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Dominique Barjot and Christophe Réveillard, Eds. *L'américanisation de l'Europe occidentale au XXe siècle: Mythe et Réalité*. Paris: Presse de l'Université Paris-Sorbonne, 2002. 274 pp. Tables, figures, notes, bibliography, and index. 24.00 € (pb). ISBN 2-84050-241-0.

Review by Seth Armus, Saint Joseph's College.

In publishing, timing is crucial—every book's fortune depends, to some degree, on the *Zeitgeist*. We should, therefore, take some pity on this series of mostly present-minded essays on Americanization and "Europe" (read, "France") that emerged from a conference on 11 July 2001—two months before their context would begin its massive reordering. Many of these essays achieve a sort of instant nostalgia, reminding us, as they do, of a time when a true global showdown between Europe and America existed mostly in the realm of theory, if not fantasy.

The works in this collection emerged from a conference on "Western Europe and Americanization" at the Sorbonne, but most focus narrowly on France, or issues that interest France. The contributors (all but two are French), though not all belonging to the "A list" in the field, include a variety of interesting scholars. While conferences of this sort rarely introduce original research, some of the articles nicely summarize larger, more complex projects. But, as is so often the case with conference-based collections, the book stretches what insight it provides pretty thinly. One gets the impression that many of the contributors are just going through the motions.

Collections such as these can succeed if they hang on one of two strategies—either a few excellent essays to anchor the collection, as was the case in the much cited *Amérique dans les têtes*, or a coherent and well-developed theme approached from a variety of novel, if not necessarily earthshaking, perspectives, as achieved, for example, in *Identity Papers*.^[1] But when a poorly defined theme is combined with overly specialized (or overly general) essays, there can be trouble.

Unfortunately, that's the case with much of this collection. One of the problems is the insistence on defining this as a European-American issue. It has in the most recent period become one, and to the extent that European integration was, and is, a multi-polar project there is some utility in this definition. But in this book Europe is clearly a stand-in for France. The papers are overwhelmingly concerned with French relations with America—the two explicitly non-French essays (on Spain and London) have a token feel to them, while the pieces on European integration are offered from a French perspective, using almost exclusively French and American sources. This in itself is fine, but it detracts from the ambitiousness of the project and leads to the suspicion that the Europe label is being used somewhat dishonestly. Even André Kaspi, in a very brief preface, appears not particularly convinced that there is a "European" experience to Americanization.

The essays are divided into three sections: "The American Project," "Europe and Americanization," and "Economic and Technological Americanization." The sections vary enormously in quality. Some of the most promising ones are the most disappointing. Typical of this is Denise Artaud's piece on American-

European relations from isolationism to neo-imperialism. Artaud, having written intelligently on this subject elsewhere, here fails to make much of an argument, and instead walks us through a simple outline of American foreign policy before drawing some startling conclusions about the influence of "American" conglomerates like Bertelsmann (!) (p. 48). What can be said about history that is this sloppy? Possibly that the distinctions between Americanization and globalization are less clear than even the experts account for?

Other pieces are better. Elodie Gombert's article on French business missions to the United States is interesting but adds little to the work Richard Kuisel did on that subject and feels rather too much like what it is—a summary of a recently completed dissertation.[2] Some of the other essays appear as if "and Americanization" was simply tacked on to earlier projects.

There are, however, some pleasant exceptions. François-Georges Dreyfus, in a brief but intelligent musing, points out that for all the jeremiads about Americanism, it is instructive to compare Americanization to the Marxist influence that originated from the other Cold War hegemon. Dreyfus notes that Marxism is probably more profound in its penetration of French culture, and, unlike the superficial Americanization of blue jeans and McDonald's, Marxist influence may be more deeply entrenched in cultural institutions and actually harder to combat (p. 93). In a similar vein, Émilie Robin discusses the perception of American politics by European Communists and the role this ideological assessment made in spreading ideas about America and American civilization. In popular culture, America's association with an abundance of negative stereotypes owes much to Communist propaganda, and these ideas seem to have become resilient fixtures in the anti-American discourse (p. 99).

In another essay, François David makes a surprisingly convincing case for the centrality of John Foster Dulles to European unification. If his insistence that Dulles was "at least" as important to European integration, in his way, as Jean Monnet and Konrad Adenauer seems excessive, he shows that his influence over his friend (Senate Minority Leader) Arthur Vandenberg was decisive in getting Republicans on board with active American engagement, in both the Atlantic alliance and the Marshall Plan. Dulles, according to a telegram he sent to the US ambassador in Paris, even realized that an atmosphere of anti-Americanism was possibly the only one in which the unification of Europe could go forward (p. 71). That sort of patience from Washington can also inspire nostalgia.

Probably the biggest surprise of all is the article by Samir Saül on American mining interests in Morocco. The topic, which sounds quite dry, is handled with great sophistication by Saül. He describes the complex situation whereby American businesses got (indirectly) involved in North African mining, thus raising concerns in the metropole. The Moroccans profited from the technical and business skills imported from America without themselves being Americanized, but the trajectory, once started, led them in directions that were "American," even after the end of direct American influence. This unusual perspective on the crossing of interests (French, American, Moroccan, imperial) adds a new dimension to the discussion of Americanization and adds to the assessment that Saül makes, in the book's conclusion, that there are varieties of "américanisations," and that Americanization can be generated even without America.

Saül's conclusion tries to tie together one of the loosest ends of this project—the distinction between Americanization, globalization, and modernization. We can't fault the book for failing to untangle this problem, but the difficulties it presents some of these writers should serve to warn us of the complexity of these issues. Ultimately, it seems we can't deny that Europe has been deeply Americanized but nor can we say with any certainty what exactly that means.

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Conclusion:

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NOTES

[1] Denis Lacorne, Jacques Rupnik, Marie-France Toinet, eds., *L'Amérique dans les têtes: Un siècle de fascination et d'aversion* (Paris: Hachette, 1986). Tom Conley and Steven Ungar, *Identity Papers: Contested Nationhood in Twentieth-Century France* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

[2] Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: The Dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

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