

# Abraham Lincoln Abroad

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## **LINCOLN’S LASTING LEGACY**

*by*

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*"For years I attempted to work out the theoretical underpinnings of an ideal U.S. foreign policy. I found it difficult to advance much beyond Abraham Lincoln's hope that our country would be not the terror but the encourager of the world . . ."*

Henry S. Reuss, *When Government Was Good: Memories of a Life in Politics*

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*William D. Pederson*, co-editor

*Donna F. Byrd*, co-editor

International Lincoln Center, LSU Shreveport, One University Place, 321 BH  
 Shreveport, Louisiana 71115-2301

## THE AGE OF LINCOLN—A GLOBAL LEGACY

BY

**WILLIAM “JACK” C. DAVIS**

In the spring of 1869 an enterprising merchant in Liverpool, England, tried luring customers into his showroom by mounting an exhibition of wax figures of distinguished Americans. A number beneath each bust referred visitors to a leaflet identifying the subjects. The likenesses were poor, but the leaflet was even worse as it mismatched names with numbers. The guide reversed the descriptions for numbers 339 and 340, Generals Robert E. Lee and Ulysses S. Grant, misidentifying each as his arch-rival in the recent American Civil War. Worse yet, a head of recent Confederate President Jefferson Davis appeared on the sheet as Abraham Lincoln. When visitors from the United States protested, the exhibitor refused to acknowledge error. He knew Davis from Lincoln, even if these silly Americans did not.<sup>1</sup>

In 1999 millions of Britons selected William Shakespeare as the Man of the Millennium, putting him one place ahead of Winston Churchill. Here in America a year later *Life* magazine gave the top honor to Thomas Edison, demoted Shakespeare number eleven, and didn't even include poor Churchill in the top 100, evidence that these “Man of...” competitions can be rather subjective and chauvinistic. In modern times, almost every newly elected president is dubbed Man of the Year at the end of his first eleven months in office. Had such a popularity contest been waged in 1861, Lincoln certainly would have been voted Man of the Year, though probably not in the Confederacy!

Or would he? If such an accolade in 1861 were based on the media interest shown in an individual—which seems to be today's measure, whereby Nobel Prize winners command less attention than inane wastes or calcium and blood plasma like Lindsay Lohan and Paris Hilton—and by the way, what the hell is a Kardashian?—then the results both north and south of Mason and Dixon's line would perhaps surprise you. The database [genealogybank.com](http://genealogybank.com) allows word searches through digital images of tens of thousands of pages of 1861 American newspapers housed in the American Antiquarian Society at Worcester, Massachusetts. The base hardly contains a comprehensive and representative selection of all journals published in 1861, since the Society's collections have no issues at all for states like Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, Tennessee, and South Carolina, and only one for North Carolina from that year. But comparisons are still useful *within* the states that are represented

even allowing that all of the figures I will give you are probably understated by 30% or more due to weaknesses in the word search system for old newspapers.

In the nation as a whole, Lincoln is mentioned at least 25,434 times in 1861. If we look at other logical contenders for Man of the Year that year, only George B. McClellan seems a possible challenger in the North, and Lincoln's tally is more than five times his figure of 5,031 mentions. To me most of the logical contenders are Confederates like Jefferson Davis, P.G.T. Beauregard, Robert E. Lee, and Thomas J. "Stonewall" Jackson. Nationwide in the American Antiquarian Society's holdings for 1861, Davis appears 9,863 times, meaning that he beat out McClellan even in the North, while Beauregard was mentioned 3,900 times, Lee 1,526, and Jackson just over 1,000. Clearly if we were to award our Man of the Year title on the basis of media popularity, Lincoln would be the man by 5-to-2 over his nearest rival Davis.

But let's look a little deeper. Among those Confederate states for which papers are available to the website, Georgia is the best represented. There Stonewall appears about 100 times, Lee 232, Beauregard 505, and Davis leads the Confederates at 734. And Lincoln? 2,665 mentions admittedly none of them favorable. Look at Louisiana. Jackson got ink only 5 times, Lee 106, and favorite son Beauregard 243. Again Davis led them all with 297. But Lincoln? 2,328, eight times the references to the Confederate president in a Confederate state's press. Even in Virginia, where Davis governed as president and Lee and Jackson were local heroes, Beauregard beat Stonewall, and Lee topped him with only 42 and Davis led them all at 131. And "Old Abe"? *Survey Says*—488. Lincoln may not have been the darling of the Rebel press, but there is no question that every day Confederate editors put his name before their readers more than that of any Confederate luminary you can name. Among the six Confederate states for which the Society's collection have 1861 runs of issues, Lincoln appears 5,934 times. Even in faraway Texas he got more press than the others, while all told, he appeared in the Confederate press more than twice as many times as all these others combined. If we make a judgment based on who the *people* were talking and reading about, then Lincoln was Man of the Year in the Confederacy, too.

Ultimately we get back to the seeming imbalance of Confederate focus on Lincoln. In an accident of history, he immediately and perpetually personified to them the war being waged against them and, as they thought, their institution. This was not the Union's war, it was Lincoln's war, and just as in World War II in Europe the Allies personified their foe in Adolph Hitler. Curiously, in the North the people rarely spoke of Jeff Davis's war. To Yankees he was an indistinct and often ridiculed figure simply lumped together with the other traitors. Indeed, Davis never

personified the war effort even in his own Confederacy. In 1861 no one did, but by 1864 it was Robert E. Lee who bore the symbolic standard. No wonder that some in high places in that year wanted to depose Davis and install Lee as dictator.

Lincoln simply looms taller than anyone else across the board in 1861. He stood for halting the further spread of slavery, the decisive issue that led to his election, to secession, and the ultimate outbreak of war. Before the first shot was fired, he defined to the North and South and the world the only basis on which any conflict could come to be while he was president, and that was overt hostile action by the Confederacy.

Above all, he held fast to one fixed point. As president it was not just his desire, but his constitutional mandate and duty to preserve the Union, the whole Union. Thus, by the end of 1861 one paramount fact is apparent and scarcely contestable. North and South alike, Abraham Lincoln was the defining element of the year and the war.

