rearing their children in a pleasant and loving household. Her mental debilitation, after her sons' and husband's deaths, should not mar her healthy years with him. As scholars and empathetic beings, we should understand that Mary witnessed the death of her three children and the sudden assassination of her beloved husband. These types of tragedies would impact the mind of even the most aplomb of individuals.

As mentioned before, human beings are molded by their inner and outer experiences. The spirits of the time are truly life altering agents that can modify and influence a person's mental disposition. It was these very same social factors that influence Abraham Lincoln's perception of his life, his world, and his women. The latter being one of Lincoln's most difficult endeavor to master.

Another factor that influenced Lincoln's view of women was his profound intellectual superiority. According to Anna Gentry, Lincoln often found women "too frivolous and silly."³⁵⁰

³⁴⁷ Honore W. Morrow, *Mary Todd Lincoln* (New York: William Morrow Company, 1928), 13.

³⁴⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 106.

³⁴⁹ Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*, 10. Mary attended the prestigious Madame Charlotte Mentelle's boarding school. It is said that Mary admired her teacher, Madame Charlotte Mentelle, for her opinions, eccentric ways, tough mindedness, and intellectual disposition. It was here where she learned how to speak French fluently.

In Victorian America, women were generally seen as subservient to men.³⁵¹ Lincoln's view of women followed the same traditional idea of the times, that women were "angels of the house."³⁵² This is the reason why he twice denied Elizabeth Todd Grimsley's nomination for postmaster of Springfield, Illinois.³⁵³ Grimsley was Mary Todd's cousin, an educated and intelligent woman with all the acquired ability and skills necessary to properly manage a post office. Lincoln deeply respected Grimsley for her acumen and passion, but did not believe that the title was appropriate for a woman.

These were the negative sentiments that Mary Wollstonecraft so vehemently opposed when she wrote the *Vindication of the Rights of Women* in 1792. Though the polemic predates Lincoln by some years, the issue of androcentrism was alive and well before and after Lincoln's time. According to Wollstonecraft, "men continued to assert patriarchal authority—prescribing women's reading and education, controlling children and property, and shutting women out of much public life."³⁵⁴ Unfortunately, upon Lincoln's death, women continued to be undermined and discouraged from educational pursuits and political life for years to come.

Education was very important to Lincoln and, from the onset, he believed that both men and women should have some form of education. Privately, he supported education for women, but in public circles his view on the education of women was toned down or sidelined. In his

³⁵⁰ Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 76.

³⁵¹ Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, 12.

³⁵² Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Separate Spheres: The Victorian Studies Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 307. The title of a poem by Coventry Patmore in 1854.

³⁵³ "Relatives and Residence, Elizabeth Todd Grimsley," *Mr. Lincoln's White House*, November 20, 2016 accessed <http://www.mrlincolnwhitehouse.org/residents-visitors/relatives-and-residents/relatives-residents-elizabeth-todd-grimsley/>

³⁵⁴ Richard D. Brown and Benjamin L. Carp, *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution: 1760-1791* (Boston: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 2014), 287.

First Political Announcement in New Salem, Illinois on March, 9, 1832, Lincoln said the following about education in front of the Illinois General Assembly:

Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in. That every man may receive at least, a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advantages and satisfaction to be derived from all being able to read the scriptures and other works, both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves. For my part, I desire to see the time when education, and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise and industry, shall become much more general than at present, and should be gratified to have it in my power to contribute something to the advancement of any measure which might have a tendency to accelerate the happy period.³⁵⁵

Lincoln argues that every man should receive, at least, a moderate education, but he does not mention women. Throughout his political career, Lincoln has always been a very judicious man and, like the issue on slavery, he was very careful with his words.³⁵⁶ He knew that the time was not ripe to introduce these types of subjects to the public because they were very unpopular and seditious. As a result, his personal feeling on the education of women was concealed.

Like education, a women's right to vote was also not publicly espoused by Lincoln.³⁵⁷ Throughout his life, Lincoln was never known to be an outspoken advocate of voting rights for women.³⁵⁸ Of course, this is not to imply that he did not support the women's movement, or their efforts, but simply that he knew the political platform in which he stood did not wholeheartedly supported these measures. As a result, Lincoln refused to publicly reveal his true

³⁵⁵ Humes, *The Wit and Wisdom of Abraham Lincoln*, 25.

³⁵⁶ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 38.

³⁵⁷ Donald, *Lincoln*, 74.

³⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 74.

feelings because he was not going to jeopardize his rise to power. This attitude can also be applied to the Abolitionist movement.

According to Foner, Lincoln admired the tenacity and convictions of abolitionists, but did not join the movement for three main reasons. First, the Abolitionist movement, especially in the South, was very unpopular because it attacked the institution of slavery which, in those days, was an extremely lucrative enterprise. Second, the South had few adherents to the Abolitionist movement and their membership was fairly weak. Lastly, associating with the movement could likely be political suicide and the end to an influential civic career.³⁵⁹ By this time, Lincoln knew the political arena he was standing on and patiently waited for the main chance. At that moment, when the time was ripe and ready, Lincoln acted on behalf of the nation by signing the Emancipation Proclamation. To a degree, the same concept can be applied to education. From an early age, Lincoln saw the importance of education and believed that all people should be

³⁵⁹ Eric Foner, “Abraham Lincoln and the Abolition Movement: A Public Lecture,” Columbia University, New York, New York, May 30th 2014. In this lecture series, which I attended, Foner explains that Lincoln believed in freeing the slaves, but not the way the abolitionist wanted him too. Men, such as William Lloyd Garrison, wanted the immediate destruction of slavery. Garrison’s radical views were not taken lightly by Lincoln, who knew that such action would lead to chaos and bloodshed. The public burning of Constitutional papers by Garrison was seen by many as an act of treason and a blatant disregard to the laws of the country. Lincoln himself thought that the act was foolish and reckless. According to Foner, Lincoln was a very methodical man who adhered strictly to the tenets of the constitution. Lincoln believed that slavery was a creature of law and can only be destroyed by the very source that created it. To Lincoln, the law was slavery’s kryptonite and only through law could Blacks be freed. In 1855, Lincoln delivered a speech in Springfield, Illinois to the abolitionists, imploring them to rely on law rather than revolution. He stated, “you can better succeed with the ballot. You can peaceably then redeem the government and preserve the liberties through your votes and voice and moral influences . . . Let there be peace. Revolutionize through the ballot box and restore the government once more to the affections and hearts of men by making them express, as it was intended to do, the highest spirit of justice and liberty.”

educated.³⁶⁰ His support for the education of women can be seen more clearly in his dealings with Ann Rutledge and Mary Todd.

During his years with Ann Rutledge, Lincoln supported her profound interest in education. When David H. Rutledge, brother of Ann, wrote the following letter, Lincoln supported the cause.

To Anna Rutledge:

Valued sister. So far as I can understand Miss Graves will teach another school in the Diamond Grove. I am glad to hear that you have a notion of coming to school, and I earnestly recommend to you that you would spare no time from improving your education and mind. Remember that time is worth more than all gold therefore throw away none of your golden moments.³⁶¹

According to Sandburg, there was a secret understanding between Ann and Lincoln that they would take what luck might bring them while they advanced their education.³⁶² Both were compatible to each other because they were smart, eloquent and ready to further their schooling. In reviewing Lincoln's choice of women, it becomes evident that each, in their own way, was fairly educated and vivacious. Mary Todd, according to Donald, was raised in luxury and

³⁶⁰ Foner, "Abraham Lincoln and the Abolition Movement." It is debatable whether Lincoln included Blacks when he spoke about education. Certainly, he felt that women should be educated, but like the issue of female suffrage, he kept the issue of female education at the periphery when addressing the public. Foner did say, however, that Lincoln was impressed by the sagacity of Frederick Douglass and treated him as an equal. He was also impressed with the judicious nature of some of New Orleans' most influential Black leaders.

³⁶¹ Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*, 45. At this time the education of women was not prevalent. Women were geared toward becoming housewives as this was the traditional role of woman in Victorian America. Yet Lincoln have always been attractive to smart women and personally felt that they were equally capable of becoming intellectuals. Regrettably, most men view them differently and refused to accept women into their political affairs.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 45.

educated in the best private schools.³⁶³ These types of women were a far cry from Lincoln's mother and stepmother, who were both illiterate. In the end, education was the life source that propelled him to greatness as he sought to promote it publicly for men and privately for women.

There is no doubt that Lincoln admired Elizabeth Todd Grimsley's qualifications and respected her courage in attempting to enter political circles. Yet, he knew that allowing her into a traditional "male occupation" would negatively impact his popularity. As a result, he decided not to approve her request to become postmaster. While evaluating these series of events, one should keep in mind the life altering encounters between Abraham, Mary Todd, Julia Jayne, and the Irish-born Democratic Auditor and General, James Shield. The scandal was commonly known as the "Rebecca Letters."³⁶⁴

In the summer of 1842, Mary wrote an incendiary article critiquing General James Shield's political ideas and agendas. Using the *nom de plume* Aunt Becca, Mary proceeded to lambaste Shield's position to manage banks through state-run programs as opposed to the private sector. Though Lincoln was aware of Mary's actions, he only partook in the criticism not the writing. These vicious critiques, by the duo, made Shield livid as he quickly sought to investigate who was writing these disparaging letters. To protect Mary Todd, the true author of the letter, Lincoln felt obligated and honor-bound to take full responsibility for these actions. Feeling that his reputation was marred, Shield challenged Lincoln to a duel, and Lincoln accepted. Both men were to fight with broadswords, but prior to the duel John H. Harding, a U.S. Representative from Illinois, stopped the fight.³⁶⁵ This incident truly affected Lincoln's perception of women;

³⁶³ Donald, *Lincoln*, 105.

³⁶⁴ Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*, 76.

it was here where he realized that political affairs should be between men not women.³⁶⁶ Lincoln was not only embarrassed and ashamed by the ordeal, but felt that he should have never allowed Mary to be involved in manly affairs.

The incident left a bitter taste to his mouth and perhaps solidified the social belief that women belong at home and men in the field. This perhaps explains Lincoln's unwillingness to grant Mrs. Grimsley the title of postmaster. Soon after the ordeal, he told Mary that, as long as he lived, she should never to speak of the affair again because the mere mentioning of it brings shame to his name and manhood.³⁶⁷ Well, Mary did spoke about it again in a letter addressed to author and historian Josiah G. Holland.

Eight months after the death of her husband, Mary wrote to Holland, explaining the circumstances behind the Lincoln-Shield duel. Prior to the letter, Holland wrote a book entitled, *The Life of Abraham Lincoln*, which was fairly accurate with the exception of the duel story, which was a bit distorted. Holland was able to attain the account of the duel from Mary's *bête noire*, William Herndon. The incident of the duel, as recounted by Holland, came directly from Herndon, and Mary immediately saw gossip, half-truths and lies.³⁶⁸ To reclaim her husband's honor and her own, Mary broke her vow and proceeded to make right to the story. Upon receipt

³⁶⁵ Ibid., 76. In a duel, it is customary for the one being challenged to accept the weapon of choice. Lincoln chose the broadsword under the recommendation of his friend, Merriman, a splendid swordsman. Merriman believed that Lincoln's long arms would inflict a faster wound onto the body of the smaller and short-armed Shields.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 76-77.

³⁶⁷ Julia Davis, "The Time Abraham Lincoln and a Political Rival Almost Duel in an Island," *Mental Floss*, 2016, November 20, 2016 <http://mentalfloss.com/article/12382/time-abraham-lincoln-and-political-rival-almost-dueled-island>

³⁶⁸ Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, 292.

of the letter, Holland tweaked the story for accuracy. Below is the private letter she wrote to Mr.

Holland on December 4th, 1865:

My Dear Sir:

The Biography of my deeply lamented husband, which you have so kindly sent me, has been received and read, with very great interest. After a careful perusal of the work, I find the statements, in most instances, so very correct, that I feel quite surprised, as to the extent of your minute information. From the description of my husbands, early struggles, which he has, so frequently described to me, to the foolish and uncalled for rencontre, with Gen. Shields, all are truthfully, portrayed. This last event, occurred, about six months, before our marriage, when, Mr. Lincoln, thought, he had some right, to assume to be my champion, even on frivolous occasions. The poor Genl, in our little gay circle, was oftentimes, the subject of mirth and even song—and we were then surrounded, by several of those, who have since, been appreciated, by the world. The Genl was very impulsive and on the occasion referred to, had placed himself before us, in so ridiculous a light, that the love of the ludicrous, had been excited within me and I presume, I gave vent to it, in some very silly lines. After the reconciliation, between the contending parties, Mr. L and myself mutually agreed, never to refer to it and except in an occasional light manner, between us, it was never mentioned. I am surprised, at so distant a day, you should have ever heard of the circumstances.

It is exceedingly painful to me, now suffering under such an overwhelming bereavement, to recall that happy time. My beloved husband, had so entirely devoted himself to me, for two years before my marriage, that I doubtless trespassed, many times and oft, upon his great tenderness and amiability of character. . . . There are some very good persons, who are inclined to magnify conversations and incidents connected with their slight acquaintance, with this great and good man.³⁶⁹

Here again, Lincoln is portrayed as a loving husband who sacrificed his illustrious and impeccable reputation to defend a woman. As a man, Lincoln knew that there were certain gentlemanly rules he needed to follow, and protecting women was one of them. But even though Lincoln was slowly acquiring some knowledge as to how men should behave around women, the duel reverted him back to the belief that, in public circles, women should remain within their

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 292. This letter gives us great insight into the Lincoln-Shields dilemma: First, it shows us that Mary's actions force Lincoln to intervene to protect her reputation and honor; second, that Lincoln was emotionally distressed by the ordeal; and finally that Herndon exaggerated the event for political reasons.

socially defined roles. Therefore, the duel served two purposes. On the one hand, Lincoln understood that he needed to be brave because a man's duty in society was to protect women at all costs; on the other hand, the circumstances of the duel were so devastating that Lincoln opted not to allow women to engage in his political endeavors ever since.

In further reviewing Lincoln's relationship with women, it becomes evident that he was also a very bashful man. Around married women, Lincoln was himself, but around young beautiful single women, he was extremely awkward.³⁷⁰ According to A. Y. Ellis, a storekeeper in New Salem, Lincoln was a very shy man around the ladies and in one occasion refused to eat in the same table with three beautiful Virginia women who stayed in the town for two weeks.³⁷¹ His lack of contact with the opposite sex during childhood truly affected his disposition.

