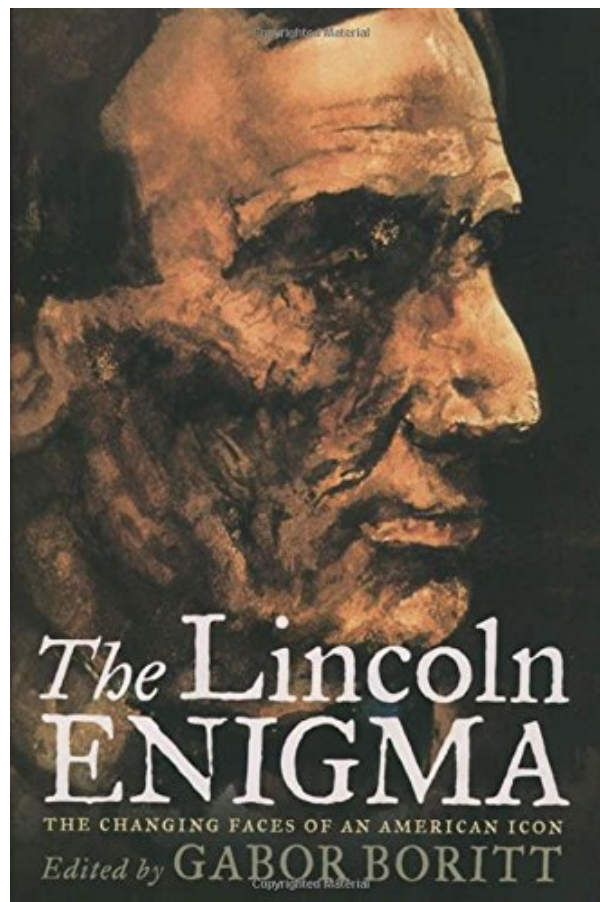
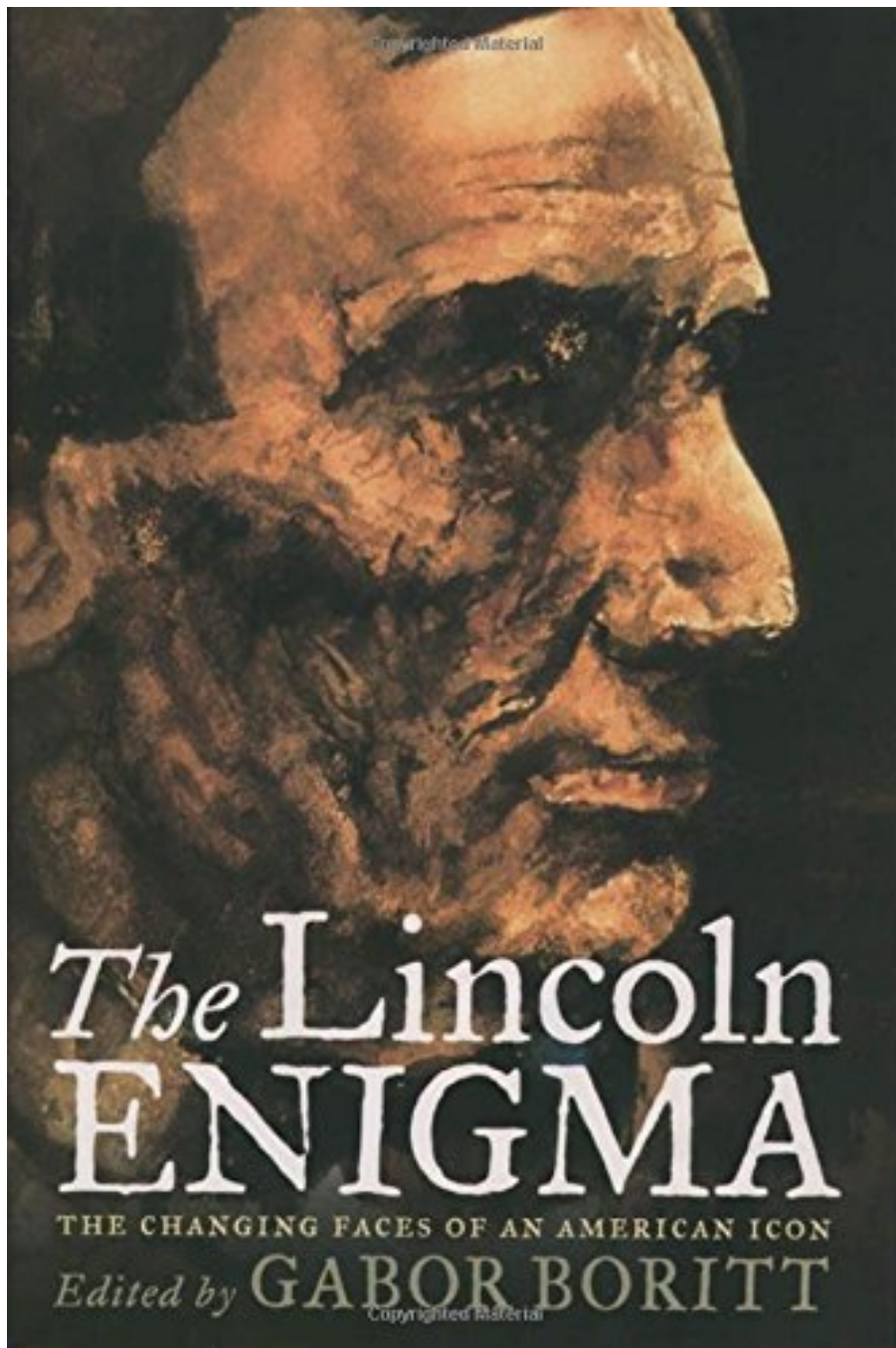