Extend this admittedly imprecise sampling across the entire war, and Lee generated 11,620 and Jefferson Davis 10,946. Lincoln? 22,422. Lincoln is the Man of the War.

But of course, that didn't end with his death. More than 16,000 books and articles on him since, more written about than any human in history except perhaps Napoleon.

His name went on the land.

Only president other than Jackson to have state capital names for him. More than forty states followed suit with towns and counties named for him. Lincoln was proposed as name for two new states that ultimately became Wyoming and North Dakota. Bills were actually introduced in Congress to create two other states named Lincoln, one in the northwest and the other in the South to be carved out of Texas, how's that for rubbing salt in the wound? Both bills ultimately failed.

Lincoln quickly leapt the bounds of the United States, and Lincoln sprang up in other countries, perhaps the first being Argentina in July 1865 after his assassination. Peoples in America and the world wanted more than just his name on the land. They wanted to see his image. There are well over 300 Lincoln Statues in this country alone, from the Lincoln Memorial to Mount Rushmore. There are three in England, including one in London's Parliament square.

Especially in Hispanic America did the identification with Father Abraham take hold. Go to Juarez, Mexico and you will see him there as well, or to Tijuana where you will see him symbolically breaking the chains of slavery, and there is another statue in Ecuador, yet another in Santo Domingo, and perhaps most interesting of all, there are three Lincolns in Havana, including one in their museum of the revolution. When Cuban rebels rose up against Spain in 1868, Lincoln became for them a hero representing the will to be free.

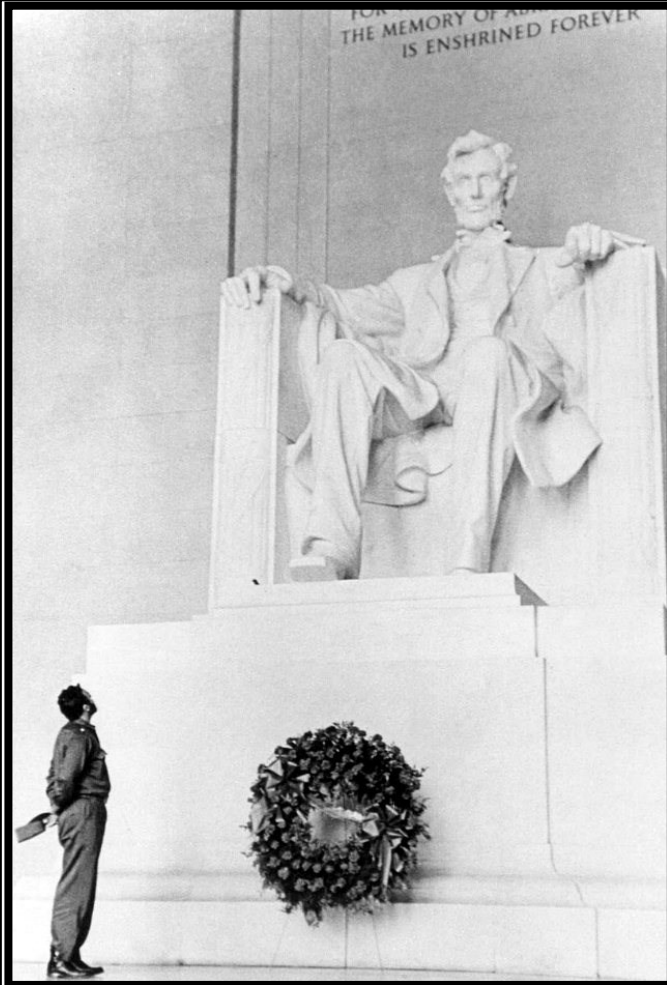
There is a wonderful depiction of Lincoln's penetration of American film. He has been our most photogenic president, appearing in more than 200 films, more than half of them done in the silent era, where almost universally he was depicted as kindly father Abraham performing charitable acts, most often saving a soldier from execution for some minor infraction, or answering an appeal from an anguished mother to save her son.

He is the most impersonated American in history except for Elvis Presley. I have the impression in my mind of Lincoln stepping out of the Executive Mansion and some announcer saying "Ladies and Gentlemen, Abraham has left the building." In fact, there is an association of these self-styled Lincoln presenters. Some years ago *Time* magazine ran a photo of about thirty of them all in full regalia. Most of them were tall and lanky, but some were shorter than I am and shaped like Humpty Dumpty. It is very dangerous to tell an American man that he resembles Lincoln. I often get told I look like Ricky Skaggs or occasionally Ted Kennedy. But I don't then go out and try to perform Bluegrass on a banjo or run for president. But tell a man—any man—that he looks a little like Lincoln and suddenly he is standing around holding his lapels, and wearing a black broadcloth suit and stovepipe hat, and growing a beard that most often looks like that of an Amish farmer. The mere suggestion of some affinity with Lincoln can bring about profound changes in the personality and self-image of an American male.

We see him on our currency, the Lincoln Penny, the \$5 dollar bill, and now a \$1 coin. In 1863 he appeared on the \$10 greenback, perhaps the only living president to appear on Federal currency.

We attach his name to consumer goods and services: Lincoln National Life Insurance, and an auto. Some of you will remember when Richard Nixon resigned the presidency and his successor told the Nation "I'm not Lincoln, I'm a Ford.

People around the world have been licking Lincoln for generations. Lincoln on stamps: San Marino 1938, Ghana 1959, Haiti 1959, San Marino 1959, Argentina 1960, Cameroon 1965, Central Africa 1965, Mauritania 1965, Aden 1967, Antigua



2009, Gambia 2009, Liberia 2009, Palau 2009, Micronesia 2009, St. Kitts, Grenada 2011, St. Vincent 2012, and that's only a few.

Many of you will be familiar with David Donald's 1956 article "Getting Right with Lincoln," in the *Atlantic Magazine*. It dealt with how every generation's politicians try with all their might to get Lincoln on their side, left, right, and center, or somehow to associate themselves with Father Abraham.