After living in isolation for many years, subsequently moving to New Salem and meeting Ann Rutledge must have been difficult for Lincoln, who had no experience courting women. It was not that Lincoln feared women, it was more that they intimidated him because he did not fully understand their ways. We all know Lincoln knew a great deal of things, often reading books to master a trade, but when it came to women, it seems he had very little knowledge of them. It can be argued that Lincoln's approach to women was based on trial and error experiments simply because he did not focus attentively to the activity of courting practices as much as he focused on other issues. Yet, although far from being a romantic, Lincoln wooed

³⁷⁰ Donald, *Lincoln*, 69. According to Donald, with wives of old friends, Lincoln was affectionate and loving. However, with beautiful and eligible young women, he froze and was reluctant to be around them. He was also unwilling to sit in a table with young, well-dressed, and beautiful young women. As stated earlier, in endnote number 9, it seems that Lincoln suffered from caligynophobia, the fear of beautiful women.

³⁷¹ Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*, 40.

Ann as best he could. Evidently, it seems that both were in love, but the sudden death of Ann from the milk disease caused Lincoln much despair and melancholy.³⁷²

Though awkward among women, Lincoln should be given credit for his attempted courtship. Victorian America was a very conservative period with unequivocal social and gender divides. In this era, women were reserved and private with their personal affairs, thus making it difficult for men to understand their behavior pattern or mode of thinking. Men had to solve the puzzle and find the way to a woman's heart which, at times, was difficult to do. Men with no courting skills, such as Lincoln, found it extremely intimidating and time-consuming.³⁷³ Yet even with these odds, Lincoln pursued his desires and eventually found his future wife—Mary Todd.

Lincoln's View of Marriage

There are several historians who believe that Lincoln's reluctance to marry had to do with his lack of interest in women. Key among these scholars is C.A. Tripp, a psychologist who believes that Lincoln was gay.³⁷⁴ Tripp postulates that Lincoln did not care for Mary and only married her for convenience. He argues that Lincoln's love for his children was the one thing that kept him bound to his wife. His conclusion is that Lincoln's profound love for his children explains his resilience towards Mary's wanton behavior in the White House.³⁷⁵ Yet there is more

³⁷² Donald, *Lincoln*, 44. Donald explains that Rutledge died of milk sickness. It is commonly believed that Ann Rutledge drank tainted milk, which led to all sorts of bacterial infections and complications. Today the disease is most commonly known as typhoid.

³⁷³ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

³⁷⁴ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 8.

³⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 196-197. Mary was known to be extravagant and extremely vocal in political matters.

evidence suggesting the opposite. The truth is that Lincoln's apprehension in marriage had to do with his meticulous nature, as opposed to homoerotic desires as suggested by Tripp.³⁷⁶

Lincoln's unwillingness to marry without fully analyzing what was at stake had to do more with observance of the law than fear of marriage. In a time when the average age of marriage was twenty-seven years old, Lincoln married at the age of thirty-three.³⁷⁷ Arguably, there must have been some sort of fear in his dealings with women, but Lincoln felt that marriage was a legal contract that needed to be ethically evaluated before being consummated. Lincoln knew that the role of a man was to provide for his wife. Therefore, not ready for this contractual commitment, Lincoln wisely broke off the engagement to Mary Owens. To Lincoln, the law was everything, and he would often evaluate his life in accordance with the law.³⁷⁸ Perhaps this explains why Lincoln married so late in life.

Throughout his career, Lincoln had an unflagging sense of justice and believed that the law was the pillar that kept the country strong and firm. Take the following statement as an example of Lincoln's profound reliance to the law:

Let every American, every lover of liberty, every well wisher to his posterity, swear by the blood of the Revolution, never to violate in the least peculiar way, the laws of the country; and never to tolerate their violation by others. Let reverence of the laws, be breathed by every American mother, to the lisping babe, that parallels on her lap—let it be taught in schools, in seminaries, and in colleges; —let it be written in Primmers, spelling books, and in Almanacs; —let it be preached from the pulpit, proclaimed in legislative halls, and enforced in the courts of justice.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁶ Ibid., 241. In his quest to support his theory of Lincoln being gay, Tripp goes as far as to suggest that Lincoln's genius was a result of his homosexuality. To Tripp, Lincoln's genius allowed him to recognize that homosexuality is not an accepted practice and that marriage was necessary to procreate and succeed. Therefore, marriage was a necessity to further his career.

³⁷⁷ "Victorian America." History Network, accessed May 1, 2014, <http://www.history.com/news/history-lists/5-things-victorian-women-didnt-do-much>

³⁷⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 100.

Though courting women was needed to secure a wife, Lincoln knew that the practice must be respected and carefully thought out before cementing a marriage. Joseph Gillespie, a longtime friend of Lincoln, said,

Mr. Lincoln had the appearance of being a slow thinker in everything. My impression is that he was not as slow as he was careful. He never liked to put forth a proposition without revolving it over his own mind.³⁸⁰

In other words, Lincoln was as rational and cautious with politics and law as he was marriage. To an extent, Lincoln applied the same precautions to abolishing slavery as he did with marriage. Since it was a very unpopular topic, Lincoln did not immediately eradicate slavery; instead he waited until the time was ripe. Miller puts Lincoln's strategy for eradicating slavery wonderfully:

Opposing slavery was not at the center of young Lincoln's purposes; it was over on the periphery, always visible out of the corner of his eyes.³⁸¹

Therefore, like slavery, marriage was logically evaluated by Lincoln before decisions were made. In fact, even when he married his wife, he sought a way to leave the one room boarding house in the Globe Tavern for a better more capacious household.³⁸² In the end, Lincoln worked diligently to make certain he provided for his wife.

When addressing issues, whether personal or public, Lincoln relied on wit and detachment of emotions. To Lincoln, a sound judgment and decision rested upon purely rational

³⁷⁹ "Speech given at the Young Men's Lyceum," *Constitution Society*, November 20, 2016, <http://www.constitution.org/lincoln/lyceum.htm>

³⁸⁰ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 38.

³⁸¹ Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 39.

³⁸² Epstein, *Portrait of Marriages*, 55. The Globe Tavern was a boarding house where many newlyweds lived. Knowing that their one room living quarters was too small, Lincoln worked hard to purchase a home.

thinking.³⁸³ To achieve this goal, total detachment of emotions was necessary because Lincoln believed that uncontrolled emotions lead to chaos and disaster. According to Lincoln, “passion will in future be our enemy. . . . happy days [will come] when all appetites are controlled, [and] all passion subdued. . . . mind, all conquering mind shall live.”³⁸⁴ His meticulous dealing with all affairs, including marriage, perhaps was a contributing factor to his unwillingness to marry.

In further reviewing Lincoln’s reluctance to marry, it becomes apparent that he is at a loss on the right way to court women. Just days before he was scheduled to wed Mary Todd, Lincoln sought advice from his friend, Joshua Speed.³⁸⁵ Lincoln’s stubbornness, in political matters, shows his profound understanding of that subject, but he lacked understanding about women. Perhaps this keen understanding in some issues, and deficiency in others, had to do with his voracious reading habits and experiences on matters related to his work.³⁸⁶ However, years of reading books on subjects related to his career led to inexperience in other matters, mainly courtship. It was after marriage that Lincoln completely matured and became more confident in his dealings with women.³⁸⁷

³⁸³ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 38.

³⁸⁴ Epstein, *Portrait of Marriages.*, 103.

³⁸⁵ Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*, 77. Sandburg explains that on the days before the marriage, Lincoln was bemused about the whole thing. Not knowing what to do, he sent a letter to Speed requesting his advised. By this time, Speed was happily married and recommended marriage to Lincoln. It was at this point that Lincoln agreed to marry Mary Todd.

³⁸⁶ Donald, *Lincoln*, 561. Donald explains how many of Lincoln’s political speeches came from the Bible. Reading and studying the Bible made Lincoln into a more proficient and forcible orator in political debates. This shows that even the Bible was used for his political career.

³⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 743.

Lincoln and Mary Todd

Though influenced by gender divides, Lincoln treated his wife with utmost love, care, and compassion. Unlike his relationship with previous women, Lincoln felt comfortable and at ease with his wife and looked to her for comfort and approval.³⁸⁸ According to Donald, “Mary was entirely different from anyone he had ever known. . . He did not feel awkward when talking to her, for she made up for his deficiencies as a conversationalist.”³⁸⁹ His wife confirmed the relationship by stating the following:

Mr. Lincoln was the kindest, most tenderhearted, and loving husband and father in the world. He gave us all unbounded liberty and was very, very indulgent with his children.³⁹⁰

Not like other men, Lincoln had the ability to understand his world and define it through his own terms and conditions, regardless if such sentiments, at times, were tempered by society. He was influenced by the religious ethos regarding women, but adhered to his own bedrock of principles and moral standards. Lincoln did not read John Stuart Mill’s *The Subjection of Women* because it was published four years after his death, but if he had, he would have probably agreed with the tenets of Mill’s arguments. In *The Subjection of Women*, Mill condemned the pattern of gender inequality, comparing marriage to an unfair business partnership:

It is not true that in all voluntary association between two people, one of them must be absolute master: still less that the law must determine which of them it shall be. The most frequent case of voluntary association, next to marriage, is partnership in business: and it is not found or thought necessary to enact that in every partnership, one partner shall have entire control over the concern, and the others shall be bound to obey his orders. No one would enter into partnership on terms which would subject him to the responsibilities of a principal, with only the powers and privileges of a clerk or agent.³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Ibid., 106.

³⁸⁹ Ibid., 105.

³⁹⁰ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 31-32

³⁹¹ John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2007), chapter 2.

Mill's view was clearly a minority opinion in his day, and most men would not agree with him. Yet, regardless of gender roles in society, Lincoln treated his wife respectfully and valued her service. Arguably, in Lincoln's mind, women were essential in their own unique way and necessary for the continuity of the American family.

In evaluating their relationship, it is evident that Lincoln respected his wife's opinions and wishes.³⁹² Mary Todd Lincoln had a strong character, but her ways were compatible to Lincoln's less aggressive disposition. In *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, Justin G. and Linda L. Turner explain that "most of Mrs. Lincoln's nagging at her husband resulted from her inordinate pride and ambition for him."³⁹³ Fleming describes how engaged Mary was in her discussion of politics with her husband and how they both excitedly read and discussed *The Lexington Observer*, a political newspaper.³⁹⁴ It was Mary, not Herndon, who advised Lincoln not to change a word on his "House Divided" speech.³⁹⁵ It was also Mary who vehemently critiqued some members of her husband's cabinet, including Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, Secretary of War Simon Cameron, Attorney General Edward Bates, Postmaster Montgomery Blair, and Secretary of State William H. Steward.³⁹⁶

³⁹² Donald, *Lincoln*, 135.

³⁹³ Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, 238. In this well-researched book, the Turners look at the private letters that Mary wrote to her husband and friends as a way to analyze and interpret their marriage. According to the Turners, Mary wrote numerous letters to friends about her husband's accomplishments and joy. In letters sent to her husband, Mary eulogized him by always being polite, caring, and, at times, flirtatious. The Turners' overall conclusion is that, through correspondence, there is no evidence of hostility between Lincoln and his wife.

³⁹⁴ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 35. Fleming describes how Mary and Abraham spent hours reading the newspaper and debating on political issues.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 35.

Mary Todd's Influence on Lincoln

Mary was also influential in releasing Private William Scott from prison. On August 31, 1861, William Scott, a twenty-one-year-old private, was found guilty of sleeping at his post. In those days, neglecting one's duty was a crime punishable by death. Scott was scheduled to die by firing squad, but days before his execution, he was pardoned by the president. Private William Scott's Pardon papers read as follows:

Private William Scott, of Company K. of the Third regiment of Vermont volunteers, having been found guilty by court-martial of sleeping on his post while a sentinel on picket guard has been sentenced to be shot, and the sentence has been approved and ordered to be executed. The commanding officers of the brigade, the regiment and the company, of the command, together with many other privates and officers of his regiment, have earnestly appealed to the Major-General commanding, to spare the life of the offender, and the President of the United States has expressed a wish that as this is the first condemnation to death in this army for this crime, mercy may be extended to the criminal. This fact, viewed in connection with the inexperience of the condemned as a soldier, his previous good conduct and general good character, and the urgent entreaties made in his behalf, have determined the Major-General commanding to grant the pardon so earnestly prayed for. This act of clemency must not be understood as affording a precedent for any future case. The duty of a sentinel is of such a nature, that its neglect by sleeping upon or deserting his post may endanger the safety of a command, or even of the whole army, and all nations affix to the offence the penalty of death. Private William Scott of Co. K. of the Third regiment of Vermont volunteers will be released from confinement and returned to duty.³⁹⁷

When Lincoln was asked by the War Department as to his reasons for pardoning Scott, he said "by request of the Lady President."³⁹⁸ Lincoln admired his wife's fiery spirit, even though such womanly attitudes were considered unconventional and unladylike in Victorian times.³⁹⁹

³⁹⁶ Ibid., 79.

³⁹⁷ Sandburg, *Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years and the War Years*, 591. Sandburg explains that Major-General George B. McClellan was against the pardon.

³⁹⁸ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 84.

³⁹⁹ Donald, *Lincoln*, 198.

According to Harold Holzer, Lincoln loved his wife and was a supportive husband to the day he died. Harold explains,

Despite long separations and radically different temperaments, the Lincoln's remained devoted to each other. Even as president, burdened though he was by disunion and rebellion, Lincoln remained protective of his wife.⁴⁰⁰

The truth is that Mary was frequently disdained because she was ahead of her time.

According to Turner, many prominent newspapers in the land lambasted Mary Todd's lack of discretion, loose tongue and interest in politics.⁴⁰¹ Similarly, most politicians of her period viewed her as an implacable and incessant braggart who lacked the self-control of a refined woman.⁴⁰² Detestation for Mary's public loquaciousness and involvement in political affairs infuriated many politicians, who began to publicly denounce her as a vixen. Similarly, these same politicians regarded her husband as being submissive and easily swayed by Mary. On numerous occasions, Mary's obstinacy was seen with consternation and annoyance by politicians, organizations, and institutions alike.⁴⁰³ One specific event infuriated politicians, and that was Mary's refusal to conform to the demands of Illinois' most prominent citizens to bury the president in a special lot in Springfield, Illinois. The Turners clearly explained the tense

⁴⁰⁰ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 29.

⁴⁰¹ Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, 79.

⁴⁰² Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*, 18. According to Baker, Victorian America was very critical on the behavior of women. Any deviation for what was considered unladylike was vehemently denounced. Herndon appreciated Anne Rutledge because of her refined femininity and abhorred Mary Todd Lincoln for her excessive involvement in manly affairs.

