Lincoln’s justification for waging war to preserve the Union, as he famously explained it, was to make sure “that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.” For him, the success or failure of the Union had consequences for the whole world. As the mid-nineteenth-century world’s only large-scale experiment in avowed democracy, the United States had to prevail in its war in order to maintain integrity. Lincoln believed that victory would demonstrate to all humanity the viability of democratic government. In Lincoln’s lifetime, the major American political parties had developed two distinctive visions of America’s relations with the rest of the world. Jackson’s Democratic Party espoused what it called America’s “manifest destiny” to expand geographically, even if that required waging wars of conquest. The Whig Party and its successor, the young Republican Party, embraced a different vision of American destiny. They proclaimed the United States a model for other countries of a peaceful and prosperous democracy, industrializing, educating its people, and providing them opportunities for self-development. Lincoln, a member of the Whig and later, the Republican Party, unashamedly endorsed the latter vision.

The Global Lincoln, a collection of seventeen thoughtful and judicious essays on the reception of Abraham Lincoln and his message around the world, provides a wealth of fascinating information that will be new to virtually all its readers. Many new books and articles on Lincoln go over familiar ground, even if addressing it from different angles. Not so this work. Despite Lincoln’s own resolution to play to a global audience, his American admirers—scholars and buffs alike—have seldom investigated his varied image around the world. These engaging essays remedy that shortfall. They analyze attitudes toward Lincoln in a wide variety of societies during his lifetime and
up to the present. The two editors are well qualified to undertake their

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Review Essay

The two editors are well qualified to undertake their
task. Richard Carwardine, formerly Rhodes Professor of American
History at Oxford University and author of the Lincoln Prize-winning
political biography *Lincoln* as well as other fine works on the antebel-
lum United States, is now the president of Corpus Christi College in
Oxford University. Carwardine represents a British (specifically, a
Welsh) perspective on Lincoln. His co-editor, Jay Sexton, is an Ameri-
can teaching American history at Oxford and the author of two books
on nineteenth-century U.S. foreign relations.

Harold Holzer of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Lincoln
Bicentennial Foundation will be well known to readers of this *Journal*
from his many accomplishments and writings on Lincoln. He here
supplies an imaginative essay on “The European Image of Lincoln,”
dealing with the popular prints depicting Abraham Lincoln that ap-
peared in European periodicals from the time of his presidential elec-
tion in 1860 onward. In his well-illustrated contribution, he shows
how nineteenth-century European printmakers portrayed Lincoln.
Those who were sympathetic to Lincoln often altered his features,
widely regarded as an embarrassment, to make him better looking
in a conventional sense. Among the most interesting of the images
Holzer displays are the political cartoons. Most of his evidence comes
from Britain, France, and Germany.

Not surprisingly, the essays collected in this volume show Lincoln as
a favorite of middle-class liberal democrats all over the world in their
struggles against authoritarian and traditionalist regimes. The context
within which such reformers employed the example and authority of
Lincoln varied from country to country. Michael Vorenberg of Brown
University, writing about France, shows how liberal opponents of Na-
poleon III invoked Abraham Lincoln. Defying the Monroe Doctrine,
Napoleon undertook to install a French puppet government in Mexico
while the United States was preoccupied with the Civil War. Meanwhile
he put his sympathy for the Confederacy on display. The opponents
of Napoleon’s Second Empire did not enjoy freedom to criticize their
government overtly, but by praising President Lincoln they could score
points by implication. The Emancipation Proclamation was particularly
popular with French liberals, since it aligned Lincoln with the 1848
emancipation of slaves in the French colonies. Once the Civil War was
over, the Mexican people overthrew Napoleon’s client Maximilian, and
the regime in Paris did not dare intervene to prevent it.

As a Whig and a Republican, Lincoln strongly supported economic
modernization through such government-sponsored endeavors as
public education, better transportation, and the nurture of industry.
Modernizers all over the world accordingly found encouragement in Lincoln’s precepts and policies. Even the autocratic Japanese modernizers following the Meiji Restoration of 1868 pointed to Lincoln with approval, we learn from De-min Tao of Kansai University in Osaka. For Whigs like Lincoln, personal self-improvement was at least as important as such public improvement projects as canals and railroads. The Japanese agreed. Biographies of Lincoln written in Japanese praised the moral qualities of self-discipline, studiousness, and honesty that had enabled his rise from obscurity. In 1903 a Japanese national textbook for the moral education of upper-level elementary schoolchildren prominently featured Abraham Lincoln; he was the only foreigner among the persons held up as examples. When the United States passed the deeply insulting Japanese Exclusion Act of 1924, Lincoln fell from favor among Japanese educators, not to return until after 1945.