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Daniel Liestman, Kansas State Univ. Libs., Manhattan

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In *The Lincoln Enigma*, Gabor Boritt invites renowned Lincoln scholars, and rising new voices, to take a look at much-debated aspects of Lincoln's life--including his possible gay relationships, his plan to send blacks back to Africa, and his high-handed treatment of the Constitution. Boritt explores Lincoln's proposals that looked to a lily-white America. Jean Baker marvels at Lincoln's loves and marriage. David Herbert Donald compares Lincoln and Jefferson Davis as Commanders-in-Chief. Douglas Wilson shows us the young Lincoln--not the strong leader of popular history, but a man who struggles to find his purpose. Gerald Prokopowicz searches for the military leader, William C. Harris for the peacemaker, and Robert Bruce meditates on Lincoln and death. In a final section Boritt and Harold Holzer offer a fascinating portfolio of Lincoln images in modern art. Acute and thought-provoking in their observations, this all-star cast of historians--including two Pulitzer and three Lincoln Prize winners--questions our assumptions of Lincoln, and provides a new vitality to our ongoing reflections on his life and legacy.

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Belonging to the Ages ...

By Toby Joyce

"Look at me and I'll tell you without blinkin' this southerner prefers Abraham Lincoln"

goes a rap at the start of this book, and it is aimed at those of like mind, southerner or not.

A warning - half the book consists of illustrations of Lincolniana so that this is one for the specialist. The Lincoln-seeker should read David Donald's excellent biography before opening this book.

That said, does this book tell us anything new about Lincoln? The answer is yes, without being final or definitive. I liked particularly the article on Lincoln and the Constitution, showing that he was not the 'dictator' of Copperhead legend, nor the conscious revolutionary of Garry Wills' 'Lincoln at Gettysburg'. However, did his actions not have revolutionary results?

The article on the Lincoln marriage I felt a bit limited, but also a good corrective to the image of Lincoln the hen-pecked husband trapped in a loveless union. 'Mary, Mary, we are elected!' he cried to his wife on arriving home that great day, showing the essential nature of the partnership between them. However, this essay does not use Mariah Vance's reminiscences, though written very much later than the 1850s, which show Mary Todd Lincoln as addicted to paregoric (which contained opium) and subject to alternating fits of drugged lassitude, and withdrawal-induced sickness. However, even the Vance memoirs (she was the Lincoln's servant) are not entirely negative on Mary Lincoln.

Other essays cover the Lincoln youth, his fascination with death, his status as war leader and finally his image in American art. The enigma is somewhat clarified but somehow the enigma, and the continuing fascination, remains.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful.

Secession Violated the Constitution

By Charles Day

Nine scholars writing ten essays take some of the most discussed and often controversial aspects of Lincoln's life and test them in the context of historical events. For me the most exciting reading was Allen Guelzo's analysis of Lincoln's understanding of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence and their use in

the Gettysburg Address.

Guelzo is the first person I can recall reading or hearing who offered this understanding of the cause of the Civil War from two Lincoln quotes:

"My opinion is that no state can, in any way lawfully, get out of the Union, without the consent of the others,' he told Thurlow Weed in 1860 `and that it is the duty of the President, and other government functionaries to run the machine as it is.' Just as slavery was a violation of the spirit of the Declaration, secession was a violation of the whole idea of constitutional government. `A majority, held in restraint by constitutional checks, and limitations, and always changing, with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people.' But secession was an insult to the notion of majority rule and constitutional government, a flight `to anarchy or despotism.'" Last quote from First Inaugural Address - Final Text - July 4, 1861

Guelzo went on to give a detailed explanation of Lincoln's thinking on the Constitution and the Declaration.

As in his other writings, Guelzo's insights are deep, based on solid research, expressed in vivid prose and sound insights.

Having read the public library copy, I'm adding this book to my next order.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

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By David Marshall

Gabor Boritt hits another homerun with this edited book on Lincoln.

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