⁴⁰³ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 45. Many politicians felt that Mary was too involved in the political affairs of her husband. Most politicians were upset that Lincoln decided to bring his wife, along with four children, to Washington as he served as congressman. In essence, most men feared that allowing women to engage in manly affairs could eventually lead to a gynecocracy.

showdown between Mary and the highfalutin members of the National Lincoln Monument Association. The Turner's remark,

During the course of their visit to Virginia shortly before the President's death, the Lincolns had gone off alone for a drive through the countryside. They had stopped to wander through a secluded graveyard, lying peaceful and green in the spring sunshine. Strolling among the weathered stones, Lincoln has turned to his wife and said, as she remembered it, "Mary, you are younger than I. You will survive me. When I am gone, lay my remains in some quiet place like this." That intensely private moment was to have far-reaching public consequences. Immediately after the assassination, a group of prominent Illinois Citizens, calling themselves the National Lincoln Monument Association, contracted for six acres of land in the center of Springfield and, without consulting the President's widow, made preparations for construction of a vault on the spot. No sooner had she learned of the Association's plans than she recalled the scene in the Virginia graveyard. She sent word from Washington that her husband was to be buried in Suburban Oak Ridge Cemetery, and that provision must be made for herself and her sons in the same tomb—a matter of vast importance to her. When the Monument Association balked at her demand, a protracted controversy began, with Mary Lincoln standing almost alone against a phalanx of eminent gentlemen, many of them old and trusted friends of the dead president. . . Throughout the first half of June 1865, she fought the Monument Association with every weapon at her command, emerging triumphant but with a number of enemies who had once been friends.⁴⁰⁴

This confrontation, along with many other political clashes, contributed in the negative labeling of Mary as a staunch prima donna by various politicians.⁴⁰⁵ This explains Mary's deep-seated stigma that haunted her for the rest of her living years. As the Turners suggest,

No President's wife in history had a more turbulent career in the White house than Mary Todd Lincoln. None took up her duties under more difficult circumstances; none was so consistently criticized, none so vulnerable to criticism. In a sense Mrs. Lincoln was doomed before she set foot in Washington. Her efforts to make a good impression, to serve her husband well, were hampered from the start by an impulsive, nervous temperament, a loose tongue, and a mind filled with quirks and delusions. Moreover, conditions in Washington in February of 1861 were volatile enough to have tried the nerves of a woman far more stable than she. The capital was a troubled city, girdled by

⁴⁰⁴ Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, 240-241. This was one, of many instances, that Mary refused to surrender to a group of male politicians hell-bent in deciding the dead president's final resting place. Mary did agree to allow the people of thirteen cities to view her husband's corpse as he traveled, on train, from Washington D.C. to Springfield, Illinois.

⁴⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 77.

hostile territory and dominated by an entrenched aristocracy: men who were jealous of their powers and women who had for decades held undisputed social ways.⁴⁰⁶

In evaluating Mary's life, one must understand the times. Victorian America was an androcentric society catering exclusively to the male gender. Mary was an extremely intelligent, extravagant, and loquacious woman who spoke without fear and with authority. She voraciously read Mary Wollstonecraft's book, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, and agreed that women should go beyond the boundaries of studying etiquette, conversations and the decorative arts.⁴⁰⁷ "Even Herndon, who came to hate her, described Mary as a young, dashing, handsome—witty, . . . cultured—graceful and dignified . . . though he also noted that she could be sarcastic, haughty, and aristocratic."⁴⁰⁸ Regrettably, it seems that the time was not ripe for Mary and her progressive ways, and, although Abraham valued her intellect and opinions, he did so privately, not publicly. Certainly, she must have influenced him in many ways, but such influences were never exposed in public circles because of society's strict enforcement of gender rules.⁴⁰⁹ In describing why Mary was so unpopular, Baker believes that her education and marriage with

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 77.

⁴⁰⁷ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 23. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, Wollstonecraft argues that education was a natural right for girls, and that education would lead women to prominent and forcible roles in society. By educating women, society will improve and humanity will prosper. In becoming First lady, Mary was following the teachings of Wollstonecraft, but with great opposition from many of her husband's political allies. Yet Mary remained steadfast and refused to be a parvenu.

⁴⁰⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 105.

⁴⁰⁹ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 42. Fleming explains that upon her marriage, Mary was thrown into the traditional role of womanhood. Not accustomed to these roles, Mary had to purchase and learn from Mrs. Lydia Green's book, *The Ladies Guide; Or Skillful Housewife* (1853). The book described the proper ways to manage a household. Mary also read *Godey's Lady's Book*, a series of popular magazines geared for women. The magazines covered an array of subjects ranging from female comportment to fashion. The contents within these books paralleled the traditional role of women in society.

Lincoln elevated her from the customary social idea that women were meant to be weak, quiet and submissive into a position of recognition and influence.⁴¹⁰ Baker explains,

Mary left no published work. She joined no reform movements, nor was she a clandestine supporter of unpopular social causes. She said nothing about women's issues and very little about slavery. She did not influence public policy or secretly author Lincoln's speeches, though her prose was occasionally eloquent as his. Moreover, her status as a well-educated Todd of Lexington and her marriage to a lawyer who became President of the United States removed her from any authentic representation of nineteenth-century womanhood.⁴¹¹

Like Abraham, Mary was a victim of the times.⁴¹² Arguably, she was the first woman that planted the seed for the recognition of the First Lady role in the White House. Today, the position of the First Lady is a very important one, providing all sorts of social, political and cultural services to the president.⁴¹³ As suggested by Baker, the First Lady, as an associate to the president, has finally been officially recognized and accepted in society.⁴¹⁴ For the first time in

⁴¹⁰ Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*, 20

⁴¹¹ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴¹² David A. Norris, "Two Shots that Shattered the World," *History Magazine* June 2014 edition. The subjugation of women in the eighteenth and early nineteenth-century was a common theme in America, Western Europe, and Eastern Europe. Women were consistently seen as inferior to men. In various parts of Eastern Europe, women who were not aristocratic were not allowed in certain monarchical activities. Purity of blood, in these countries, was of utmost importance. Take for instance the Austrian Archduke, Franz Ferdinand and his wife, Sophie, Duchess of Hohenberg. Norris explains that Ferdinand was a pure blooded monarch who came from a wealthy aristocratic family, while Sophie was an average woman with no ties to royalty. As a result, Sophie was restricted from engaging in certain political, social, and ceremonial affairs. According to Norris, "life amid the Austrian court was uncomfortable for the duchess because her inferior rank forbade her from accompanying her husband to many court and state functions." Here too, the role of women as second class citizens was upheld. Regrettably, both the Duke and Duchess were assassinated in June 28, 1914 by Gavrillo Princip, a 19-year-old assassin.

⁴¹³ Baker, *Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography*, 11.

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 11. Baker explains that the First Lady role was simply a political title devoid of animation. She believes that Mary Todd Lincoln was the first to enliven the position and became the prototype for others to follow.

history, the *New York Herald*, a popular newspaper in New York City, referred to Mary as “The Presidentess.”⁴¹⁵ Furthermore, the inclusion of social history as a historical methodology has allowed scholars to open the window to a new interpretation of historical events. As Rosenberg suggests, “women’s history constitutes one of the most expansive and revolutionary forces within the New Social History.”⁴¹⁶

Mary’s Flaws: Jealousy, Expensive Endeavors, and Peculiar Behavior

Like all human beings, Mary had flaws. One of her biggest downfalls was her intense jealousy.⁴¹⁷ Elizabeth Keckley, Mrs. Lincoln’s dressmaker, whose reliability as an observer has been called into question, explains that Mary’s protective nature unnerved the president. Keckley explains:

She was extremely jealous of him, and if a lady desired to court her displeasure, she could select no way to do it than to pay marked attention to the President. . . these little jealous freaks often were a source of perplexity to Mr. Lincoln.⁴¹⁸

There is no doubt that Mary Todd was a jealous woman, there are several instances when her “green eyed monster” emerged and took the best of her.⁴¹⁹ Take, for instance, a trip to the front lines to visit U.S. troops on March 26, 1865. On that day, Lincoln decided to ride to the front

⁴¹⁵ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 191.

⁴¹⁶ Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*, 4-11. As Rosenberg suggests, “we were not trained to study women, nor had we thought to do so until the women’s movement transformed our lives and our conscious.”

⁴¹⁷ Holzer, *Lincoln as I Knew Him*, 27.

⁴¹⁸ Ibid, 27. Though busy with the dilemma of the Civil War, Abraham manifested extreme equanimity with his wife. In time of disagreement, he would often retreat to his duties as president and then speak to his wife at a later time.

⁴¹⁹ Donald, 767. Mary Todd disliked a woman by the name of Matilda Edwards because it was believed that Lincoln found her attractive.

line on horseback, while Mary and Julia Grant were in a carriage.⁴²⁰ There was a lot of mud on the ground, and the carriage was delayed. When the carriage arrived, Mr. Lincoln was already doing his rounds and besides him was General Ord's beautiful wife. Fleming describes the scene in this way:

By the time her carriage arrived, the review had already begun. Worse, General Ord's beautiful young wife was riding alongside Abraham in the place of honor that should have been her own. Mary erupted in an embarrassing tirade against Mrs. Ord, calling out such vile names that Mrs. Ord burst into tears and wheeled away. But Mary's anger wasn't spent. Clambering from the carriage, she yelled at her husband as everyone on the review field watched. "Poor Mr. Lincoln," recalled one officer. "He pleaded with eyes and tone as she turned on him like a tigress, then he walked away hiding that noble, ugly face that we might not catch the full expression of its misery."⁴²¹

With all this, Abraham bore her angry words with patience, and on the next night, she apologized and asked for forgiveness. Caring for her, and knowing that he should have waited, Abraham accepted her apology, and apologized himself as well for his imprudent decision to ride with Mrs. Ord.⁴²² Perhaps Lincoln's reasons for not quarrelling with his wife had to do with his modest disposition or with the way he perceived women in general. After all, Lincoln did say that he has the tendency to avoid arguing with women because they always get the best of him.⁴²³ In the end, however, this is a typical scene in many marriages today. Just because Mary was an overly protective woman does not demonize her character. In fact, her immense love for her husband was the basis for her jealousy and rage.

⁴²⁰ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 130. Julia Grant was the wife of General Ulysses Grant who became the eighteenth president of the United States.

⁴²¹ *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴²² *Ibid.*, 130.

⁴²³ Burlingame, *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln*, 130.

When it came to luxury, Mary was in her glory. She loved money and expensive materials.⁴²⁴ In her years in the White House, she spent a lot of money decorating every aspect of the Executive Mansion, especially the guest rooms.⁴²⁵ However, one must take into consideration that she came from an affluent family that loved to display their prestigious status in public. Also, at the time of her arrival, the White House was in deplorable shape and in need of repairs. Mary was a refined woman who was courted by many prominent and wealthy individuals—Stephen Douglass being one of them. With all these available suitors, Mary chose Abraham to be her husband.⁴²⁶ This, perhaps, displays the attraction and compatibility between the two. It seems that it was Mary's love for luxury of which Lincoln was most afraid. Their first home was not big, but comfortable and cozy.⁴²⁷ Not having much money, Mary understood that she was responsible for the domestic duties of the home. It was this physical toil, more than the simplicity of the house, which affected Mary most. Turner explains,

Mary had to keep a house clean and warm, make and mend clothes for three, attend to the urgent demands of an infant, and feed a husband at strange and unpredictable hours. These responsibilities were so overwhelming in aggregate that one or the other often suffered until she was able to afford help. Lincoln, no stranger to physical labor, cooperated by chopping wood, building fires, grooming the horse, and sometimes even tending to the baby.⁴²⁸

It is true that Lincoln wanted to provide her with the best living experience that his money could buy, and even though Mary was not pleased with the domestic arrangements, she believed in her

⁴²⁴ Donald, *Lincoln*, 381.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, 381.

⁴²⁶ Fleming, *The Lincoln's: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 31. According to Fleming, though not as affluent or prominent as other suitors, Mary chose Lincoln out of love. She admired his humble ways, humor, and wit.

⁴²⁷ Donald, *Lincoln*, 119.

⁴²⁸ Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, 31.

husband's dreams and stood beside him. In fact, it was Mary who insisted to her husband that the road to prominence ran toward Washington, not through dusty little courtrooms in Illinois.⁴²⁹

It was during his years as president that Mary reverted back to her expensive ways and brought much attention to the White House. Angered by her behavior, the White House gatekeeper, James H. Upperman, referred to Mrs. Lincoln's improvidence as "flagrant frauds on the public treasury and trust."⁴³⁰ This was followed by accusations that Mary Lincoln and John Watt, the White House gardener, became thieves and operated in full support of each other.⁴³¹

Furthermore, there were rumors circulating in the White House that Mary began to associate herself with disreputable individuals, including the refined and eloquent Henry Wikoff.⁴³² It was

⁴²⁹ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 43.

⁴³⁰ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 194.

⁴³¹ Ibid., 196. According to Tripp, The White House gardener, John Watt, instructed Mary on how to make money and cover her deficits by padding bills she submitted for household expenditures. In other words, pay for private expenses out of the public treasury. He believed that both Mary and John were willing participants in the embezzling scheme. In his book, *A Portrait of a Marriage: The Lincolns*, Epstein believes that Mary would have never tarnished her husband's reputation because she wanted him to succeed as president. Epstein believes that Watt was a slithering sycophant who knew exactly how to cajole the vulnerable Mary. Mary, not aware of how the politics operated in the White House, followed Watts's suggestions. Epstein comments, "The first snake in the garden, and probably the most poisonous, was Watt the gardener."

⁴³² Ibid., 196. Henry Wikoff became a good friend of Mary's and gave her much advice on decoration and refinement in the White House. In his book, *Portrait of Marriage: The Lincolns*, Epstein explains that Wikoff was detrimental during Prince Bonaparte's visit to the White House. It was Wikoff who educated Mary in the style, manners, and customs of the French. Unlike Epstein, Tripp believes that Wikoff's kindness led Mary to have feelings for him. Tripp believed that Mary loved Wikoff's flirtatious advancement and that she was receptive to his courting because Lincoln did not pay her much attention. At this time, Lincoln was trying to save a bleeding and beleaguered nation with no time for flirtatious rendezvous. This is not to say, however, that Lincoln did not care for his wife, evidence show that he loved her immensely. This is just to infer that Lincoln was intently focusing on saving the union at all cost. In relation to Wikoff, he was given the titled "chevalier," which he loved to use to accentuate his character and promote his elite status. Epstein believes that Mary was victim to Wikoff's love for fashion

during these times that politicians began to dislike Mary for her seemingly expensive taste and affiliations. Some, including Herndon, felt that she was too heavily involved in political affairs.⁴³³ This explains why many politicians of this time agreed with Herndon's negative account of Mary.

But as stated before, Mary was a highly educated woman who willingly challenged any man who confronted her, including Herndon—her greatest *bête noire*. According to Turner,

Mary Lincoln's longest-running grievance against her husband stemmed from his confidence in, and affection for, William H. Herndon, a bright, but erratic young man whom he had taken as a junior law partner when he set up his own firm in 1844. . . . She kept him at arm's length, never once invited him to eat in her home and staying away from the office as much as possible. The fact that Lincoln divided his hard-earned fees equally with Herndon could only have fueled her rage.⁴³⁴

Mary never liked Herndon, but her hatred towards him intensified when he publicly denounced her in some of his lectures and writings.⁴³⁵ Herndon, knowing that Mary never cared for him, purposely began to debase her character and devalue her role as the president's wife. She was

and decoration which she admired. But, like Watt, Wikoff did all this to gain political favors and recognition. Wikoff wanted to get information about Abraham Lincoln and sell it to the tabloids for money. The only way to do this was to be kind to his over-protective wife. Eventually, Wikoff's true character came to light when he sold a portion of Lincoln's State of the Union address to the *New York Herald* without consent of the president. Epstein referred to Wikoff, Watts, and Wood as men with no honor and respect. All three men were dismissed from the White House at different times.