George W. Bush said 9/11 gave him the greatest challenge ever faced by any president since Lincoln. He made his "Mission Accomplished" announcement aboard the USS *Abraham Lincoln*.

Obama is the first president to use the Lincoln Bible for his inauguration since Lincoln used it in 1861. Inauguration organizers have said Obama's inaugural theme, "A New Birth of Freedom," was inspired by Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

The Republican Party often strives mightily to claim the mantle of Lincoln even though his demonstrated social views, protectionism, and strong central government approach put him largely at odds with today's conservatives.

Today's Democrats try to claim him despite the fact that Lincoln's doctrine of self-help and opposition to social—as opposed to racial—leveling, make him a difficult fit for some of today's liberals.

The Northeastern Illinois University plaque says "Lincoln Democrat", but what does that mean?

Only the Libertarians seem not to want Lincoln on their side, but that poses a problem since in rejecting Lincoln, they are seen as thereby endorsing Secession, slavery, and the Confederacy, an argument that in fact, currently divides them. How do you try to be popular with an electorate while rejecting their most cherished political symbol?

The compulsion to drape the mantle of Lincoln over a cause long ago jumped the bonds of the New World to find fertile ground in the old. While Lincoln still lived, Karl Marx proclaimed that Lincoln's fight to end slavery was the fight of the working class man against the tyranny of the oligarchies.

In the Spanish Civil War of the 1930s about 2,800 of the approximately 40,000 international volunteers who responded to the Spanish Republican government's 1936 plea for help called themselves the ABRAHAM LINCOLN BRIGADE. In 1959 Fidel Castro came to Washington and while there he laid a wreath at the Lincoln Memorial. Fidel Castro remained an admirer of Abraham Lincoln for the next half a century. He had a bust of Lincoln in his office, and wrote that Lincoln was devoted "to the just idea that all citizens are born free and equal", and once even saying "*Long Live Lincoln!*"

Chinese communists associated themselves with Lincoln in the People's Republic of China. Abraham Lincoln's stance on national unity during the Civil War and his opposition to the slavery have been cited by People's Republic officials, media, and social elites to explain and legitimize their own response to those they disparage as "separatists" in Taiwan and Tibet.

To Beijing, vigorously opposing separatism and preserving Chinese territorial integrity is a cause no less noble than was Abraham Lincoln's resort to war as a way of preventing the secession of southern states. In its quest for moral authority, Beijing has recalled the rhetoric and posture of Abraham Lincoln toward the Confederacy, apparently unaware that it has misconstrued Lincoln's sentiments by citing his words out of context. This resort to Lincoln is not new. Prominent Chinese leaders have manifested a touch of Lincolnophilia since the start of the twentieth century. Sun Yat-sen, the forebear of both the Nationalist Party of Chiang Kai-shek that was long the ruling party and the Communist Party of Mao Zedong, explicitly conjured Lincoln as a model for his own nationalist creed called—*The Three Principles of the People*, Sun reportedly wrote that his own three principles "correspond with the principles stated by President Lincoln—'government of the people, by the people, for the people,' which Sun translated into "...the people (are) to have...the people (are) to govern and ... the people (are) to enjoy."

The apparent link between Sun and Lincoln was enshrined in the first article of the 1947 Constitution of the Republic of China (ROC)—a document that still remains in effect on Taiwan. It reads, "The Republic of China, founded on the Three Principles of the People, shall be a democratic republic of the people, to be governed by the people and for the people."



Indeed, so established was the putative link between Sun and Lincoln that in 1942 the United States commemorated the fifth anniversary of Japan's invasion of China by issuing a postage stamp featuring the images of Abraham Lincoln and Sun Yat-sen. The stamp is inscribed with the passage from Lincoln's Gettysburg Address that inspired Sun, as well as the resulting *Three Principles*—in Chinese—that Sun devised. In 1959, the government of the Republic of China (ROC) produced its own commemorative stamp displaying the two “leaders of democracy.”

Later Chinese communists also associated themselves with Lincoln. A July 4, 1944 article in the *Liberation Daily*, the official press organ of the party, proclaimed that “The work which we Communists are carrying on today is the very same work which was carried on earlier in America by Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln.” Mao Zedong reportedly told a Reuters correspondent in 1945, that “a free, democratic China would... realize the ‘of the people, by the people, and for the people’ concept of Abraham Lincoln.”

While references to Lincoln—and particularly to the standard of government that he articulated at Gettysburg—may thread through the political rhetoric of modern China, the effort by leaders of the PRC to invoke Abraham Lincoln's image and words in support of policy preferences has flourished in recent years. PRC leaders refer to Lincoln's posture during the American Civil War to immunize themselves from criticism about their own unyielding insistence that Taiwan not be allowed to remain separate and Tibet not be allowed to separate from China.

To be sure, the interest in Lincoln waxes and wanes in the PRC. Former president Jiang Zemin, who attended an American missionary school near Shanghai, apparently takes pride in his capacity to recite the Gettysburg Address from memory, in English. He frequently cited Lincoln to reinforce his view that Beijing has an obligation to defend the unity of China—as he understands it—by force, if necessary, against any efforts to divide it. So enamored of Lincoln was Jiang that when *Fortune* magazine hosted a glitzy confab in Shanghai in 1999, Gerald Levin, then president of AOL Time Warner, publicly presented the Chinese president with a bust of the sixteenth American president.

Former premier Zhu Rongji drew his arrow from the same quiver. Standing beside President Clinton in 1999, Zhu said “Abraham Lincoln, in order to maintain the unity of the United States and oppose independence of the southern part...resorted to the use of force and fought a war....So I think Abraham Lincoln...is a model.” Some years later, PRC premier Wen Jiabao told *The Washington Post* on the eve of his departure for the United States in November 2003, “The Chinese

people will pay any price to safeguard the unity of the motherland. I assume that you are familiar with the words of President Lincoln, who once said, 'a house divided against itself will not stand.'"

