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—John C. Rodrigue, Presidential Studies Quarterly

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Among the numerous volumes on that famous speech, Jared Peatman’s The Long Shadow of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address stands among the best.

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Examining the Influence of an Iconic Speech

When Abraham Lincoln addressed the crowd at the new national cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, on November 19, 1863, he intended his speech to be his most eloquent statement on the inextricable link between equality and democracy. However, unwilling to commit to equality at that time, the nation stood ill-prepared to accept the full message of Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address. In the ensuing century, groups wishing to advance a particular position hijacked Lincoln’s words for their own ends, highlighting the specific parts of the speech that echoed their stance while ignoring the rest. Only as the nation slowly moved toward equality did those invoking Lincoln’s speech come closer to recovering his true purpose. In this incisive work, Jared Peatman seeks to understand Lincoln’s intentions at Gettysburg and how his words were received, invoked, and interpreted over time, providing a timely and insightful analysis of one of America’s most legendary orations.

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