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Tom Sancton, *Sweet Land of Liberty: America in the Mind of the French Left, 1848-1871*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2021. xi + 320 pp. Index. \$50.00 U.S. (hb). ISBN 978-0-8071-7430-2.

Response by Tom Sancton, Tulane University.

I do not think it is an author's place to critique his reviewers, and can only thank Professor Kramer for his thorough and thoughtful article about *Sweet Land of Liberty*. However, since he raises two specific questions about my approach to the subject, I am happy to offer this reply.

The first question is "why [I] originally wanted to study French leftist views of America or why [I] decided to publish this revised dissertation after [my] long stint as a historically-trained journalist." As Prof. Kramer rightly points out, this study is rooted in research I did for a doctoral dissertation at Oxford University. In casting about for a subject, I wanted to do something that would combine my background in American History (my undergraduate major at Harvard) with the European history I was studying at Oxford. I was quite interested in the American Civil War and initially began looking into French reactions to that conflict. I soon discovered that several fine studies had covered the subject so I decided to focus on the reactions of the French left, broadly defined as partisans of political liberty.<sup>[1]</sup> Why the left? Because they were the ones who had the greatest stake in the survival and success of the democratic idea in America. And while the Civil War remained a central topic, I chose to broaden the timeframe to span the period between the Revolution of 1848 and the Franco-Prussian War that led to the founding of the Third Republic. During most of this period, France lived under the authoritarian regime of Napoleon III. His opponents on the left used the image of American democracy as both a model and a propaganda weapon against the Second Empire. How and why they did that seemed to me to be a worthy and interesting topic for historical research.

As for Prof. Kramer's related question of why I chose to publish this work after my "long stint as a historically-trained journalist," the answer is a matter of timing and circumstances. I had initially intended to publish the thesis and pursue an academic career. Shortly after receiving my doctorate, however, I was offered a job as a staff writer at TIME magazine and embarked on a career as a professional journalist. Many years later, after leaving TIME and finding myself between book projects, I decided to take the thesis off the shelf and revise it for publication. The revision involved not just updating the scholarship, but substantially reworking the text to make it accessible to a broader readership. In doing that, I relied on writing skills I had gained through my long experience as a professional journalist. I did not, however, turn it into a work of journalism.

Which brings me to Prof. Kramer's second main question. He wonders why I did not offer "reflections on how the present context differs from the era in which [I] began [my] historical research or how [my] journalistic experiences in Paris altered [my] understanding of cross-cultural historical analysis." That is an interesting idea, but it would have totally changed the nature of my book. I wanted it to remain what it was originally, that is, a historical monograph based on substantial archival research. Indeed, I could have written a book (and may still) comparing contemporary France with earlier periods of French history. But it would be a very different book. Just because I happen to have worked as a journalist in France does not mean that I should approach a historical subject as a journalist--no more than the fact that I have written about jazz and performed as a musician means that I must introduce musicology into a work of history. That might make for an interesting book, but again, it's not the book I chose to write.

Prof. Kramer's suggestion, however, is not totally off the mark. In fact, I originally included an epilogue in which I compared French opinion of America in the Trump era with the period I had studied. As one might imagine, contemporary French impressions of the United States, largely negative, contrasted starkly with the often hagiographic image cultivated by the French left in the mid-nineteenth century. My editors at LSU Press suggested that I cut the epilogue because it injected an awkward element of "presentism" into a purely historical work. I agreed and chopped off the epilogue. So readers who want to know about twenty-first century French views of America will have to look elsewhere. If they are curious about how French partisans of liberty perceived and used the image of American democracy during the crucial years between 1848 and 1871, I would like to think that *Sweet Land of Liberty* will serve them well.

#### NOTE

[1] Lynn M. Case and Warren F. Spencer, *The United States and France: Civil War Diplomacy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1970); Serge Gavronsky, *The French Liberal Opposition and the American Civil War* (New York: Humanities, 1968); Harold Hyman, ed., *Heard Round the World: The Impact Abroad of the Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 1969); Donaldson Jordan and Edwin J. Pratt, *Europe and the American Civil War* (New York: Octagon Books, 1969); and Warren R. West, *Contemporary French Opinion on the American Civil War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1924).

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