As the Japanese experience demonstrates, foreign views of Abraham Lincoln are often colored by the esteem in which the United States is held. This principle is well illustrated in Latin America, explains Nicola Miller of University College, London. In 1865, shortly after Lincoln’s death, the Argentine statesman Domingo Sarmiento published in Spanish what would long be the most influential biography of Lincoln among Latin Americans. Argentina in the mid-nineteenth century engaged in a series of civil wars between defenders of national unity (unitarios) and the rights of the provinces (federalistas). The would-be nation-builder Sarmiento not only took Lincoln for a hero in his biography but made the vindicator of the Union a model for his own statecraft. Lincoln had vigorously condemned James Knox Polk’s war against Mexico and had pursued good relations with Latin America during his own presidency. He persuaded Latin Americans that the unwelcome “filibustering” expeditions of norteamericanos (like William Walker in Nicaragua) had been the work of proslavery southerners, not the Union he represented. In the nineteenth century, Latin American decision-makers generally regarded the United States as a welcome counterweight to the interventions of such European powers as France, Britain, Portugal, and Spain. But Theodore Roosevelt’s reinterpretation of the Monroe Doctrine, and especially his encouragement of Panama to secede from Colombia in order to facilitate a U.S.-controlled canal across the isthmus, angered Latin Americans. Early twentieth-century Latin Americans would offer Lincoln as an example of U.S. democratic ideals before they became corrupted by international power politics.

Lincoln as architect of national unity has been invoked not only in Argentina but all over the world by a wide variety of leaders. When Willy Brandt, in his long and ultimately successful campaign to reunite
Germany after the Second World War, made his slogan “A house divided against itself cannot stand,” he was quoting Lincoln, not Jesus. In modern Spain, nationalists have quoted Lincoln when resisting the demands of Basques and Catalans. Nowhere has this use of Lincoln been more amazingly displayed than in Ireland, as described in the essay by Kevin Kenny of Boston College. A historian of the Irish and the Irish-Americans, Kenny shows how both sides in the prolonged struggles over Irish Home Rule and independence invoked Lincoln in defense of their own version of nationhood. For Irish Protestants, national unity meant the integrity of the United Kingdom; for Irish Catholics, national unity meant the political integrity of the island of Ireland. At times the terms of debate were set by Lincoln. British Prime Minister Lloyd George cited Lincoln in denying the right of Ireland to secede from the United Kingdom; Eamon de Valera, the U.S.-born future president of the Irish Republic, retorted that “there never can be in the case of Ireland a question of secession because there never has been a union” (162). The true secessionists, Irish republicans insisted, were the Ulstermen.

The British response to Lincoln, which has been more complex and intense than that of any other country, is the subject of three essays in this collection. Lawrence Goldman, a scholar of American and British history at St. Peter’s College, Oxford, examines the attitude of the British press to the Civil War and Lincoln’s presidency. He concludes that the British were largely ignorant of the real issues and of the constraints U.S. public opinion imposed upon Lincoln’s statecraft. When Lincoln issued the Preliminary Emancipation Proclamation, *The Times* of London was not very impressed: “Where he has no power Mr Lincoln will set the negroes free; where he retains power he will consider them as slaves” (114). But the assassination of Lincoln, coming in the moment of his final triumph, awakened *The Times* to Lincoln’s wisdom and greatness.

The continuing place of Lincoln in the English imagination since that time is the theme of Adam I. P. Smith, senior lecturer at University College, London. He finds that in the nineteenth and early twentieth century radical reformers treated Lincoln as an example of humble working-class virtues. In a period when the transatlantic commonality between the Americans and the English was stressed, English people often accepted Lincoln as one of their own. During the Second World War a heroic image of Lincoln, combining devotion to democracy with resolute prosecution of the war effort, occupied a central role in an Anglo-American pantheon.