⁴³³ "William Herndon and Mary Todd Lincoln," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Summer 2001, November 20, 2016, accessed <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0022.203/--william-h-herndon-and-mary-todd-lincoln?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

⁴³⁴ Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, 33. Lincoln chose Herndon because he wanted to be head of his own firm and the only way to do this was to employ an inexperienced lawyer to become a junior partner.

⁴³⁵ "William Herndon and Mary Todd Lincoln," *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, Summer 2001, November 20, 2016, accessed <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0022.203/--william-h-herndon-and-mary-todd-lincoln?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

dubbed as being excessively controlling, manipulative and extravagant.⁴³⁶ Though there is some grain of truth in these claims, especially in Mary's excessive spending in the White House, most of Herndon's work should not be taken at face value.

One of the things that angered many politicians was Mary's peculiar beliefs. From an early age, Mary was superstitious, but she became more committed to her beliefs upon the death of her son, Willie. Willie's death truly affected Mary because of all her children she felt most in tune with him.⁴³⁷ Turner explains,

Both the President and his wife were inconsolable. Whatever stability Mary Lincoln had possessed at the time of Eddy's death had long since fallen away under the pressures of her new existence, and she was more alone, frightened and despairing than ever before . . . For three months following the funeral, she lay lost in the most abject misery, wild grief alternating with periods of paralyzing depression. She was unable to function, or to write to her family and friends. To be reminded of her son was agony.⁴³⁸

It was soon after Willie's death that Mary began to visit Nettie Colburn, a spiritualist who claimed she could transmit messages to the dead.⁴³⁹ Also, in Victorian times, pregnancy was a dangerous and excruciating experience. Mary, like most women of her time, suffered the hardship of childbearing, especially while giving birth to her son—Thomas, who sadly died of pneumonia in 1871. These difficult childbearing experiences did not only debilitated her physically, but also solidified her intimacy with her children because it took so much physical energy and effort to have them. Therefore, their untimely deaths led Mary to do all sorts of things, including the use of spiritualism, to alleviate her depressive state.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, 120. Mary's cousin, Elizabeth Todd Grimsley, describes the boy in the following terms: he was a "noble, beautiful boy of nine years, of great mental activity, unusual intelligence, wonderful memory, methodical, frank and loving, a counterpart of his father, save that he was handsome."

⁴³⁸ Ibid 121.

⁴³⁹ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 94.

During the Civil War, spiritualism—the belief that spirits of the dead can communicate with the living through mysterious persons called mediums—became an acceptable practice among certain believers.⁴⁴⁰ Mary ardently believed in the spirit world and felt that the medium was able to connect her with Willie.⁴⁴¹ But while Mary believed in these types of invocations, many politicians felt that she was losing her mind. Even against these political odds, Lincoln continued to allow Mary to practice spiritualism because it was palliative and cathartic for her.⁴⁴² However, a few months after Willie’s death, Mary began to use these same séances to protect her husband from his political foes. According to Turner, she told Senator Orville H. Browning that the spiritualist revealed that Lincoln’s Cabinet members were all depraved men hell-bent in causing harm to the president.⁴⁴³ Mary became so paranoid and insistent on their immediate removal that her husband once said in exasperation “that if he continues to listen to her he would

⁴⁴⁰ Ibid., 94. Fleming argues that Abraham did not care much for these séances, but allowed them because they made Mary feel better. A total of eight séances were done in the White House. Furthermore, allowing Mary to conduct these pagan activities in the White House also gives credence to Mr. Lincoln’s immense love for his wife. Victorian America was a Christian society and the mere practice of pagan activities could have affected the president’s political ambitions. Any other president perhaps would have never allowed these practices in the White House.

⁴⁴¹ Helm, Katherine. *Mary, Wife of Lincoln* (New York: Academic Books, 2001), 227. Helm explains that Mrs. Lincoln saw visions of her dead son: “he comes to me every night and stands on the foot of my bed with the same sweet, adorable smile he always had; he does not always come alone; little Eddie is sometimes with him.” In subsequent years, First Lady–Eleanor Roosevelt, used palm readers to predict her future, thus giving evidence that superstitious belief and practices in the White House continued to be used after Mary’s death.

⁴⁴² Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 94.

⁴⁴³ Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, 134. Illinois Senator Orville Browning assumed responsibility for Willie’s funeral and knew the pain the Lincoln’s were experiencing. Historian Mark Epstein stated that Browning attended Willie’s embalming along with mortician Brown and Alexander. These were the same morticians that later embalmed Abraham Lincoln.

soon be without a Cabinet.⁴⁴⁴ Her jealousy, vociferous demeanor in matters of politics, extravagant taste and peculiar beliefs were all factors to the way she was perceived by her contemporaries and modern scholars.

Regrettably, as more of her beloved family died, Mary began to rely more on these types of spiritual séances. Eventually it was her husband's sudden death that broke her strong will and she became irreconcilable and remote. Yet within this period of immense agony and despair, a valuable narrative begins to unfold. An emotive story of commitment, companionship and love was seen minutes after John Wilkes Booth discharged the fatal shot that killed her husband. It is in this chaotic moment where Mary's love for her husband is seen more conspicuously.

The Real Mary Todd and How Her Grieving Manifested Her Love for Her Husband

To be sure there exists a very decided popular opinion today about Mrs. Lincoln. Ask the first American you meet "What kind of a woman was Lincoln's wife?" and the chances are ninety nine to one hundred that he'll reply that she was a shrew, a curse to her husband, a vulgar fool, and an insane [woman].⁴⁴⁵

The above quote by the historian Honore Willsie Morrow, was taken from his book, *Mary Todd Lincoln*. In the book, he argues that most people would critique Mary Todd because, unlike other women of her time, she was brave, strong, committed, and shrewd.⁴⁴⁶ Ironically, most of the gossip came from elite women who disliked Mary simply because of her unique position.⁴⁴⁷ Morrow explains how these women would gather at Mary's yearly receptions just to belittle and critique the event. Morrow explains,

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid., 135.

⁴⁴⁵ Morrow, *Mary Todd Lincoln*, 6.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., 32

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., 32. Morrow explains how elite women were the most critical of Mary Todd Lincoln's receptions.

Every woman who arrived has come as a critic and not one of them will be capable of doing kindly justice; and they will be authorities, hereafter, swelling a miserable tide of misunderstanding. . . . These women, queens in their own parishes, should have perceptive faculties capable of telling them that Mrs. Lincoln is doing the honors of the White house remarkably well. Not one woman in a hundred could do better. But these women considered themselves each as one in a thousand with nine hundred and ninety-nine ranges below her. So they will show no mercy.⁴⁴⁸

It was these types of critiques, along with the many others, that severely wounded Mary's image for decades. Take, for instance, her friendly relationship with Henry Wikoff. According to Tripp,

Wikoff was of middle age, an accomplished man of the world, a fine linguist, with graceful presence, elegant manners, and a conscious, condescending way . . . Mary accepted Wikoff as a majordomo in general and in special, as a guide in matters of etiquette, domestic arrangements, and personal requirements, including her toilette.⁴⁴⁹

Mary, being a woman of fashion and exquisite taste, admired Wikoff for his elegance, gentlemanly conduct, proper behavior, and style. Wikoff, having spent numerous years in France, developed an affinity for French culture and fashion. Mary, a known Francophile, immediately was drawn by Wikoff's conviviality. Yet, in contrast to Tripp's interpretation and research, Mary never viewed Wikoff in a romantic way. In fact, her heart belonged to Abraham, and she adamantly respected her husband by being amiable and faithful to him. Tripp's allegation that Mary was smitten by Wikoff's refined ways and gradual courting advances is not grounded on facts.⁴⁵⁰ This damning accusation is equivalent to saying that Mary was in love with William S. Wood, her accountant, just because he was faithful to her— or Senator Charles

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid., 34.

⁴⁴⁹ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 197.

⁴⁵⁰ Ibid., 197.

Sumner, for always being a kind gentleman in her presence.⁴⁵¹ Arguably, many of Tripp's accounts are exaggerated to give credence to the idea that Lincoln was gay and to further display Mary as an insane love seeker who never received a caring word or gesture from her husband. In fact, the people around Mary were highly corrupt and took advantage of the first lady by exhibiting kindness. Epstein explains the scene wonderfully:

Removed from the familiar environment of Springfield, Mary Lincoln was disoriented, destabilized. Like a lost child in some cautionary tale, she was immediately set upon by scoundrels who corrupted her. In addition to William S. Woods, these Jackals included John Watt, The White House gardener, and a shady former diplomat called Chevalier Henry Wikoff, once an agent for both France and England, now a gadfly and undercover reporter for the New York newspaper.⁴⁵²

In recent years, scholarship on Mrs. Lincoln has shifted from innuendos and myth to reality and truth. Arguably, no other scene captures the true love that Mrs. Lincoln had toward her husband than during the time she spent on his deathbed in the Petersen house.

Following the dreadful shot at Ford's Theater, Lincoln was taken to an adjacent house owned by the Petersen family. At the Petersen house, Lincoln was put to bed and tended by various individuals. Beside him was his doleful and agonizing wife, Mary, who was in a state of shock. There were many politicians who documented the emotive actions of Mrs. Lincoln as she tenderly caressed her fatally injured and dying husband's head. According to Maunsell Field, assistant to the secretary of the Treasury, Mrs. Lincoln was in a state of indecipherable agitation

⁴⁵¹ Epstein, *Portrait of a Marriage* (New York: Random House, 2008), 337. Epstein explains that Mary's accountant, William S. Wood, did anything for her just to secure a position as Commissioner of Public Buildings. Later, Mary will realize Mr. Woods's dishonesty, dull-witted nature, and duplicity. Sadly, politics in the White House was a tricky business and, as Epstein suggests, Mary was not well attuned to the danger of power politics. In relation to Senator Sumner, he was always good and pleasant to Mary. Even after the death of Abraham, Sumner continued to be a loyal friend to Mary.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, 342.

and kept repeating, “Why didn’t he kill me?”⁴⁵³ Miss Clara Harris, a friend of the Lincolns, described Mrs. Lincoln as a woman stricken with frantic grief and immeasurable pain.⁴⁵⁴ These eyewitness accounts hold a cornucopia of information that gives insight into how much Mary loved her husband. In fact, one can argue that she was saddened by the various deaths that frequent her family over the course of her lifetime, but it was her husband’s death that incapacitated her for life. Swanson explains,

In the years following Lincoln’s funeral, the melancholy curse that afflicted his family would not lift. . . . Tad, the president’s constant companion after Willie’s death, died of tuberculosis in 1871, when he was eighteen, having survived his father by just six years. The body of another Lincoln was put aboard a train. The tomb in Springfield was opened, and Tad joined Abraham, Willie, and Eddie. . . . Mary continued to live as an unsettled wanderer, spending much of her time in Europe. Irrationally, she believed herself destitute. She made mad, vicious accusations of dishonesty and theft against her son Robert, which led him to have her committed to a sanitarium for four months in 1875. She posed for the notorious spirit photographer Mumler, who supplied her with the expected image of the ghost of Abraham and Willie hovering above her . . . After the assassination, Mary spent much time in seclusion in her room, longing for death. She died on July 16, 1882, surviving her husband by seventeen unhappy years.⁴⁵⁵

There is no doubt that upon Abraham’s death, Mary suffered immensely. Her husband was her greatest confidant and true friend and now he was dead—an unwilling victim of a demented and overzealous stage actor. His death embarked Mary on a lonely journey of despair for seventeen

⁴⁵³ James Swanson, *Bloody Crimes* (New York: Harpers Collins, 2010), 108.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 113. Clara Harris and her fiancé, Major Henry Rathbone, were the two couples who accompanied Abraham Lincoln and his wife at Ford’s Theater. During Lincoln’s stay at the Petersen house, Miss Harris was very attentive to Mary, providing her comfort during her time of need. Regrettably, Clara Harris was fatally shot by her husband, Henry Rathbone, who went mad and was later committed to an asylum in Hildesheim, Germany.

⁴⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 389-390. Along with Mumler—who presented her with ghostly photographic images of her husband and son—Mary relied heavily on spiritualist, Nettie Colburn Maynard, to invoke the dead.

long years.⁴⁵⁶ Though mentally and emotionally wounded by her husband's death, Mary was able to write a sound correspondence to a young blind girl who sent her a letter of condolence. In the letter, she elevates her husband to heightened proportions and humbly thanks the girl for her warmth thoughts and blessings. Mary wrote the following on April 9th, 1866:

My dear girl:

Your kind and most touching letter, has been received and believe me, in the midst of my terrible bereavement, your expressions of sympathy, for myself and my afflicted sons, are most welcome. Our heavenly father has afflicted you, in the deprivation of your sight, yet you are surrounded by loving friends, whose lives are passed in contributing to your comfort. My dearly beloved husband, was the light of our eyes—we never felt, notwithstanding our great love for him, so good and great as he was, that we could love him sufficiently . . . To me, as you may well believe, life is all darkness, the sun is a mockery to me, in my great sorrow—my dear young friend, although unknown to me, I love you, for being able, so thoroughly to appreciate the noble character of my idolized husband—I pray, that your days, may be passed in happiness and peace, whilst I remain always, your deeply afflicted friend.⁴⁵⁷

Clearly, the letter, and her subsequent behavior manifest the deep-seated love she had for her husband. The idea that their marriage was based on convenience and not on mutual respect and love is preposterous and untrue.⁴⁵⁸ As the Turners suggested, there were many loving love letters between Abraham and Mary, but these private letters rarely survived.⁴⁵⁹ In the end, it

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid, 389-390.

⁴⁵⁷ Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, 354. This letter written a year after Abraham's death still shows the agonizing pain being experienced by Mary over the loss of her beloved husband.

⁴⁵⁸ Winkler, *Lincoln's Ladies: The Women in the Life of the Sixteenth President*, 23. Winkler, Burlingame, Tripp, Herndon, and others believe that Lincoln married Mary for convenience, not love.