Xu Shiquan, formerly the Director of the Institute of Taiwan Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and then the vice president of the All-China Taiwan Studies Society, cited Lincoln's brief second inaugural address to highlight this point. Xu is widely quoted in the PRC press referring to Lincoln as having said, "Both parties deprecated war; but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive; and the other would accept war rather than let it perish. And the war came." Xu presumably wishes to associate the PRC with Lincoln and the Union resigned to fight only to ensure that the nation does not perish.

PRC statesmen who cite Lincoln seem to imply that American citizens should appreciate the plight of the PRC and identify with it as analogous to that of the Union during the Civil War. They implore their audience to see them as responding so differently to the issue of China's unity than did President Lincoln when he confronted the secession of southern states.

Of course, the other one-time great communist power can't be left out of the Lincoln love-in. On February 14, 1961, Moscow Radio broadcast a Tribute Paid to Lincoln. "Abraham Lincoln," the Moscow radio said today, was a name "dear to the heart of the Soviet people." A broadcast beamed at North America and heard here declared that the Soviet people "can sympathize with and understand Lincoln's democratic views and his sincere and deep sympathy for the working people." Today, when the peoples of all countries see as the main task the struggle to preserve peace," the broadcast went on, "we return to the words of Lincoln. Let us arrive to do all that will achieve a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations." "We honor the great President and United States citizen because he represented the revolutionary and democratic traditions of the American people, traditions which found expression during difficult years of the struggle against fascism."

Meanwhile back in the land of Lincoln, he is also the demonized poster child of today's right wing extremists, who liken him to Hitler and Stalin combined. A favorite of people like Thomas Di Lorenzo whose books almost maniacally portray him as a tyrant responsible for the virtual enslavement of Americans today in what some of his ilk describe as American National Socialism.

Consider the current debate on who Lincoln really was. According to one internet pundit, Abraham Lincoln was actually black. His mother came from an Ethiopian Tribe and his father was an African American. The story that his father was Thomas Lincoln was just a blind to cover the truth. In fact, Thomas Lincoln was sterile as a result of childhood mumps and just to make certain, he was also later castrated, making it impossible for him to have been Lincoln's father. In his youth Lincoln's nickname was "Abraham Africa-nus the First."

No say others. Actually Lincoln's father was a Mr. Springs of North Carolina who shortened his name from Springstein, making the half Jewish future chief executive's name actually Abraham Springstein. No wonder the younger generals like U.S. Grant refused to call him Mr. President, insisting instead on addressing him as the "Boss," especially after he tried to rename the Army of the Potomac the "E. Street Band."

For proof of such claims, adherents of the Hebrew Lincoln point to supposed sketches of young Lincoln that show "typical Sephardic Jewish looks: dark features, bony skull, lanky build, big nose, craggy brow." Now that Lincoln is beginning to be seen as having Jewish ancestry, what about his status as a Melungeon? For others maintain that he sprang from the mysterious and uniquely American blend of white Europeans, Black Africans, and American Indians indigenous to Appalachia.

Meanwhile, as others argue about his ethnicity, the anti-Catholic esoteric mystical group called Rosicrucian claim that he was one of them, even sitting on their Order of the Lily's Great Council of Three.

Well, no, he was actually French, the illegitimate child of a lost son of the lost Dauphin of France.

Well, no, actually Lincoln was a yogi. Lincoln adopted a yoga lifestyle! He dubbed himself "a mystic," and behaved in a way that corresponds with the teachings of yoga and meditation. There are reports of advanced Hindu yogis doing amazing things like lifting boulders and heaving them, etc. Some would tell us that Abraham Lincoln did the same thing as a young man—lifting and carrying a 600-pound chicken coop, tossing a heckler a dozen feet, and more. Lincoln had tapped into what yogis call pranayama, or energy control.

Others want him in their embrace. "Lincoln was really what is called "a Kinsey 4," a homosexual with more than incidental opposite-sex contact.

Most timely of all, perhaps, a new film titled "Quran Contemporary Connections," announces that "The 16th president of the United States, Abraham

Lincoln, was born a Muslim. "Lincoln shares equal footage with luminaries of Islamic history like Saladin, King Faisal of Saudi Arabia and the former president of the UAE, Sheikh Zayed." The film's producer says that "According to the Quran, everybody is born a Muslim." It is only by his own free will that a man chooses a different course for himself. In that Abraham Lincoln was not only a born Muslim but he chose to live by Islamic edicts like abolishing organized slavery; establishing equality of all human beings, democracy and accountability to God and man; core Islamic concepts as propounded in the Holy Quran."

Today a site called the Thinking Housewife asks, "Was Abraham Lincoln a Girl," recalling that several years ago, the *Weekly World News* carried a headline that proclaimed "Abe was a Babe!"

And as you all know, recently has taken to killing vampires.

Lincoln can be made useful to almost everyone. I haven't yet found any comments on him from the Taliban or Al Qaeda or ISIS, but worry not, they will get around to him.

What will he do next, and where will he be? In a great film titled "Viva Zapata," Mexican peons saddened at the assassination of Zapata are comforted that he was not gone. Rather he was all around them, in the wind, in the rain that fed their crops, and in the hearts that kept their aspirations for freedom alive. Where they went, so went he. Those are Lincoln winds, too.

It always seemed peculiar to me that Andrew Jackson, a lesser man and a lesser president, left his name upon his times. We speak still of the Jacksonian Era, the Age of Jackson. Yet that has not happened with Lincoln. Perhaps it is because he has escaped the temporal bonds of his own time to become, not just man of the year or man of the war, but man of all times. His ideals and values, most of all his humanity, are eternal aspirations that transcend geographical bounds. Almost everyone, everywhere, at any time, want him for their own, because they need him.

And so there really is an Age of Lincoln. It began in the 1850s, and we live in it still.

<sup>1</sup>Alexandria, *Gazette*, April 29, 1869, Boston, *Post*, May 6, 1869.