Professor Kenneth Morgan (Lord Morgan) of Queen’s College, Oxford, adds a fascinating essay on the reputation of Lincoln in Wales.
In a small country that has long valued social mobility, Lincoln the archetypal self-made man was generally beloved. Because so many Welsh people migrated to the United States and stayed in touch with their kinfolk back home, the Welsh felt bonded to America and took an interest in American affairs. Ordinary Welsh folk largely sympathized with the North in the Civil War, voted for the Liberal Party once enfranchised, and hung pictures of Lincoln and the Liberal leader Gladstone on their walls at home. At the time of the First World War, the Welshman David Lloyd George became British prime minister. An avowed admirer of Abraham Lincoln, Lloyd George discussed him with Woodrow Wilson and Georges Clemenceau at Versailles. “It is perhaps only since the great world war began that people have come to realize how much Lincoln’s work for the United States has meant to the cause of human freedom in all nations,” he declared (147). Later, in 1920, Lloyd George gave an address on Lincoln when the Saint-Gaudens statue of him was erected in Westminster. “He is one of those giant figures, of whom there are very few in history, who lose their nationality in death. They are no longer Greek or Hebrew, English or American; they belong to mankind” (150). In 1923 Lloyd George visited Springfield, Illinois, to pay tribute to Lincoln.

Surprisingly, Lincoln the Emancipator has not elicited as much global appreciation as Americans might expect. But one nation where his abolition of slavery has been taken seriously is Spain, we learn from Professor Carolyn Boyd of the University of California at Irvine. Slavery remained legal in the Spanish Caribbean colonies until 1873 in Puerto Rico and 1886 in Cuba. The Spanish abolitionist movement invoked Lincoln’s example and indeed followed it, founding their nationwide organization promptly after learning of his Emancipation Proclamation. Meanwhile the counterrevolutionary, ultraconservative Spanish Carlists regarded him—along with the rest of the American republic—as godless and lawless. Spain was one of the countries where Lincoln’s reputation mirrored that of the United States as a whole. At times and among persons who admired the American example and wanted Spain to imitate its democracy and modernization, Lincoln was celebrated. Professor Boyd describes several Spanish biographies of Lincoln published in the generation after his death. Not surprisingly, the Spanish-American War of 1898 curtailed pro-American sentiment, and interest in Lincoln’s achievements fell off. Ironically, Franco’s dictatorship tried to revive a cult of Lincoln when seeking good relations with the United States.

The imagination and breadth of this collection is well reflected in the essay on “Lincoln and the American South” by the eminent David W.
Blight of Yale. Blight’s essay explores the subtleties and paradoxes of southern Americans’ attitudes toward the leader who destroyed their section’s attempt at independence as well as the previous basis for their economy. He includes a brief but judicious treatment of the cult of Lincoln among southern black people and the functions it performed for them. His vivid portrayal of the hate-filled writings of white neo-Confederates, a few of whom one learns are still at work today, I found downright disturbing. But the most remarkable part of all his superb essay is the brief section on the Southerners in recent decades who have become distinguished scholars of Lincoln and the Civil War, a list that includes Avery Craven, Bell Wiley, David Donald, David Potter, T. Harry Williams, C. Vann Woodward, and Robert Penn Warren.

This review has only sampled the richness of The Global Lincoln. The book also includes rewarding essays on Lincoln in China, India, Africa, Germany, and Italy, a fascinating essay by co-editor Jay Sexton on the deliberate promotion of Lincoln abroad by the United States Information Agency during the Cold War, and a statistical analysis of foreign language biographies of Lincoln. (Surprise: If you count translations, there are more Lincoln biographies in Chinese than in any other foreign language.) Of course, no review would be complete without some critical comment on the limitations of the work under consideration. I was disappointed that there were no essays explicitly on Russia or African Americans, although both do receive considerable mention in other essays. The African American relation to Lincoln is particularly complex and fraught; indeed it is entirely possible that the reason for its absence is that no one wanted to undertake the subject within the constraints of a brief essay.

Editors Carwardine and Sexton raise a number of sophisticated questions about what constitutes Lincoln’s global “influence.” They invite us to distinguish between the “real” Lincoln and the various myths of him created all over the world. At the same time they remind us of what a private man Lincoln was and how cryptic he sometimes was in his statements of purpose. It is not surprising, they observe, that different peoples have interpreted his achievements differently. They take the opportunity to point out the expanding media of communication in the modern world that have facilitated the spread of the Lincoln story. They remind us that Lincoln has been invoked by foreigners not only in praise of the United States but also to critique its exercise of power. All in all, this is a fascinating and unusually rewarding book, one that belongs in the library of every serious student and admirer of Abraham Lincoln.