⁴⁵⁹ Turner, *Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters*, 217. On April 12, 1865, Abraham Lincoln paused in his labors to pen an affectionate letter to his wife. Although the letter no longer exists, it is known that Mary Lincoln kept it with her for years, reading and rereading it for comfort. Later it was revealed that the letter was about his ambition to travel with Mrs. Lincoln to as far places as Jerusalem.

seems that it was the inner influence of his wife that bolstered Lincoln's confidence in his dealings with women and other matters

Chapter 4: Lincoln's Alleged Homosexuality

Lincoln's Alleged Homosexuality

Lincoln was an under sexed man...He was one of those manly men, whose mind made him seek other masculine minds.⁴⁶⁰

In *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, the psychologist and sex researcher, Clarence Author Tripp, contends that Lincoln's awkwardness with women had to do with his repressive homosexuality. As Tripp explains his study in this way:

the study is neither polemic nor divulgence, but a full-fledged character study that places Lincoln's sexuality into a larger, more significant framework of trying to understand this elusive man.⁴⁶¹

Tripp believes that Lincoln's impassivity with women, and his obsessive solidarity with men, were latent signs of his homosexuality.⁴⁶² According to Tripp, Lincoln veiled his sexual preferences because of fear of society's views on homosexuality.⁴⁶³ Thus, Lincoln refused to devote himself to a religious group because none supported same sex relations. Tripp's thesis is simple: Lincoln's personal responses to both women and men were reflections of his homosexuality.⁴⁶⁴ In more direct terms, Tripp suggests that Lincoln had erotic attractions and attachments to men throughout his lifetime.

⁴⁶⁰ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 95.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., 7.

⁴⁶² Ibid, 10.

⁴⁶³ Ibid., 11.

⁴⁶⁴ Ibid., 9.

Tripp also argues that Lincoln's intimate life fell victim of what psychohistorians now call "the closeting of history," which is the common practice of removing deviant sexual behavior from historical text or narrative.⁴⁶⁵ But Tripp's study is inconclusive. For one, he died before completing the work, and his facts are unsubstantiated and filled with conjectures extracted from Lincoln's dealings with women and his long friendship with Joshua Speed. He also briefly mentions a recorded sleepover between Captain David Derickson and President Lincoln during an outing.

As suggested in this research, Lincoln's dealing with women was caused by a plethora of issues, none relating to homosexuality. Key among these issues was isolation, lack of proper courting techniques, shyness, physical awkwardness, intellectual superiority, and his immense respect for the law. His stay with Speed was more out of convenience and friendship than homoerotic bed-sharing, as suggested by Tripp.⁴⁶⁶ According to Herbert Donald,

For nearly four years Lincoln and Speed shared a doubled bed, and their most private thoughts, in the room above Speed's store. No one thought that there was anything irregular or unusual about the arrangement. It was rare for a single man to have a private room, and it was customary for two or more to sleep in the same bed. Years later, when Lincoln was a well-known lawyer, he and the other attorneys traveling the judicial circuit regularly shared beds.⁴⁶⁷

Captain David Derickson perhaps slept in the same bed with Lincoln, but that does not mean that erotic tendencies were present during his stay. Captain Derickson was one of Lincoln's

⁴⁶⁵ Mark J. Blechner, *Sex Changes: Transformations in Society and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Taylor and Frances Publishing Company, 2009), 25. Blechner, a psychoanalytical psychologist, believe that in some places where homosexuality is considered taboo, proper measures are taken to conceal or eradicate the practice. Though Blechner coined the phrase "the closeting of history," Tripp believed that Lincoln's intimacy was deliberately altered, or expunged, to conceal his homosexuality from the pages of history.

⁴⁶⁶ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 9.

⁴⁶⁷ Donald, *Lincoln*, 86.

bodyguards and would often be near the president to protect him. Sleeping in the same bed with the president when there was a shortage of beds was not an anomaly, but the norm. Even Shenk dismissed Tripp's conclusions, stating that the idea of Lincoln being gay was “based on a tortured misreading of conventional 19th century sleeping arrangements and practices.”⁴⁶⁸ Fleming describes how twenty men slept in the same room and shared beds during their circuit rounds.⁴⁶⁹ It seems that the gay rights movement of the late twentieth-century raised the human curiosity of Lincoln's sexuality to heightened proportions. Arguably, it appears that Tripp, who was gay, was searching for an iconic figure to stand for homosexual pride and acceptance. For these reasons the historian Merrill D. Peterson, warns “that for decades the myth-makers sought to shape the image of the hero president to suit their own agendas.”⁴⁷⁰

The truth is that Lincoln had many male friends in the military, such as Elmer Ellsworth, Edward D. Baker, Ulysses Grant, William T. Sherman, and many others. For the first two men, Lincoln cried upon hearing their deaths. According to James Swanson, when Ellsworth died in battle, two politicians came to visit Lincoln and caught him weeping. Lincoln sat down and spoke the following words:

I will make no apology, gentlemen, for my weakness; but I knew poor Ellsworth well, and held him in great regard. Just as you entered the room, Captain Fox left me, after giving me the painful details of Ellsworth's unfortunate death. The event was so unexpected, and the recital so touching, that it quite unmanned me.⁴⁷¹

⁴⁶⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁴⁶⁹ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 38. The Eighth Circuit was a huge district in Illinois where traveling judges and lawyers tended to the legal needs of people who could not attend a traditional court setting.

⁴⁷⁰ Merrill D. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), vi.

⁴⁷¹ Swanson, *Bloody Crimes*, 164.

Just because Lincoln knew these men, and cried for some of them, does not make Lincoln gay. Lincoln and Herndon were also close friends, but to suggest that Herndon and Lincoln were lovers certainly seems preposterous, even unfounded, and slanderous. In the end, it appears that Lincoln's ambiguous and elusive disposition will always lead to discussion, no matter how offensive the topic of debate might be.

Lincoln's Male Friends

Throughout his lifetime, Lincoln encountered men that became very close friends. One of his earliest friends was a young man called Billy Greene. For eighteen months, the two men were inseparable as they were both responsible for carrying goods on a flatboat. For a while, the two young men shared a common bed as was customary during those times. Yet Tripp refers to their relationship as a homosexual experience because of the bed sharing. Though there is no evidence that the two were involved in sexual intercourse, Tripp suggests that Greene's description of Lincoln having "strong thighs" is an indication that they practiced "femoral intercourse."⁴⁷²

Femoral intercourse has existed since the ancient Greeks as a way to satisfy sexual desires and heighten sexual pleasure.⁴⁷³ The sex style has been used among heterosexual and homosexual participants for centuries. In Japan, the practice is called *sumata* and is done between heterosexual couples to avoid pregnancy.⁴⁷⁴ In the United States, it became popular in

⁴⁷² Steers, *Lincoln Legend*, 133. Femoral intercourse is when a man places his penis between tightly clasped thighs.

⁴⁷³ Kenneth James Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (New York: Harvard University Press, 1989), Preface.

⁴⁷⁴ Peter Constantine, *Japan Sex Trade* (Tokyo: Charles E. Tuttle, 1993), Kindle, 75.

the nineteenth century among homosexual students attending Ivy League institutions. The sexual act was termed the “Ivy League rub.”⁴⁷⁵

In his book, *Greek Homosexuality* (1976), British classical historian Sir Kenneth James Dover explains how ancient Greek pottery depicted homosexuality.⁴⁷⁶ Dover believes that some of these art forms represented femoral intercourse. From there, the practice reached far corners of the world as yet another form of sex and sexual pleasure. Therefore, the practice of femoral sex was a reality during Lincoln’s time. Yet to say that Greene’s comments indicate that the two practiced interfemoral sex is inaccurate. While one can try to make the argument that Green’s statement might lead one to believe that he perhaps experienced femoral intercourse, to suggest that Lincoln did the same without evidence of the sexual act is clearly speculative.

Another young man who was Lincoln’s good friend was Elmer Ellsworth. Tripp suggests that Lincoln had amorous feelings for the young man and gave him very influential positions in government.⁴⁷⁷ He argues that Ellsworth’s appointment of Inspector General of Militia is an indication of Lincoln’s romantic desire. These types of positions, according to Tripp, were given to experienced older men, not neophytes.⁴⁷⁸ Yet, Tripp, as is customary, forgot to mention that Ellsworth was a well-trained and strategic fighter who unfortunately was the first to die in the Civil War. If Lincoln had anything to hide, he would have never told members of his cabinet that he was weeping for Ellsworth. Here too, Tripp hangs on minutiae to solidify his case.

⁴⁷⁵ “Ivy League Rub.” *Urban Dictionary*, accessed May 11, 2014, <http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Ivy%20League%20Rub>

⁴⁷⁶ Kenneth James Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, 4-5.

⁴⁷⁷ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 18.

⁴⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, Chapter 6.

The last of the male figures that Tripp talks about is Captain David V. Derickson. Derickson was Lincoln's bodyguard who, at times, slept in the same bed with Lincoln.⁴⁷⁹ Tripp argues that there were sufficient beds in the White House and that there was no need to for Derickson to sleep in the same bed.⁴⁸⁰ One must keep in mind, however, that the role of a bodyguard is to protect the person they are required to serve. Perhaps Derickson slept on the same bed to provide protective services to the president, or probably the president was suffering from melancholy and needed someone to talk to as the bloody Civil War waged on. It was a known fact that Lincoln suffered from depressing premonitions, once telling Colonel William H. Cook, another of his bodyguards, that he had a dream of being assassinated.⁴⁸¹ Lincoln was always forthright with his bodyguards, and Derickson perhaps slept in the same bed to reassure his protection and lessen his angst. One important bit of information to note is that Derickson never concealed the fact that he slept on the same bed with the President, hinting on the notion that such practices were acceptable in Victorian America. According to Edward Steers Jr., "Billy Greene, Joshua Speed, and David Derickson spoke and wrote freely about their bed-sharing with the President."⁴⁸² As stated earlier, Victorian America was a very critical era that leaped to attack the slightest deviation of conservatism. Therefore, suggesting that Lincoln was gay because of these bed-sharing practices is completely superficial, baseless, and unfounded.

As Steers suggests, "Lincoln's relationships with Billy Green, Joshua Speed, Elmer Ellsworth

⁴⁷⁹ Ibid., 36.

⁴⁸⁰ Ibid, 15. Most historians believe that the actual bed sharing occurred at the soldier's home, not the White House. In this case, Tripp's interpretation of the event is wrong.

⁴⁸¹ Mark Sceurman and Mark Moran, *Weird Civil War* (New York: Sterling Publishing Company, 2015), 154.

⁴⁸² Steers, *Lincoln Legends*, 147. Steer argues that it is difficult to accept the idea that Lincoln engaged in sex with these men over a period of twenty-five years and that the tabloids, or anyone for that matter, did not pick up on it.

and David Derickson were nothing more than they represented themselves to be: warm, friendly admiration for four individuals that Lincoln loved, and not in a romantic way.”⁴⁸³ In the end, Steer’s statement is what makes the most sense.

In reviewing Lincoln’s loyal devotion to his friends, one can also attribute these deep feelings to his childhood experiences.⁴⁸⁴ As a boy, Lincoln had very little opportunities to make lots of friends with other children. In fact, the rough frontier region was one that demanded Lincoln to work hard and be accountable for his work. Lincoln spent hours a day with his father planting corn so that the family can eat and live.⁴⁸⁵ The lack of time, coupled with the low level of interaction with other children, contributed to Lincoln’s psychological makeup.

In researching relationships and interactions among boys, the psychoanalyst Harry Stack Sullivan came out with a very important observation. According to Sullivan, having friends in late childhood and early adolescence is very important to the development of a child. Sullivan states that in this critical age,

friends are needed to share secrets, desires, and ambition. By giving a boy a perspective on himself different from that offered by his family members, a friend can help in the difficult process of self-recognition and can help him to develop an autonomous personality. When there are very few children of the same age in the community, some boys never find such an intimate friend, and the failure can have serious consequences for the rest of their lives.⁴⁸⁶

Lincoln met his true friend on April 15, 1837; his name was Joshua Fry Speed. By this time, Lincoln was twenty-eight years old, and because he had not had a true friend before, he deeply

⁴⁸³ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁸⁴ “Mr. Lincoln and Friends,” *The Lehrman Institute*, November 20, 2016
<http://www.mrlincolnandfriends.org/mr-lincoln-and-friends/>

⁴⁸⁵ Donald, *Lincoln*, 29.

⁴⁸⁶ Donald, *We Are Lincoln Men*, 10.

confided in Speed all of his emotions and desires. In the book, *We Are Lincoln Men*, historian David Herbert Donald explains,

Though Lincoln had hundreds of acquaintances and dozens of admirers, he had almost no intimate friends. Behind his mask of affability and endless stream of humorous anecdotes, he maintained an inviolate reserve that only a few were ever able to penetrate.⁴⁸⁷

Speed became Lincoln's trusted and closest friend. He confided in him and told him his intimate secrets, desires, and fears. The two also shared many private talks together. Donald explains,

When the stove grew cold and the other men went home, Speed and Lincoln were left together, to talk endlessly about everything. They discussed books and literature. Lincoln loved Shakespeare and Burns, some of whose poems he could recite from memory, while Speed favored the poetry of Lord Byron . . . At the same time they both had a lively sense of humor. Lincoln was given to burlesque, and his endless anecdotes always had a point; Speed's humor tended to be understated.⁴⁸⁸

Over the course of his life, Lincoln met a few men which he considered true friends.⁴⁸⁹ One can make the argument that Lincoln's adolescent years began when he was an adult and continued throughout his lifetime. In other words, instead of making friends as a child, he began that process as an adult. Hence, this was the reason why he was so intimate with some of his most trusted friends. Men such as Billy Greene, Elmer Ellsworth, Captain David V. Derickson, Joshua Fry Speed, William H. Herndon, Orville Hickman Browning, William Henry Seward, Charles Sumner, John George Nicolay, John Jay, and others were all important friends to Lincoln.⁴⁹⁰ In

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid., cover page.

⁴⁸⁸ Ibid., 33.

⁴⁸⁹ "Mr. Lincoln and Friends-The Sons," *The Lehrman Institute*, November 20, 2016 <http://www.mrlincolinandfriends.org/the-sons/>

⁴⁹⁰ Ibid.

fact, the term homosexuality did not emerge in the English lexicon until 1955, so the term was not politicized as it is today.⁴⁹¹ Therefore, to assume that Lincoln's relationship with a few of these men was because he was sexually attractive to them is essentially baseless.

Lincoln's Lack of Sexual Drive

In relation to Tripp's allegation that Lincoln had a very low sex drive with women, the answer can lie on three possibilities.⁴⁹² First, if Lincoln had Marfan's syndrome, his libido would definitely be affected. Individuals with Marfan syndrome tend not to be sexually motivated because sex can produce physical pain.⁴⁹³ An independent study by Public Medicine, a national and professional public health information group, reveals that 62% of Marfan patients lacked sexual wellness and experienced pain during sex.⁴⁹⁴ The pain is usually centered in the joints and chest area. Individuals with Marfan syndrome suffer from heart problems and excitement can lead to aortic aneurisms.⁴⁹⁵ Along with the pain, most Marfan patients also feel ashamed of their physical makeup and are not emotionally ready to have sex or procreate.⁴⁹⁶ Secondly, in Victorian America, giving birth was a difficult and dangerous endeavor. The

⁴⁹¹ Daven Hiskey, "How Gay came to Mean Homosexual," *Today I Found Out*, February 25, 2010, November 20, 2016 <http://www.todayifoundout.com/index.php/2010/02/how-gay-came-to-mean-homosexual/>

⁴⁹² Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 36.

