



Stephen D. Bosworth. *Lionel Jobert and the American Civil War: An Atlantic Identity in the Making.* Albany: SUNY Press, 2021. Illustrations. 208 pp. \$95.00, cloth, ISBN 978-1-4384-8509-6.

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In the past decade, a growing literature has argued that nineteenth-century Europeans, Africans, and Americans inhabited a wider “Atlantic community.” People, goods, and ideas moved freely across the ocean, fostering personal, political, and economic ties. Most scholars working on transnational history have emphasized the engagement of their subjects with the great issues of the age, which included the abolition of slavery and the emergence of republican governments. Not all nineteenth-century citizens were so high-minded, however, as Stephen D. Bosworth’s biography of the French-born confidence man Lionel Jobert attests. Jobert traversed national boundaries with ease, as his career took him from France, to Haiti, to the United States, and then to Great Britain. He served in the French maritime fleet, the Haitian Navy, and the Union army’s officer corps. He cared little, however, for the rights of man or the future of democracy; instead, in the words of Bosworth, Jobert was wholly “driven by ambition” to achieve “position and prestige” (p. xii). Jobert attained many of his posts through misrepresentation or outright fraud, and in most cases his adventures ended ignominiously. For Jobert, the fluid world of the nineteenth-century Atlantic

offered nothing more than an opportunity to advance his fortune.

Jobert was born in France in 1829, the son of a prosperous French businessman and an English mother, who, ironically, was the cousin-in-law of the celebrated French poet and liberal revolutionary Alphonse de Lamartine. Jobert shared neither the intellectual nor the political aspirations of his famous cousin-by-marriage. As a young man, he rose to captain a ship in the French merchant marine, at which time he began using the surname d’Epineuil, a noble title purchased by his great-grandfather but discarded by his family after the French Revolution. In 1858, after a voyage to Port-au-Prince, he secured a position as director of the newly founded Haitian Naval School, presumably on the strength of his seafaring experience and his recently assumed aristocratic identity. The posting did not go well. While commanding a training voyage in Europe, Jobert dawdled on the return trip, squandered public funds, and, while in port in Madeira, seduced a married woman, Theodosia Augusta Lloyd, who then joined Jobert aboard his warship. When the lovers arrived back in Port-au-Prince, they fled the country to avoid impending arrest.

Jobert and Lloyd made their way to Philadelphia, where they presented themselves as the French aristocrats “Monsieur and Madame d’Epineuil” in order to ingratiate themselves with the city’s high society. The subsequent outbreak of the American Civil War offered Jobert an opportunity for the status and income he craved. He parlayed his “noble” credentials and “military experience” into a commission to raise a regiment of volunteers, to be dubbed the “d’Epineuil Zouaves.” The newly minted colonel attracted young men to his regiment by promising the opportunity to don the famous French uniforms and serve under a bona fide European aristocrat. He quickly proved himself to be little more than a martinet. He capriciously meted out violent punishments to his soldiers, and he scandalized his men by allowing Lloyd to join the regiment in the field while dressing herself in full zouave uniform. Jobert’s officers drew up charges of military incompetence, and General George B. McLellan disbanded the regiment and dismissed the colonel after inspection revealed that many of the enlisted men harbored lice and lacked food. The disgraced Jobert turned to a variety of endeavors to make ends meet, including acting and patent brokering. After being abandoned by Lloyd, he moved to England where he passed himself off as the French “Count d’Epineuil” and succeeded in marrying an heiress even after an eleventh-hour discovery of his disreputable background.

Bosworth’s crisp and engaging narrative does justice to Jobert’s saga. The plot offers readers all the twists, turns, and intrigue of a Victorian novel. Bosworth also provides appropriate historiographical framing to make Jobert’s story relevant to scholars. He argues that Jobert “personified” scholars’ descriptions of a connected Atlantic World. As the bilingual and bicultural son of a French father and an English mother, Jobert navigated “comfortably between French- and English-speaking populations on both sides of the ocean” as he sought his fortune (p. xii). Though Bosworth does not explicitly claim to present a revisionist

take on nineteenth-century transatlantic history, his work clearly offers support for those who would question the degree to which ideology and political engagement drove even the most cosmopolitan of historical actors. Bosworth finds Jobert “representative of a subset of the population who cared more about personal advancement than about the great issues of the day” (p. 112).

Bosworth’s brief narrative raises intriguing questions that might have been explored in a longer work. For example, although Jobert cared little for transnational politics, others clearly attached importance to his French identity. Providing context on nineteenth-century Americans’ engagement with European affairs might have explained how and why Jobert so easily beguiled many American citizens and government officials. Bosworth’s work might also have considered gender as a fruitful category of analysis. Lloyd’s story is at least as interesting as Jobert’s, as she, too, successfully navigated the Atlantic in pursuit of personal fulfillment. The negative reaction of many American soldiers to her decision to dress as a zouave, as well as the attraction zouave dress initially held for them, might shed light on understandings of nineteenth-century masculinity.

Still, Bosworth demonstrates that for at least some nineteenth-century migrants, ideological concerns mattered much less than personal interests. Future students of foreign-born Unionists and Confederates would do well to consider Jobert’s story. Motivations aside, there can be no doubt that Jobert and those like him attempted to use the fluidity of nineteenth-century Atlantic society to their benefit. Bosworth’s work has lent more support to those who argue that the world of the 1800s was as globally connected as that of the twenty-first century.

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