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**William "Jack" C. Davis is a prolific author of Civil War books, including *Crucible of Command: Ulysses S. Grant and Robert E. Lee* (DaCapo, 2015). The preceding paper was presented at the Frank and Virginia 32nd annual Abraham Lincoln Lecture, October 23, 2015 on the LSU in Shreveport campus.**

# LINCOLN'S LASTING LEGACY

*BY*

*MAX J. SKIDMORE*

## **Abstract**

Americans are accustomed to thinking of Abraham Lincoln as a great national symbol, and those who play around with presidential rankings more often than not find him at the very top. Under the circumstances, it may not be surprising to find that he is a major international figure as well. From the time of his assassination onward, he has received recognition as a major figure in the demonstration that, however much it was being tested, government by the people was feasible. Democratic government could prevail not only in the United States, where it was first implemented on a huge scale as humanity's great experiment, but also in countries around the world. Both then and now, countries of all kinds with all kinds of governments honor the memory of Lincoln—and they are wise to do so. That honor is richly deserved. If America re-emphasizes its Lincoln heritage, and takes care to shape its policies so that they are consistent with that heritage, the honor other countries continue to pay to Lincoln may help America recover from recent questionable policies, and regain its standing in the world.

A persistent question regarding Lincoln studies is whether it is possible, in view of the enormous body of writing on Lincoln, to say anything new on the subject. This essay assumes that it may be possible. Perhaps the odds are against success in saying anything new about Lincoln, but this paper almost assuredly will be the only one that considers Lincoln along with terrorism on European trains, American poetry, Transcendentalism, and the recent messages of Pope Francis.

Last August, four Americans were credited with having played a major role in preventing a bloodbath on a high-speed train from Amsterdam to Paris. Based on reports in the press, a 51-year-old American from Virginia, Mark Moogalian of Armeian descent, appears to have been the first person to recognize the impending attack, and to seize the would-be mass murderer as the gunman exited a toilet carrying an assault rifle. Moogalian grabbed the rifle, but the terrorist shot him with a handgun, seriously wounding him. Three other Americans, Alek Skarlatos, a member of the National Guard; Spencer Stone, a member of the U.S. Air Force;

and a civilian student from Sacramento State University, Anthony Sadler, then subdued the attacker. Sadler was also wounded, and Stone saved Moogalian's life by keeping pressure on his wounded neck to inhibit the bleeding until the train reached a place to stop that had medical facilities. All recovered. Moogalian was variously identified as a professor of English at the Sorbonne, and as an artist and musician who conducted a school from his houseboat on the outskirts of Paris.

As most often happens when this kind of potential tragedy is averted, it did not require a "good guy with a gun" to stop the "bad guy with a gun." As has not frequently happened in recent years, the world recognized American bravery and praised the actions of Americans. French President Francois Hollande awarded each of the four the Legion of Honor and praised the role of Americans in preventing a massacre.

A century and a half ago, America's Civil War President, Abraham Lincoln died from the bullet of an assassin blinded by hatred. The world at the time recognized that this was more than the death of a political leader, even an outstanding political leader. It was the sacrifice of a major world figure who had demonstrated that democracy—government of the people—might yet be viable. Lincoln had preserved democracy under the most difficult circumstances possible in the only country that had been willing to make a sincere effort to try such a radical experiment, the United States of America.<sup>1</sup> By so doing, he made America a model for the world and enabled democracy ultimately to take root and thrive elsewhere.

Thus, when Pope Francis made his historic address to the Congress of the United States on 24 September 2015, the first papal appearance before Congress, among the influential Americans he cited, he mentioned Abraham Lincoln first.<sup>2</sup> It is significant that, in this most significant of addresses, the Pope recalled for Americans, and for the world, the key role that America's greatest president played in the advance of liberty and representative government.

Long ago, in an article in *White House Studies*, I discussed the reaction abroad to the assassination.<sup>3</sup> I quoted David Donald that British opinion had been "overwhelmingly unfriendly to President Lincoln, a mixture of calumny, contempt and ridicule," until the Emancipation Proclamation and the Gettysburg Address encouraged a slow change of attitude. "Eventually, immense throngs in London, Birmingham, and other British cities would rally to celebrate Lincoln's declaration of freedom and an outraged public opinion would make it impossible for any British government to intervene on behalf of the slaveholding Confederacy."<sup>4</sup> I also

mentioned similar comments from Merrill Peterson. Peterson pointed to Goldwin Smith, Professor of Modern History at Oxford, who wrote that with Lincoln's "noble Second Inaugural Address, his reputation soared, and grief in Britain had become universal." The London *Times*—and especially *Punch*—had been especially hostile to Lincoln, but upon his death, "issued apologies for their previous comments."<sup>5</sup>

I then turned my attention to France, where the reaction was "even more emphatic." The American minister in Paris, John Bigelow, was amazed by the outpouring of sorrow. The Comte de Montalembert, wrote that the United States had placed a "common man at the head of affairs," astonishing the world, and the result not only vindicated the American Constitution, but also "liberty, democracy, and humanity. Lincoln's eulogy was everywhere." The French Academy offered a prize for the best poem on "La Mort du President Lincoln," and Bigelow received a memorial medal to present to Mrs. Lincoln—the result of contributions by forty thousand French citizens. Citizens of a village in Italy proclaimed that Lincoln had been not America's alone, "he was also ours." From the Swiss came "two bound volumes of three hundred addresses from twenty-one Swiss cantons, municipal governments, and associations, plus twenty thousand signatures, 'the aggregate and congregated voice of all Switzerland.'" In Argentina, there were three official days of mourning. In Chile, "men wept in the streets, passed resolutions, and marched in processions to honor the man who was 'the incarnation of modern democracy.'"<sup>6</sup>

It is significant that the U.S. Department of State gathered the condolences from around the world into a volume—its length, 717 pages, demonstrated the size of the response—that became *Appendix to the Diplomatic Correspondence of 1865*. Despite the "cheerless title," Peterson wrote, "as a historian has said, it is 'one of the most interesting and deeply affecting books in the English language.' The assassination of Lincoln touched the world's heart because Lincoln was the human being he was, but it also impressed itself on the mind of the world because the nation's survival and triumph over this catastrophe proved the strength and resiliency of American democracy."<sup>7</sup> The entire volume is available today on line.<sup>8</sup>