⁴⁹³ K. F., Peter, F. Kong, M. Hanslo, and B. B. Biesecker, "Living with Marfan Syndrome: Quality of Life and Reproductive Planning," *Clinical Genetics* 62, no. 2: 110-20.

⁴⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁹⁵ Anna Krigel, "Did Abraham Lincoln Have Marfan Syndrome?" *Clinical Correlations*, at <http://www.clinicalcorrelations.org/?p=6110>. Many Marfan patients suffer from cardiomyopathy, enlargement of the heart.

⁴⁹⁶ K. F., Peter, F. Kong, M. Hanslo, and B. B. Biesecker, "Living with Marfan Syndrome: Quality of Life and Reproductive Planning," *Clinical Genetics* 62, no. 2: 110-20.

medical branch of obstetrics and gynecology was at its infancy, and women experienced all sorts of complications from birth.⁴⁹⁷ Even with these odds, Mary Todd gave birth to four children; her body must have been weakened from constantly going into labor. As stated earlier, Thomas's birth was a very difficult one. Therefore, Lincoln must have known that child bearing was a hazardous undertaking and, as a result, decided not to procreate anymore. But to simply say that Lincoln's sexual drive should be measured by the amount of offspring is not an idea that seems plausible; however, the possibility can be entertained.

Another reason for Lincoln's low libido can be attributed to his incessant preoccupation with his work.⁴⁹⁸ Lincoln, as suggested earlier, was deeply immersed with his work and strove to become great by intently focusing on his career. This certainly took a lot of his time as he prepared to become president of the United States. In all, however, Tripp's allegation that Lincoln despised to have sex with women is speculative and not convincing. If this were the case, he would have never suffered immensely from a broken heart upon the death of Ann Rutledge or suffer the painful separation to Mary Owens.⁴⁹⁹

Tripp's Interpretation of Ann Rutledge and Abraham Lincoln

In reviewing the Rutledge-Lincoln relationship, Tripp believes that Herndon made a simple and unembellished story into a tear-jerking melodrama.⁵⁰⁰ Citing J.G. Randall and Paul M. Angle's research findings, Tripp believe that Herndon did not report the relationship

⁴⁹⁷ Miss Cellania, "The Historical Horror of Childbirth," *Mental Floss*. November 20, 2016, <http://mentalfloss.com/article/50513/historical-horror-childbirth> Take for instance the prominent suffragist leader Mary Wollstonecraft. Regrettably, she became an unwilling victim of childbearing when she gave birth to her daughter, Mary Shelley.

⁴⁹⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 133.

⁴⁹⁹ Flemmings, *The Lincoln's: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 33.

⁵⁰⁰ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 95-99.

accurately.⁵⁰¹ According to Tripp, Robert B. Rutledge, brother of Ann, invited Herndon to his home to reshape some of the misinformation in his lectures and writings. Rutledge said,

I trust largely to your courtesy as a gentleman, to your honesty and integrity as a historian, and to your skill in writing to the public, to enlarge wherever my statements seem obscure, and to condense and remove whatever seems superfluous . . . I beg of you to consider well the testimony in each case, and make up your history from those statements which may appear to you best fitted to remove all doubts as to their correctness.⁵⁰²

Tripp further explains that Mr. Rutledge informed Mr. Herndon that complete truth can only be attained through main sources, and that everything else is merely approximation.⁵⁰³ As a result,

Tripp believes that Herndon's account of the Ann story is largely fabricated. Tripp says,

Most of these wild stories and outright fictions appear to have stemmed from exaggerations or slight word errors that caused accounts to veer off down one wrong track after the other.⁵⁰⁴

⁵⁰¹Ibid., 99. James G. Randall was a Lincoln historian and professor at the University of Illinois. Among his students was David Herbert Donald, who became one of the leading scholars of Abraham Lincoln. Paul M. Angle was a leading Lincoln scholar and director of the Chicago Historical Society.

⁵⁰² Ibid., 99.

⁵⁰³ Ibid., 99. There is no doubt that Herndon's accounts of Ann Rutledge are hagiographical and were meant, to a degree, to besmirch the image of his nemesis Mary Todd. But to say that the entire story was a romantic legend is to devalue Herndon's contribution to the life of Lincoln. As historians we must analyze historical facts without being whiggish. It seems that Tripp is using his twentieth-century perception of the world and retrofitting it to Lincoln's era. Eric Foner, in a lecture given at Columbia University on May 31, 2014, stated that when evaluating history, it is good to use one's modern perception, but it is not good to place one's personal take to the era being investigated because it taints the validity of the research. Foner continues by saying that it is okay to analyze the sources with our modern minds, but when a historian, journalist, or biographer is hell-bent in placing their modern views to the past, the work becomes distorted and etc. Tripp's research would have been better if he would have presented his findings; instead, he made it his mission to inject his modern belief to the era being investigated.

⁵⁰⁴ Ibid., 107.

Tripp uses the relationship between Ann and John McNamar to dispute Herndon's idea that Lincoln was deeply and madly in love with her. In fact, Tripp believes that Lincoln was not in love with any women because he was homosexual.⁵⁰⁵ According to Tripp, a few years after Ann died, McNamar was asked how he felt about Lincoln back then and he said the following:

Mr. Lincoln was not to my knowledge paying particular attention to any of the Young Ladies of my acquaintance . . . I never heard any person say that Mr. Lincoln addressed Miss Ann Rutledge in terms of courtship neither.⁵⁰⁶

The truth is that Mr. McNamar was a liar with a secret past. He lied to Ann various times and was known to her as John McNeil, a false name given to her to conceal his true identity. According to Donald, McNamar concealed his name to protect a family fortune in New York City from covetous family members.⁵⁰⁷ Lincoln, who was McNamar's lawyer and handled his law matters, knew of his real name and felt that Ann deserved better.⁵⁰⁸ Ann's family was skeptical about him and believed that a man with a lurid past should not be trusted. Obviously, it seems that Tripp trusted McNamar's account because he is relying on his statement to disprove Lincoln's true affection for Ann. In truth, McNamar was a man who cared for himself and his fortune; his letters to Ann became more infrequent and eventually desisted completely when he went away on business. As postmaster, Lincoln knew about these things and slowly began to make his acquaintance to Ann. Upon her death, it was Lincoln who was in deep depression, not McNamar.

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid., 101.

⁵⁰⁷ Donald, *Lincoln*, 69.

⁵⁰⁸ Ibid., 70. Lincoln was responsible for McNamar's legal transactions, but could not reveal the true name of his client to Ann because of lawyer-client confidentiality. Here too is a classic example of Lincoln's profound adherence to the rule of law.

Tripp believes that the entire Rutledge story was a myth because McNamar would have been told that a relationship between Ann and Lincoln was brewing, and he would have taken preemptive measures. He also states that Lincoln was a dutiful and comprehensive writer, but there was no letter written to Ann, even when he went to Vandalia as a State Legislature from November 1834 to February 1835.⁵⁰⁹

First, let us address the former statement. Through much research, it is clear that McNamar lost interest in Ms. Rutledge the moment he left for New York City for three long years. To leave a woman in such an abrupt matter, and knowing that marriage was pending, leads any person to believe that there was an issue with McNamar. McNamar must have known that his lies tarnished and weakened the trust level between them both. Also the fact that correspondence ceased completely is a good indication of his lack of interest. Lincoln, an extremely careful observer, waited patiently for any signs of McNamar's approach and, not seeing any, he gradually began to talk to her. This was not a courting event as Tripp suggested; instead it was more a flirting scene. If McNamar was truly in love with Ann, than perhaps he would have been upset at Lincoln's flirtatious endeavors, but he was nowhere to be found. Therefore, it is uncertain if McNamar would have gotten upset with Lincoln's advancements in the first place.

In addressing the second statement, there are various reasons why Lincoln did not write to Ann during his circuit rounds. First, Lincoln was enthralled by her beauty and had feelings for her, but he was not traditionally courting her. Lincoln was deficient in courting practices and approached the relationship more as a flirtation than an all-out love relationship. In dealing with Lincoln and Ann, one has to keep in mind that Lincoln, for the first time, was getting some attention from a beautiful young woman. This truly, enlightened the spirit of a man who for

⁵⁰⁹ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 102.

decades was seen as ugly, lanky, and disproportionate.⁵¹⁰ Furthermore, Lincoln was in the state legislature, and the job took a lot of work during four-month period in Vandalia. From November to February, Lincoln had to travel to Vandalia, and his focus has always been to succeed and be great in politics. As a new comer, his objective was to impress the other more seasoned politicians so that his name will slowly be recognized by them. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why he did not write to Ann. Another possible reason could have been Ann's sudden death. Her death prevented Lincoln from deeply immersing in the relationship and getting to really know her. If Ann should have lived a ripe old age, than perhaps they would have been letters written to her by Lincoln. Lastly, it is possible that any letters simply have not survived. After all, Abraham Lincoln was not a famous figure in 1834. In the end, it seems that Tripp's suggestions are more conjectures attached loosely to misinterpreted facts than a well-reviewed and written presentation to Lincoln's persona.

Tripp consistently uses quotes from family and friends to prove that Lincoln was not interested in girls. One of the quotes is from David Turnham, a lifelong friend of Lincoln, who said the following, "when in company with men and women he was rather backward, but with the boys, he was always cheerful and talkative."⁵¹¹ Throughout the literature on Lincoln, there has been plenty of evidence suggesting that Lincoln was a shy and reserved person. This is especially true when he was among women. He felt most comfortable around men because he

⁵¹⁰ Donald, *Lincoln*, 239. There are many accounts of Lincoln being ugly and physically disproportionate. These types of words truly affect the mental status of people and it is a fact that Lincoln himself made fun of his looks. Being admired and seen favorable by a beautiful woman must have stoked the emotions of Lincoln who felt so deficient with his looks. This is the reason why he became so deeply melancholic upon her death. It seems that Lincoln realized that the one woman who admired him, and was not taken aback from his physical looks, is dead. As a result, he no longer has her presence to elevate his spirit and joy.

⁵¹¹ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 103.

had no interest in them and cared not what they thought of him. Women, on the other hand, were a different story. Lincoln must have known that the odds were against him when it came to women. He was tall and physically uncoordinated, his clothes were too short, and his courting habits needed much improvement. He felt comfortable around married women because they were already taken so there was no stress in trying to capture their hearts. To suggest that Lincoln was homosexual because he associated more with men than women is absurd. Tripp goes as far as to say that his willingness to be around married women and not single women is an indication of his “gayness.”⁵¹² The author goes on tirades and personal attacks about why he believes Lincoln was homosexual. One who received harsh criticism from Tripp was an obscure farmer called Isaac Cogdal.

Tripp believes that Cogdal’s description of the Rutledge and Lincoln relationship was embellished and incredible. According to Tripp, in 1861 Cogdal was able to sit down with President Lincoln and interviewed him about his relationship with Ann Rutledge.⁵¹³ Tripp argues that Cogdal asserts that he was able to quote Lincoln’s exact words during the interview.⁵¹⁴ Tripp believes that Cogdal’s statements of Lincoln’s relationship to Rutledge,

⁵¹² Ibid., 103. Tripp suggest that Lincoln felt at ease with Ann because she was engaged to be married to McNamar. Otherwise, he would have never approached Ann because he was not interested in women. Donald explains how Lincoln was a very judicious person and would analyze every given situation before he leaped forward. Lincoln patiently waited to approach Ann. He knew that approaching an engaged woman could stir up gossip and unwanted public attention. As postmaster of a small village, Lincoln knew that McNamar’s letters were no longer being dispatched because there was none to be delivered. This coupled with Lincoln’s knowledge that McNamar lied to Ann, by giving her a false name, prompted his movement.

⁵¹³ Ibid., 116.

⁵¹⁴ Ibid., 116. According to Tripp, the interview was in 1861. By that time, he argues, Lincoln was president, and it is very unlikely that he had time to be interviewed by Codgal.

made after the Presidents' death to Herndon, were not indicative of Lincoln's speaking style.⁵¹⁵ Tripp says, "The most obvious thing about Cogdal's effusive statement is its un-Lincolnian quality."⁵¹⁶ To Tripp, Cogdal, a good friend of Lincoln, overstated the Rutledge story to receive political favors and recognition. It is no coincidence, he argues, that Cogdal later immersed in law.⁵¹⁷ To solidify his position, he continuously mentions J.G. Randall and Paul M. Angle as supporters of the theory, while lambasting the historians, Douglas L. Wilson and David H. Donald, by labeling them scholars who follow the traditional "status quo" of history.⁵¹⁸

Tripp's attributes Lincoln's sadness, grief and depression to the times. According to Tripp, in 1835, the same year of Ann's death, a virulent disease hit the land. The outbreak of typhoid caused many people to become depressed, including Lincoln, who feared that the disease could take his own life.⁵¹⁹ Tripp describes the era in this manner:

The sanitary conditions were unspeakable. . . . Besides all this mayhem of misery amid wretchedly dirt-poor poverty during an era of no screens or sanitation, the air was filled not only with mosquitoes, but with swarms of noxious large black flies and poisonous yellow ones that flew unhindered from feasting on dung heaps and human feces.⁵²⁰

Tripp believes that Lincoln was depressed solely because of these horrible conditions that were afflicting New Salem at the time. The truth is that Lincoln had been exposed to these types of

⁵¹⁵ Ibid., 117.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid., 117.

⁵¹⁷ Ibid., 116. Though not directly implied, Tripp hints on the possibility that Cogdal wrote a good account of the relationship to get political favors.

⁵¹⁸ Ibid., 117. Wilson was specifically critical of Angle and Randall, stating that they allowed their personal biases to taint the Ann Rutledge and Lincoln relationship. Donald supports most of the story, but encourages readers to do their own research on the matter.

⁵¹⁹ Ibid., 106. Typhoid is a modern term. In Lincoln's day, the disease was referred to as "brain fever."

