



Lincoln's Smile and Other Enigmas

Alan Trachtenberg

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A new assemblage of masterly essays from a foremost scholar of American history and culture

Alan Trachtenberg has always been interested in cultural artifacts that register meanings and feelings that Americans share even when they disagree about them. Some of the most beloved ones—like the famous last photograph of Abraham Lincoln, taken at the time of his second inaugural—are downright puzzling, and it is their obscure, riddlelike aspects that draw his attention in the scintillating essays of *Lincoln's Smile and Other Enigmas*.

With matchless authority, Trachtenberg moves from the daguerreotypes that entranced Americans from the start (and that Hawthorne made much of in *The House of Seven Gables*) to literary texts of which he is a peerless interpreter: Howell's novels, Horatio Alger's stories, *Huckleberry Finn*, the cityscapes of Walt Whitman and Stephen Crane. In his exploration of the ways that nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century writers tried to make sense of the modern American city he also addresses subjects as diverse as Louis Sullivan's Auditorium Building, the Brooklyn Bridge, and the early works of Lewis Mumford. The celebrated author of *Reading American Photographs* concludes his important new book with "readings" not only of the photographs of Walker Evans, Wright Morris, and Eugene Smith, but of the city images of film noir.

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