My examination of the world reaction to the assassination, and more broadly Lincoln's legacy around the world, dealt for the most part only with the most obvious, such as Nehru's prized bronze cast of Lincoln's hand on his desk, although I was able to report that Chairman Mao, in the design of his own tomb, had paid homage to Lincoln.<sup>9</sup> I also called attention to a book that even now is little known

in the United States (it is in English, despite being directed to an Asian audience), Donggill Kim's *Abraham Lincoln: An Oriental Interpretation*.<sup>10</sup> Since that time there has been considerable in-depth research, and a fine outreach to Poland, where there was considerable interest in Lincoln, but little material available. Mario Cuomo and Harold Holzer dedicated *Lincoln on Democracy*<sup>11</sup> to the people of Poland, "for inviting Lincoln abroad," and to the late Czeslaw Milosz, Polish "poet, patriot, and apostle of democracy, whose translation of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address" graced the Polish language edition of their collection. Regarding new research, two significant books deserve mention: *Abraham Lincoln Without Borders: Lincoln's Legacy Outside the United States*,<sup>12</sup> edited by Jyotirmaya Tripathy, Sura P. Rath, and William D. Pederson, deals mostly—although not entirely—with the Lincoln legacy in Asia. *The Global Lincoln*,<sup>13</sup> edited by Richard Carwardine and Jay Sexton, as its title implies, presents the broader view. One of its essays, Lawrence Goldman's "A Total Misconception: Lincoln, The Civil War, and the British, 1860-1865," expands upon my earlier comments on the subject to which I referred above.<sup>14</sup>

Other than sheer political genius, what qualities that made Lincoln "the man that he was," that caused the late president to rise to mythical levels, both at home and abroad? In those more straightforward days it was not political spin or propaganda. A sense of his prodigious physical strength conceivably played a small part,<sup>15</sup> but more to the point were his complete lack of malice, his demonstrated courage when visiting in battle areas in the face of fire, and his dogged determination. Surely, however, the mastery of language, with his flawless and precise use of every word—the language's literal foundation, must be relevant as was his grasp of ideas, and his ability to make them real to his hearers and readers. These abilities certainly are not unique to Americans, but in Lincoln's case, they reflected deep roots in American politics, and beyond politics, in American culture.

Lincoln was certainly among America's most cerebral presidents, but had no formal education. His reading was more characterized by depth than by breadth, yet he was superbly—considering his challenges one might conclude uniquely—successful.<sup>16</sup> Other cerebral presidents would have to include Jefferson, John and John Quincy Adams, Theodore Roosevelt, and Wilson. Jefferson and Wilson had brilliant first, and disastrous second, terms. Neither Adams is known for great success in office. Only TR—appropriately for this conference—can be classed along with Lincoln in this regard, and he cited Lincoln ("Jackson-Lincoln"), as a model. To be sure, Clinton and Obama could be cited in this regard, but their records will become clearer with time.



Jackson, Franklin Roosevelt, and Lyndon Johnson obviously possessed keen intelligence also—it is not too extreme to say that along with Lincoln they exhibited political genius—but they were not scholars nor were they “intellectuals.” Unlike Lincoln, they were not among our most “cerebral” presidents, yet Jackson and FDR performed superbly in office, and LBJ was extraordinarily effective in his domestic policy. Thus, intellectual power in the sense used here, being “cerebral,” does not ensure success, nor does it work against it.

One quality in Lincoln’s background may have made a difference. Uniquely among presidents, Lincoln seems to have been influenced by Transcendentalism. Although today it generally is associated solely with literature. Transcendentalism’s influence ranges far, affecting education, philosophy, the arts, social thought, and an even wider range of intellectual activities.<sup>17</sup> In addition to Emerson, the most prominent Transcendentalists were Margaret Fuller, Henry David Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Theodore Parker.

Transcendentalism emerged in 1836, at first with little notice, when a group of writers started meeting regularly for discussions in Boston at the home of the Rev. George Ripley. There was never an organized group, but detractors sensed conspiracy, and their fervent opposition helped to publicize Transcendentalist ideas. For a number of reasons, including widely differing views among its highly individualist adherents, Transcendentalism is not easy to define. As Unitarianism had grown from Calvinism and added rational analysis, so had Transcendentalism grown from Unitarianism, adding rational analysis, so had Transcendentalism grown from Unitarianism, adding spiritual striving. As its heart lay the conviction that ideas were not limited to information gained through the senses, they could be innate, or could be received directly from the divine. Human beings themselves contained a reflection of the divine, and were in fact part of an overall divinity—Ralph Waldo Emerson termed it the Oversoul. They were intellectuals who recognized the intellect as incomplete; they accepted emotion, but not at the expense of the intellect. Above all, they glorified articulate consciousness, and believed in absolutes, and in progress toward the ideal.

An American Studies student at the University of Hong Kong once asked me whether Transcendentalism had any lasting effect. No less an authority, after all, than Emerson had said after the fact that nothing more serious came of the early meetings of the group “than the modest quarterly journal called *The Dial*, which under the editorship of Margaret Fuller, and later of some other [Emerson, himself], enjoyed its obscurity for four years.” Emerson did concede that the journal had contained some “noble papers by Margaret Fuller,” and that some issues “had an

Instant exhausting sale because of papers by Theodore Parker."<sup>18</sup>

The student's question was reasonable. However influential Transcendentalist ideas were during America's "Romantic Period," today one is likely to encounter it rarely. Yet Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845) was a pioneering work in feminism that, as Perry Miller noted, "influenced the calling" of the famous Seneca Falls Conference in 1848. This was a milestone toward women's rights and women's suffrage in America. Because Transcendentalism encouraged "new critique of the social structure," Miller concluded that it inevitably led to new consideration of relations between the sexes.<sup>19</sup>

Politically, the most noted influence certainly was Thoreau's. His famous essay, "Civil Disobedience," found resonance in such widely separated venues as Russia, Gandhi's India, and Martin Luther King's demonstrations in America for civil rights. Nevertheless, Emerson, Whitman, and Parker exercised lasting influence.