⁵²⁰ Ibid., 106.

morbid situations before. His mother, Nancy, died from a severe case of dysentery by consuming tainted milk.⁵²¹ His beloved sister, Sarah, died giving birth at an early age.⁵²² Numerous friends died in accidents. To assume that Lincoln's sole reason of being depressed was caused by these conditions seems invalid and superficial; Lincoln had seen death and despair long before 1835. In fact, the American poet, Charles Bukowski, once wrote that "it is not the large things that send a man to the madhouse; it is the continuous series of small tragedies."⁵²³

Tripp suggests that the scholars who refused to acknowledge that Lincoln was a homosexual are affected by the "bandwagon effect," the tendency to support themes that are accepted in academia.⁵²⁴ The truth is that all scholarly work is subjected to interpretation from a number of viewpoints. To say that disagreeing with one's tenet, or research, means that readers are conforming to "status quo" is absurd and unsubstantial. All research, no matter how well documented or presented, has critics. Tripp needs to understand that disagreeing with a person's research should not mean guiding the critic to the gallows; instead it should be welcomed and disproven through dialogue or written correspondence. As historians, we can never gain direct access to the era being investigated; instead we can only get approximations. To believe that one's work is completely accurate is an unrealistic viewpoint to scholarship. Perhaps Tripp forgot this basic and valuable lesson.

⁵²¹ Donald, *Lincoln*, 33. During Lincoln's time, milk disease was common. The disease was caused by milk laden with bacteria. Pasteurization began in 1864 when Louis Pasteur discovered that liquids, such as milk, could be cleansed from bacteria by applying heat. Nancy died in 1818.

⁵²² Ibid., 42. Sarah Lincoln Grigsby, sister of Abraham Lincoln, died in 1828.

⁵²³ Shenk, *Lincoln's Melancholy*, 20.

⁵²⁴ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 113.

Tripp's Interpretation of Mary Owen and Abraham Lincoln

In relation to Mary Owens, Tripp follows the same *ad nauseam* theme that he did with Ann. He suggests, once again, that Herndon embellished the story, and that Lincoln was never interested in Owens. Tripp believes that the lack of interest Lincoln had with girls, and his unwillingness to properly court Owens, are all indication of his clandestine homosexuality. Tripp explains,

He had never been in love, neither is there any evidence of his ever having been physically attracted to any girl. Nor had he tried his hand at courtship, least of all with a new girl in town.⁵²⁵

Tripp argues that Owens was always complaining about Lincoln's deficiency in proper manner with her. He discusses Uncle Billy Greene's story about how Lincoln did not help Mary cross a stream. Tripp's question is this: How was it that those other gentlemen managed to be very officious in seeing their ladies got safely over the dangerous stream, while Lincoln failed miserably?⁵²⁶ His answer is simply that "those gentlemen had a large charge of heterosexual enthusiasm; enough to keep them tuned in and turned on to their partners."⁵²⁷ He states that Lincoln was homosexual because he lacked gallantry, polite formality, and courtly machismo.⁵²⁸ Tripp, once again, refuses to acknowledge Lincoln's deficiency in courting women. Mary Owens, herself, stated "his training had been different from mine; hence there was not that

⁵²⁵ Ibid., 122. Tripp never takes into consideration Lincoln's timidity and his lack of courtship skills when dealing with women. Even Mary, his wife, knew that Lincoln was not well versed with women and corrected his deficiency during marriage.

⁵²⁶ Ibid., Chpt 5.

⁵²⁷ Ibid., 124.

⁵²⁸ Ibid., 124.

congeniality, which would otherwise have existed.”⁵²⁹ This simple statement gives us great insight. First, that the men present that day did not come from the same upbringing as Lincoln and were better attuned with courtship practices; secondly, that if it were not for this courting deficiency, a relationship between Mary and Lincoln could have possibly survived. In fact, the role of manhood has changed over the course of time. In Lincoln’s era men had to be refined and follow the teachings of Castiglione; today, however men have to coexist with women and some are stay-at-home husbands.⁵³⁰ Therefore, is it right to label a man homosexual just because he stays home and is responsible for domestic duties? Of course not.

Tripp’s Interpretation of Mary Todd and Abraham Lincoln

Mary Todd, like Ann Rutledge, is something of a lightning rod for historians—they either love her or hate her. Love and hate are too strong perhaps to describe her situation, but the fact remains that historians either view Lincoln’s marriage as a living hell or believe the couple were deeply in love and compatible in the important things that mattered in their marriage: their children and politics. The literature is filled with snippets of reminiscences to support both arguments. The important matter before us is how Tripp explains the relationship in light of his belief that Lincoln was gay?⁵³¹

In his exploration of Mary Todd, Tripp believes that Lincoln married her out of necessity not love.⁵³² He believes that the marriage between Mary and Abraham was hell, but revisionist historians distorted the truth, and the end result was like a “scrambled egg.”⁵³³ He states that during the “fatal first,” the time when Lincoln called off their relationship, Lincoln knew that he

⁵²⁹ Ibid., 122.

⁵³⁰ “What is a Home Dad,” *National At Home Dad Network*, 2016, accessed November 20, 2016 at <http://athomedad.org/about/what-is-an-at-home-dad/>

⁵³¹ Steers, *Lincoln Legends: Myths, Hoaxes, and Confabulation*, 139.

⁵³² Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 185.

⁵³³ Ibid., 189.

did not love Mary and conscientiously broke off the relationship.⁵³⁴ But after a year or so, he felt sympathy for Mary and married her.

First, as stated in previous chapters, when analyzing Lincoln's life, one must look at the totality of the circumstances. In 1841, the year of the "fatal first," Lincoln was experiencing extreme opposition in the political arena. Douglas L. Wilson and Joshua Wolf Shenk noted that Lincoln's public life was crumbling at around this time.⁵³⁵ Lincoln's proposed internal improvement plans were not taken seriously by many politicians, and they were dubbed too costly, impractical, and complicated.⁵³⁶ His career seemed at an end with no prospect of recovering. He knew that marriage was a costly affair, and he was not going to marry without being able to provide for a wife. As a result, he became apprehensive of marriage. The fatal first, along with the stress of his career, were the factors that galvanized Lincoln's reasons for breaking the relationship. It took reassurance from Mrs. Simeon Francis, the wife of Lincoln's good friend, to rekindle the relationship.⁵³⁷ Ironically, with the previous two women (Rutledge and Owens), Tripp denounces Herndon's account of the relationship, but agrees with him in the bashing of Mary.⁵³⁸ Throughout his work, Tripp relentlessly goes on with his conjectures and attempts to prove Lincoln's latent homoerotic feelings. He goes as far as saying that Lincoln

⁵³⁴ Ibid., 185.

⁵³⁵ "The Fatal First and the Things We Just Don't Know," *Lincoln Studies*, accessed on August 19, 2014, <http://www.lincolnstudies.blogspot.com/2008/01/fatal-first-and-things-we-just-dont.html>

⁵³⁶ Ibid.

⁵³⁷ Donald, *Lincoln*, 112.

⁵³⁸ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 187. Tripp agrees with Herndon that Lincoln married Mary because he was honor-bound and that there was no love in the relationship.

purposely spent half the year following Judges Treat and Davis during the Eighth Circuit to avoid being with Mary.⁵³⁹

The truth is that Lincoln joined these traveling lawyers for two reasons. First, Lincoln wanted recognition. By traveling and dealing with the legal worries of a large group, Lincoln was gaining experience and his good name was being recognized by the people. Even Schurz explains that before the circuit, Lincoln's name was not well known.⁵⁴⁰ Secondly, traveling the circuit provided money that Lincoln needed for his family. Therefore, to say that Lincoln went on these long-distant rides to escape Mary and to avoid his responsibility as a husband is a bit disquieting. It is true, however, that some of the men left on Saturday morning to return on Sunday nights, but these were in the minority. Most of the men stayed behind to avoid the arduous trip. In fact, traveling to these districts was very difficult and dangerous. Fleming explains the following:

Life on the circuit was not easy. In winter, the roads were deep with snow; in spring they were soft with mud. Abraham and his fellow travelers had to drive through unbroken prairie where the grass grew as tall as their horses. When they came to swollen stream without bridges, Judge Davis would ask Lincoln to look for a crossing if he could get over, the others would safely follow. In this matter they could travel thirty or forty miles each day. Rarely did they see another passing rider.⁵⁴¹

Though Tripp's research provides an entertaining proposition, his net is not widely cast. The result is a research with a weak foundation and a weaker edifice. Tripp believes that Lincoln did not leave any reliable evidence to give proof of his heterosexuality, and that his marriage is a weak example of living as a heterosexual.⁵⁴² It seems that Tripp is so determined to prove

⁵³⁹ Ibid., 188.

⁵⁴⁰ Holzer, *The Lincoln Anthology*, 340.

⁵⁴¹ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 38.

Lincoln was homosexual that he tends not to focus on scholarly works that show ample examples of Lincoln's love for women, especially his wife. It seems that Tripp failed to realize that marriage is dynamic and never static. In fact, the French author, Andre Maurois, once said that "a successful marriage is an edifice that must be rebuilt every day."⁵⁴³ Truly, Tripp's account of the marriage is purely a negative one, devoid of any positive animation or joyful occasions. It is for this reason that one must be careful with Tripp's account of the marriage because it parallels Herndon's observations. As Weir once said, "history lies, or maybe sometimes it exaggerates or oversimplifies."⁵⁴⁴ Edward Steers Jr., the author of *Lincoln Legends: Myths, Hoaxes, and Confabulations*, explains the following:

Abraham Lincoln has been appropriated as the poster boy for so many different causes, ranging from melancholia to the National Guard, that it is difficult at times to keep them straight. Americans of every persuasion have wanted to pin their tail on Lincoln's donkey in an effort to gain status for their personal cause since shortly after his death. I suppose it is not surprising then to find Lincoln coming out of the closet to join the ranks of homosexuals in modern America. As with many of the other tail pinners, those who tried to promote Lincoln as a homosexual have missed the donkey—this time by a wide margin.⁵⁴⁵

⁵⁴² Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*, 219. Tripp is very convinced that Lincoln was homosexual that he criticizes the work of David Donald, namely his book: *Lincoln At Home*. He also criticizes the 2001 television series, *A House Divided*. Tripp believes that these types of works and documentaries purposely conceal the true nature of Lincoln's homosexuality.

⁵⁴³ "Andre Morouis." *Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed on May 18, 2014, <http://www.britanica.com/EBchecked/topic/370190/Andre-Morouis>

⁵⁴⁴ Weir, *History's Greatest Lies*, 6.

⁵⁴⁵ Steers, *Lincoln Legends: Myths, Hoaxes, and Confabulation*, 125. Steer explains that the idea of Lincoln being homosexual was proposed before. According to Steer, in 1999, Larry Kramer was the first man to suggest that Lincoln was homosexual. Kramer's allegation stem from a diary he found hidden beneath the floorboards of the general store of Speed. In it, Kramer claimed was evidence suggesting that Speed and Lincoln had an intimate relationship and were lovers. Kramer, however, was not able to produce a diary. His claims were quickly dispelled. In 2004, five years after Kramer, another claim of Lincoln's homosexuality emerged, this time by a scholar, C.A. Tripp. Tripp's research was more prominent than Kramer's because the time was ready for a homosexual icon. Also, because Tripp was a scholar, more people read the book. Some newspapers and magazines declared Tripp's research a *magnum opus*, while other more

The truth is that “Tripp simply took the known facts of Lincoln’s various relationships and followed them right to where he wanted those facts to lead him.”⁵⁴⁶ In fact, the historian Michael Burlingame, a scholar that Tripp admires, did not agree with most of his research. According to Burlingame, “Tripp’s book helps disabuse the reading public of the ‘legend of Lincoln’s happy marriage,’ but insofar as it leads people to believe that he was gay, it does a disservice to history.”⁵⁴⁷ Burlingame was not the only critic to be unimpressed with Tripp’s work; several other illustrious scholars who attended the symposium on Tripp’s book at the Claremont Institute also were displeased.⁵⁴⁸ Many, including Shenk, believed that Tripp was not impartial; instead he acted as an emotional advocator for gay pride which, at the time of the publication, had not seen many successes.⁵⁴⁹

In evaluating Lincoln’s life, there is plenty of evidence suggesting that his deficiency with women was caused by many factors, not just one issue as Tripp suggests. To simply imply that Lincoln’s ignorance in courting procedures defines his sexuality is superficial and speculative. Lincoln was not homosexual; instead he was a man so preoccupied with his career that the little things in life, such as proper etiquette, courting, and marriage eluded his mind.

serious scholars, such as the renowned historian, Allen Guelzo scoffed at the whole thing. Here again, according to Guelzo, is a work of literature that the Lincoln community must exhaustively disprove and dispel.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid., 128.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid., 139.

⁵⁴⁸ Martin P. Johnson, “Did Abraham Lincoln Slept with his Bodyguard?,” *Journal of Abraham Lincoln Association* 27, no. 2 (2006): 42-55, accessed February 4, 2015, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/j/jala/2629860.0027.205/--did-abraham-lincoln-sleep-with-his-bodyguard-another-look-at?rgn=main;view=fulltext>

⁵⁴⁹ Steers, *Lincoln Legends: Myth, Hoaxes, and Confabulations*, 128.

Mary's relationship with Wikoff was not romantic, instead it was platonic. Epstein explains the situation in this manner:

By November, the distance between the president and his wife had grown so abysmal that she confided more in John Watts and Chevalier Wikoff than in her husband. Without a circle of reliable women friends, she had attracted a following of male admirers. These included the estimable Charles Sumner, Nathaniel P. Willis, and John Lothrop Motley.⁵⁵⁰

Clearly, Mary had other more estimable and righteous friends, but Tripp decided to concentrate primarily on those with disreputable characteristics. This was all done to tarnish Mary's image and give credence to the notion that their marriage was an irreversible disaster. In more direct terms, Tripp is a modern day Herndon with all the same vitriol towards Mary. Tripp explains that "Lincoln scholars has chosen to either skip entirely, or at least greatly understate, the enormous punishments Mary managed to load onto Lincoln."⁵⁵¹ Tripp's overall conclusion about Mary was that she was insane and the most detested woman in America.⁵⁵² Perhaps, Tripp refused to heed the emotional words of Charles Sumner when he said the following about Mary:

Surely the honorable members of the senate must be weary casting mud on the garments of the wife of Lincoln; those same garments on which one terrible night, five years ago, gushed out the blood and brains of Abraham Lincoln. She sat beside him in the theater, and she received that pitiful, that holy deluge on her hands and skirts, because she was the chosen companion of his heart. She loved him. I speak of that which I know. He had all her love. And Lincoln loved, as only his mighty heart could love, Mary Lincoln.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵⁰ Epstein, *Portrait of a Marriage*, 346. It was not that Lincoln distanced himself on purpose. He was so preoccupied with the Civil War that he focused less on his wife. But even with his busy schedule, he never discouraged his wife's social life. In fact, he attended some of Mary's receptions even if for only a fleeting moment.

⁵⁵¹ Tripp, *The Intimate World of Abraham Lincoln*. 200.

⁵⁵² Ibid , 200

⁵⁵³ Barton, *The Women Lincoln Loved*, 360-361.