In 1837, Emerson gave his address, "The American Scholar," in which he ascribed the "sacredness" that attached to the act of creation. Oliver Wendell Holmes later called it an "intellectual declaration of independence."<sup>20</sup> Five months later, a young Abraham Lincoln addressed the Young Men's Lyceum in Springfield, Illinois, calling for a "political religion." Hutchison draws a "spectrum of 'transcendental'" politics," upon which "The American Scholar" and the Lyceum Address are two points. Connecting the two is "a near spiritual belief in the Declaration of Independence as enshrining a *transcendental* principle removed from historical contingency: the principle that all men are created equal."<sup>21</sup> The great abolitionist orator and former slave, Frederick Douglass, who at times expressed great impatience with Lincoln, said to the President that his Second Inaugural "was a sacred effort."<sup>22</sup>

Whitman was the least likely Transcendentalist. He was from New York, not New England, was working class, had not gone to Harvard (or any other college), and was an ardent nationalist. He nevertheless was one of the most innovative poets in history, and his poetry strongly influenced the political rhetoric of America's most poetic president, Abraham Lincoln.<sup>23</sup> Critics Jacques Barzun and Edmund Wilson each noted that Lincoln could have been a major force in letters.<sup>24</sup>

Lincoln's law partner, William Herndon, called his attention to Theodore Parker's writings.<sup>25</sup> As president, Lincoln's mastery of the language enabled him to create, in the Gettysburg Address, what Garry Wills accurately described as "The Words that Remade America." Wills pays tribute to his genius: "Lincoln was an artist." His Address "created a political prose for America, to rank with the

vernacular excellence of Twain."<sup>26</sup>

In 272 words, Lincoln portrayed the Declaration of Independence as America's founding document, with the Constitution as an imperfect instrument designed to approximate the Declaration's ideal.<sup>27</sup> Wills argues that "Equality" took its place among America's fundamental principles. Lincoln's "dialectic of ideals struggling for their realization in history owes a great deal to the primary intellectual fashion of his period, Transcendentalism." The Declaration became an influence not limited to America; one that radiated "out to *all* people *everywhere*."<sup>28</sup> As Hutchison put it, Lincoln had "transplanted" the "transcendentalist" credo to the political sphere."<sup>29</sup>

Wills quotes Hemingway that "all modern American novels are the offspring of *Huckleberry Finn*. It is no greater exaggeration," Wills adds, "to say that all modern political prose descends from the Gettysburg Address."<sup>30</sup> Lincoln "was a Transcendentalist without the fuzziness. He spoke a modern language because he was dealing with a scientific age.... Words were weapons, for him, even though he meant them to be weapons of peace in the midst of war." Wills does not exaggerate when he writes that Lincoln "came to change the world, to effect an intellectual revolution. No other words could have done it. The miracle is that these words did. In his brief time before the crowd at Gettysburg he wove a spell that has not, yet, been broken...."<sup>31</sup>

Yet despite his powerful and attractive image, Lincoln has his detractors. These come from different places, but it is not surprise that much of the opposition comes from the area that went down to defeat, the American South. Yale historian David W. Blight offers a superb look at the frenzied attacks in "Hating and Loving the 'Real' Abe Lincolns: Lincoln and the American South."<sup>32</sup> As he makes clear, "this tradition of Lincoln-hating has waxed and waned in Southern history, and it has certainly eroded measurably in recent decades." It was never exclusively a southern phenomenon. There have been critics from the Old Left and from some black writers, "but Southerners have dominated Lincoln-hating and still do."<sup>33</sup> Lyon Gardiner Tyler, a son of President John Tyler, says Blight, carried on perhaps the most "prolonged and bitter campaign of Lincoln-hating" than any other southerner, until he died in 1935; ironically on 12 February. Part of his effort was directed at vindication of his father's presidency.<sup>34</sup> His father, one may recall, became the only president of the United States who joined an organization dedicated to the overthrow of the government that he had led the Constitution under which he served. Long after being denied nomination to succeed himself in

office, he joined the Provisional Congress of the Confederacy, and was elected to the Confederate House of Representatives, but died before he could take his seat.

In recent times, Blight notes, Lincoln-hating has evolved from Tyler's old Lost Cause venom into "a Reagan-Bush era venom from the political and academic Right." The most poisonous of these writers is one Thomas DiLorenzo, a "Southerner by roots and outlook," who has been active in the "League of the South."<sup>35</sup> Blight effectively demolishes DiLorenzo, who knows only enough about Lincoln, in today's political jargon to "play to his base." Blight cites other authors who produce their own demolitions of DiLorenzo.

Gabor Boritt noted that "the beauty of language of the Gettysburg Address has something to do with" the fact that it lives on. It has inspired, and continues to spire, "creative genius—great sculptures and monuments, paintings, drawings, popular prints, cartoons, fiction, theater, poetry, humor, dance, music—all the facets of artistic life," not limited to the United States. He cites Tolstoy and the words he quoted from a "Muslim chief in the Caucasus" praising Lincoln; Gandhi, Nehru, Sun Yat-sen; newly independent countries in Africa that brought out Lincoln postage stamps; Mandela; Latin America—audience cheers at Caracas at the end of a performance of Aaron Copland's *Lincoln Portrait* in the 1950s when it rang with the words "a government of the people, by the people," in Spanish; students praising Lincoln in Hungary in 1956 and Tehran in 1979; praise for Lincoln in Tiananmen Square in 1989; and the words of John Paul II in the twenty-first century when he visited the United States, kissed the ground, and quoted Lincoln." But that is not all. The great speech also rang, with "the appeal to the use of force to defend democracy....the nationalist face," Boritt said, "cannot be ignored." To be sure, there have been "sins," (many sins), committed "in the name of nationalism in the last two centuries," but most recognize the right of self-preservation. "But," Boritt notes perceptively, "the Gettysburg Gospel does not exult in war. It illuminates the tragedy is part of the 'new birth'." Garry Wills, he reminds us, pointed out to us all that the "Second Inaugural Address can be understood as the culmination of the Gettysburg Address."<sup>36</sup>

Europeans and others abroad can still recognize, and praise American heroes such as those four brave men who saved the Amsterdam to Paris train disaster. They can still thrill to the legacy of Lincoln.

Unfortunately, though, the anti-Americanism that has persisted for decades has taken a more virulent turn in the twenty-first century. Andrew Kohut of the Pew Research Center, and Bruce Stokes of the *National Journal*, studied public opinion

in fifty countries, and found that citizens elsewhere, who previously had tended to have warm feelings about Americans even while holding America and its policies in low esteem, have begun to associate the American people with their government.<sup>37</sup> In *America Against the World*, they, along with former secretary of state Madeline Albright, who contributed the Foreword, concluded that the trouble results not only from America's "go-it-alone" policies, such as those that characterized the Bush Doctrine, but also from misunderstanding and misinformation.

As Francine Kiefer put it so gracefully in the *Christian Science Monitor*, Pope Francis reminded all in his message to Congress, that "Lincoln, who resolutely led the country during the stark challenges of the Civil War, became the vehicle to address global conflict and political division." She noted the powerful admonition from Francis: "the pope warned against 'every type of fundamentalism' and 'every form of polarization' that divides people into 'simplistic camps.'"<sup>38</sup> A similar concern was at the core of Lincoln's greatness.

Americans, as a whole have not produced an especially introspective culture, but clearly we need to understand ourselves better. Certainly, others need to understand us better, as well. We need not only to emphasize our heroes and the better parts of our heritage—specifically our legacy from Lincoln and from his devotion to the Declaration of Independence—but also to ensure that our policies overtly reflect the qualities that Lincoln displayed, and that we and the rest of the world once associated with the best of America.

**Max J. Skidmore is the University of Missouri Curators' Professor of Political Science, Thomas Jefferson Fellow, University of Missouri-Kansas City**

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<sup>1</sup>To be sure, the French made such an attempt at about the same time the United States did, but it almost immediately degenerated into tyranny.

<sup>2</sup>Francine Kiefer, "Pope Francis' speech to Congress: Both Moral and Political," *Christian Science Monitor* (24 September 2015). <http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Politics/2015/0924/Pope-Francis-speech-to-Congress-both-moral-and-political-video>; retrieved 26 September 2015.

<sup>3</sup>Max J. Skidmore, "Abraham Lincoln: World Political Symbol for the Twenty-First Century," *White House Studies*, 2:1 (2002), pp. 17-35.

<sup>4</sup>David Donald, *Lincoln*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995, p. 379.

<sup>5</sup>Merrill D. Peterson, *Lincoln in American Memory*, New York: Oxford, 1994, p. 24.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid*, p. 25.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid*, p. 26.

<sup>8</sup>See <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1865p4>: retrieved 6 September 2015.

<sup>9</sup>Skidmore, "Abraham Lincoln: World Political Symbol," p. 28.

<sup>10</sup>Seoul: Junwoo-sa, 1983.

<sup>11</sup>New York: Fordham University Press, 2004; in English and Polish.

<sup>12</sup>Delhi: Pencraft International, 2010.

<sup>13</sup>New York: Oxford, 2011.

<sup>14</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 107-122.

<sup>15</sup>See Doris Kearns Goodwin, *Team of Rivals*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005, p. 437, in which she recounts an episode in which Lincoln on a ship "playfully demonstrated that in 'muscular power he was one in a thousand,' possessing 'the strength of a giant,' He picked up an ax and 'held it at arm's length at the extremity of the [handle] with his thumb and forefinger, continuing to hold it there for a number of minutes. The most powerful sailors on board tried in vain to imitate him'."

<sup>16</sup>This and the next few paragraphs draw extensively on a paper I gave in Helsinki, in 2008. See "American Presidents: Scholarship, and the Power of Literature," in Giacomo Bottá, & Maria Härmänmaa, eds., *Language and the Scientific Imagination: Proceedings of the 11th Conference of the International Society for the Study of European Ideas (ISSEI)*, 28 July—2 August 2008, University of Helsinki, Finland, 2010.

<sup>17</sup>See Philip F. Gura, *American Transcendentalism: A History*. New York: Hill and Wang, 2007.

<sup>18</sup>Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Historic Notes of Life and Letters in New England," Lecture before the Concord Lyceum, 1880, in *The Transcendentalists: An Anthology*, Perry Miller, ed., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950, p. 502.

<sup>19</sup>Perry Miller, *The Transcendentalists*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950, p. 457.

<sup>20</sup>Anthony Hutchison, *Writing the Republic*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 30.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid*, p. 34.

<sup>22</sup>See Ronald C. White, Jr., *Lincoln's Greatest Speech: The Second Inaugural*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2002, p. 199.

<sup>23</sup>See Daniel Mark Epstein, *Lincoln and Whitman*, New York: Ballantine Books, 2004.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid*, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup>Miller, p. 450.

<sup>26</sup>Garry Wills, *Lincoln at Gettysburg: The Words that Remade America*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992, p. 52.

<sup>27</sup>For a different and contrary, interpretation, see Gabor Boritt, *The Gettysburg Gospel*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 2006.

<sup>28</sup>Willis, p. 103.

<sup>29</sup>Hutchison, p. 52.

<sup>30</sup>Willis, p. 148.

<sup>31</sup>*Ibid*, p. 174-175.

<sup>32</sup>See Blight in Carwardine and Sexton, *The Global Lincoln*, pp. 272-287.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 278.

<sup>34</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 281-282.

<sup>35</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 283-284.

<sup>36</sup>Boritt, pp. 201-203.

<sup>37</sup>See Andrew Kohut and Bruce Stokes, *America Against the World: How We are Different, and Why We are Disliked*, New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2007.

<sup>38</sup>Kiefer, "Pope Francis' Speech to Congress."