In relation to Lincoln, Tripp's general conclusion was that he was a clandestine homosexual with no love for his wife. The fact is that Tripp went through great length to discredit Mary's reputation as a caring and loving wife. He also preyed on Abraham's vulnerability, apprehension, and deficiency in courting women. These vicious attacks on Abraham and his wife were done specifically to elevate Tripp's arguments by attempting to distort the image of the couple. As Steers suggests,

For years, historians—and a few who try to be, have taken shots at Lincoln from every side imaginable. His honesty has been questioned, his commitment to emancipation has been trashed, his oath to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution has been severely challenged by historians who chastise him for suspending *habeas corpus* and establishing military tribunal to try civilians. Lincoln scholars have not handled Lincoln with kid gloves. Those who attack Tripp's critics have to do better in their defense of Tripp's thesis. It will take more than disparaging those who criticize Tripp's conclusions, accusing them of "obfuscation," to save their hero from embarrassment. . . . [Tripp] did, however, set out to create a myth that may outlive us all.⁵⁵⁴

Therefore, it is for this reason that Tripp's research is, and continues to be, an attempt to derail reality by injecting heavy doses of innuendos, conjectures and half-truths into an otherwise healthy narrative of a marriage.

⁵⁵⁴ Steer, *Lincoln Legends: Myths, Hoaxes, and Confabulation*, 149.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In evaluating Lincoln's life, the evidence suggests a valid premise. That is, that Lincoln was influenced by a series of events that molded his character and subsequently affected the way he dealt with women. Truly, Lincoln's social environment, church teachings, his relationship with his father, his physical and mental makeup, his desires to be great, his strict adherence to the law, his fear of young beautiful women, his fear of marriage, and his often brutish manners—all culminated in the way he approached and treated women in general. Psychoanalysis would argue that Lincoln's reason for escaping the solace of rural life was both his passion to be free from the manacles of his father's grip and to live a modern life devoid of rural settings. Miller explains that Lincoln fought his entire political life for industrialization, and there was not a pastoral bone in his body.⁵⁵⁵ It was his hatred of the woods that propelled his indefatigable pursuit to modernize the world. Debatably, his youthful years in solitude were more of a prison sentence than a serene and cheerful experience. The Lincoln scholar, Michael Lind, explains the following:

Lincoln wanted to help build a society that would be the opposite in almost every way of the rural society in which he had grown up as a child. Instead of wilderness there would be cities; instead of manual labor there would be machine production of goods and mechanized harvesting of farm products; instead of widespread ignorance there would be universal literacy and education.⁵⁵⁶

The same way he vigorously proposed modernization, as a politician, is the same way he intently focused on his readings as a youth. Lincoln wanted to succeed at all costs, and at times, it seems that women and romance took a backseat. Many historians and biographers, such as Burlingame

⁵⁵⁵ Miller, *Lincoln's Virtues*, 30.

⁵⁵⁶ Michael Lind, *What Lincoln Believed*, 66.

and Herndon, considered him as “the most ambitious man in the world.”⁵⁵⁷ Donald explains how Lincoln brought his wife to the capital and felt that she and the children were hindering his political advancement.⁵⁵⁸ In a sense, Lincoln loved his wife, but also felt that her presence was obstructing his political movements and thinking pattern. Instead of embracing her presence at home, it seems that Lincoln did not know how to use his wife as both a companion and confidant as he later did.⁵⁵⁹ It seems that while he elevated his intelligence by reading, writing, and research, the simpler things in life escaped him. Regrettably, Lincoln was never able to completely find his niche around women, and in many respects it could have been caused by some, or all, of the factors mentioned in this research. Though influenced heavily by the spirit of the times, Lincoln’s view on women was milder and gentler than the rigid stance of society and the church. This was due, in part, to his discerning intelligence, good judgment, keen sense

⁵⁵⁷ Burlingame, *The Inner World of Abraham Lincoln*, 236.

⁵⁵⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 15, Donald explains how the presence of his wife and children forbade him from concentrating solely on politics. Lincoln’s objective was to gradually ascend to greatness as a politician and felt hampered by the presence of his family. When Mary left the capital and traveled to her father’s house in Kentucky, Lincoln was both happy and sad. Lincoln was happy because he could now focus on his career, but sad because he relied on Mary and the children for comfort and catharsis.

⁵⁵⁹ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 84. It was during his presidential years that Lincoln truly realized his wife’s profound positive influence on him. She became his bedrock and most trusted cheerleader as he dealt with a beleaguered nation. Fleming describes one specific event in the White House. On August 1861, Prince Jerome Napoleon Bonaparte of France was invited to the White House. Fearing that France might come to the aid of the confederacy, Abraham thought it prudent to invite the prince for peace talks. It was Mary, not Abraham, who requested the United States Marine Band to play the French National Anthem. It was Mary also who organized the banquet and the welcoming. The prince was very pleased, but as he sat to speak with Abraham, they realized that he did not speak English. At that point, all the men in attendance looked at each other not knowing what to do. Realizing this oversight, Mary immediately began to interact with the prince in French and served as an interpreter.

for justice, and his unflinching commitment to do things his way. In the end, it can be said that Lincoln was properly equipped to undertake the grim and challenging ills of the country, but less capably prepared to manage the journey to a women's heart.

In this world, human ingenuity can never create an error free machine of humanity. Humans, by nature, are flawed creatures devoid of complete perfectibility. Lincoln's best poet, William Shakespeare, stresses our shortcomings by saying that "we all are men, in our nature frail," meaning that human beings are delicate and limited to what is possible. Yet every so often a herculean force enters the world and changes our worldly topography forever. One of those forces was Abraham Lincoln, a man a hundred years ahead of his time.

Debatably, Lincoln fits well into Friedrich Nietzsche's theory of the *ubermensch*—a "super" man who is able to overcome the many intricate and challenging obstacles that life has to offer.⁵⁶⁰ At a time when the country was divided and wounded by civil war, Lincoln was able to keep his ideas and strategies complete for a better and brighter future. His firmness of mind and resilience can also be applied to his interactions with women. Although Lincoln failed numerous times to suitably court women, his resolution kept him trying over and over again. This alone deserves merit and recognition.

Although not well adjusted with women, his accomplishment in all aspects of life makes Lincoln a hero. As Lincoln became older, his association with Mary Todd helped him become more mature and refined. In fact, as a seasoned politician, Lincoln began to use the stovepipe hat more frequently as an effort to accentuate his gentlemanly status and authority.⁵⁶¹ By the time of his death, Lincoln became more aware of high society

⁵⁶⁰ Tom Jackson, *Philosophy: An Illustrated History of Thought*, 70-71.

and began to understand its customs and behavioral patterns. Unlike his great hero, George Washington, who at the tender age of eleven crossed the social chasm and mingled comfortably with the aristocracy, Lincoln's immersion with the social elite came much later in time.⁵⁶² Nevertheless, constant immersion in the social affairs of the elite began to teach Lincoln how the privileged treated women. As a result, he began to learn the art of proper courtship. But he was never able to master gentility as thoroughly as he did everything else.

Campbell's Theory on Heroes

Regardless of his shortcomings, Lincoln fits into Joseph Campbell's template of a daring hero. The mythologist, Joseph Campbell, explains that there are three steps taken by courageous people to become heroes.⁵⁶³ The first step is departure. Campbell explains how the hero departs and follows a path that no one has traversed before. Once at the crossroads, the hero initiates his battles, which are usually intricate and dangerous. Upon completing the ordeal, the hero returns home with the acquired experiences and attempts to rectify and elevate his society and culture. Though Campbell was referring to

⁵⁶¹ Stephen L. Carter, "Abraham Lincoln's Top Hat: The Inside Story," *Smithsonian Magazine*, November 2013, accessed April 12, 2015, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/abraham-lincolns-top-hat-the-inside-story-3764960/>. In his early years, Lincoln was rarely seen with a stovepipe hat. Many historians believe that he began to wear the hat as a gimmick. However, as he became older, he began to wear the hat more frequently. In a book title *The Top Hat: An Illustrated History*, author Debbie Henderson describes how the stovepipe hat became an irrepressible symbol of prestige and honor in the nineteenth century.

⁵⁶² Ron Chernow. *Washington: A Life* (New York: Penguin Books Publishing Company, 2010), 16.

⁵⁶³ "The Heroes Journey by Campbell," *The Heroes Journey*, accessed http://www.thewritersjourney.com/hero%27s_journey.htm

the legendary heroes of literature, such as Odysseus, Theseus, Perseus and Achilles, the theory can aptly be applied to earthly heroes as well.

Retrofitting Lincoln into Campbell's Heroic Scheme

In evaluating Lincoln's life, Barton explains how Lincoln "wrote, in his mind, a narrative of an adventure in which he was a hero."⁵⁶⁴ To prove that Lincoln embodies heroic qualities, let's briefly analyze his life. Lincoln left his isolated home and engaged with the social, political, and economic ills of society. As president, Lincoln was faced with numerous challenges that were overcome with profound wit, commitment and sacrifice. These dramatic experiences were then used to put his beleaguered nation back in order. Arguably, not many of history's most influential people can face as severe a dilemma and remain poised as Lincoln did. For his feat, Lincoln remains one of history's most beloved presidents and heroes, regardless of him being slightly flawed with women.

In conclusion, Lincoln's view of women was a direct result of his life experiences. Socialized in an era where gender divides was the norm, Lincoln did his best to understand the opposite sex despite the various deficiencies he possessed. To put it more strongly, Lincoln's timidity, reticence, unpleasant physical looks, intellectual superiority, freehand courting practices and assertive adherence to the law of marriage were all factors that influenced his relationship with women. Yet, in the end, Lincoln "did it his way," and eventually was able to find companionship with Mary Todd. Arguably, this was the key to Lincoln's success—he was able to choose his own path regardless of the constant critique being leveled upon him. In all, it was Lincoln's poise that allowed

⁵⁶⁴ Barton, *The Women Lincoln Loved*, 117.

him to swim against the political currents of the times, and this firmness of mind can also be applied to the way he addressed women.

Miller explains that in an era imbued with deep-seated beliefs and customs, Lincoln defied traditional values by going the other way and forging new ideas. Miller describes Lincoln in this way:

In a society of hunters, Lincoln did not hunt; where many males shot rifles, Lincoln did not shoot; among fisherman, Lincoln did not fish; among many who were cruel to animals, Lincoln was kind; surrounded by farmers, Lincoln fled from farming; with a father who was a carpenter, Lincoln did not take up carpentry; in a frontier village preoccupied with physical task, Lincoln avoided manual labor; in a world in which men smoked and chewed, Lincoln never used tobacco . . . in a white world with strong racial antipathies, Lincoln was generous with blacks; in an environment indifferent to education, Lincoln cared about it intensely; in a family active in church, Lincoln abstained.⁵⁶⁵

Among the listing of the things that Lincoln did not and did do shown above, allow the following inclusion—“in a society of well-bred suitors, Lincoln courted women in his own unique way.” This phrase should be included with Miller’s comparison to show that Lincoln also did not follow the customary wooing practices of the times. In the end, Lincoln truly lived by the words of Harold R. McAlindon, who proposed that a great man is one who chooses his own path regardless of violent opposition.⁵⁶⁶ One Illinois political leader wrote in 1858 that Mr. Lincoln manifested extraordinary abilities and that “he did not follow the beaten track of other speakers or thinkers, but appeared to comprehend the whole situation of the subject, and take hold of its principles on his

⁵⁶⁵ Miller, *Lincoln’s Virtues*, 45.

⁵⁶⁶ “Harold R. McAlindon’s Quotes.” *Inspirational Quotes*, accessed July 25, 2014, <http://www.inspirational-quotes.info/leadership.html>

own.”⁵⁶⁷ Remarkably, and without question, Lincoln did just that throughout his poignant and seminal lifetime, thus becoming the strongest and most durable oak in the forest.

In the years after Lincoln’s death, a tidal wave of commentaries, books, movies, plays, rhymes, commercials, caricatures, magazines and animations have emerged to pay homage to this great man, thus giving credence to Secretary of War Edwin Stanton’s statement that, upon his death, Lincoln belonged to the ages.⁵⁶⁸ Leo Tolstoy’s encomium to the sixteenth president reads as follows: “Lincoln was what Beethoven was in music, Dante in poetry, Raphael in art, and Christ in the philosophy of life.”⁵⁶⁹ Presently, Lincoln’s memory continues to live in the hearts and minds of people who keep him alive through their work, research and oral tradition. He is, and continues to be, a resilient and transcendent figure with all the qualities of a hero. He was a hero, admired by many, but also besmirched by some.

A question that may linger in the minds of some readers is why a study on Lincoln and women? Did not historian Frank J. Williams warn us when he said that Lincoln’s experience with women can never be fully understood because he was a shut-mouthed man in most personal matters?⁵⁷⁰ Of course, he did. However, by approaching the subject through the prism of psychohistory, a better explanation and understanding of Lincoln’s actions with women can be inferred. For one, the study attempts to give the

⁵⁶⁷ Fleming, *The Lincolns: A Scrapbook Look at Abraham and Mary*, 62.

⁵⁶⁸ Donald, *Lincoln*, 772.

⁵⁶⁹ Holzer, *The Lincoln Anthology*, 386.

⁵⁷⁰ Frank J. Williams, *Judging Lincoln* (Southern Illinois University Press, 2007), 32.

reader a glimpse into Lincoln's interaction with the opposite sex by looking at his inner and outer influences. Yet, more than this, the research was created as an attempt to sweep away the innuendos associated with Lincoln's approach to women—especially the idea that he was gay. In evaluating his life, this study does not only bring a glimmer of light to his character, but it also exposes and defines those around him. In other words, to know the man and his spirit, one must know his surroundings.

In studying Lincoln, Tolstoy described how his profound genius prevented commoners from completely understanding his actions and reasons.⁵⁷¹ Tolstoy recommends profound immersion when analyzing Lincoln's life in order to understand and savor the true essence of his actions, deeds, and accomplishments.⁵⁷² By approaching the sixteenth president in such a manner, he argues, a clearer picture of his life will unfold. It is for this reason that this research project attempts to follow Tolstoy's recommendations with the hopes that this hybrid approach to history can explain, in some ways, Lincoln's behavioral patterns towards the opposite sex. Furthermore, as historical research becomes more inclined to accept varying methodologies to explain historical occurrences, more scholarship on Lincoln and women is destined to emerge, given the sixteenth president's status as one of the most celebrated and recollected historical figure in the world. To this end, the Irish aesthete, Oscar Wilde, once said, "we are all in the gutter, but some of us are looking at the stars."⁵⁷³ When it comes to Lincoln, however, the stars were not bright enough for him as he transfixed his sight to a higher purpose beyond

⁵⁷¹ Ibid., 387.

⁵⁷² Ibid., 387.

⁵⁷³ "Oscar Wilde's Quotes." *Brainy Quotes*. Accessed July 25, 2014.
<http://www.brainyquote.com>

the beaming stars. Indeed, it was this unique and stellar quality that attracted millions of people to his persona in hopes of understanding the life of an intricate and fascinating man.

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