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**Robert J. Young**, *Marketing Marianne: French Propaganda in America, 1900-1940*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004. Notes, bibliography, index. \$60.00 US (cl.). ISBN 0-8135-3377-5.

Review by William Keylor, Boston University.

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During the controversy over the Bush administration's plans to invade Iraq without the approval of the United Nations Security Council in the autumn and winter of 2002-03, French President Jacques Chirac's audacious bid to assemble an international coalition opposed to unilateral U.S. military action in Iraq unleashed one of those periodic waves of francophobia that occasionally wash across the American heartland. In the cafeteria of the U.S. House of Representatives, French fries became "freedom fries." Angry demonstrators poured Beaujolais and Bordeaux down American drains. Epithets such as "cheese-eating surrender monkeys" appeared in print and cruel (and historically inaccurate) jokes made the rounds: "How many Frenchmen does it take to defend Paris? Answer: "We don't know. It has never been tried." Considering this energetic French-bashing entirely unjustified, I sent a message of "bon courage" to a French friend who was at the time occupying a high diplomatic post in the United States and was presumably sending back nervous reports to the Quai d'Orsay about the state of American opinion toward France. He replied to my message of condolence with the observation that, as difficult as the situation was with the mainstream media and the general public was, "les universités nous sont favorables."

This brief exchange perfectly summarizes the underlying theme of Robert Young's sensitive and perceptive study of the French propaganda campaign in the United States from the beginning of the twentieth century to the fall of France in 1940. The absence of a large francophone minority community in the United States deprived the French government of the advantage enjoyed by other European states as they sought to influence American public opinion to support their foreign policy goals. To compensate for this lack of linguistic and ethnic ties, the French government eagerly exploited the one advantage that (it believed) France enjoyed in its sister republic across the Atlantic: the widespread admiration for French literature, painting, music, architecture, interior design, fashion, and cuisine that the moneyed, educated elite in the northeast had acquired either from frequent visits to France or in their liberal arts education at Ivy League universities. To combat the occasional outbursts of anti-French sentiment in America over various international issues, officials in Paris could count on this informal network of American Francophiles who recognized France as the cultural capital of the world.

Based on exhaustive research in the archives of the French Foreign Ministry, and a careful reading of the relevant secondary literature, Young's book provides a very useful overview of the efforts of Parisian officials to project a favorable image of France in the United States during the crucial four decades before the collapse of 1940. The author skillfully follows the complex maneuvering within the bureaucracy of the Quai d'Orsay and other ministries as successive governments sought to develop a coherent strategy for projecting a positive image of France abroad. He also identifies the institutional network within the United States that served as the conduit for this propaganda campaign. In addition to providing a valuable institutional analysis, the book reviews the literature on propaganda and the formation of public opinion and offers some stimulating observations about the obstacles that the French propagandists faced and how they attempted to surmount them.

The book begins at the turn of the twentieth century, when the United States emerged as a world power with overseas possessions recently obtained from Spain and an ambition to construct a blue-water navy. Since France had begun to worry a great deal about the military threat from Germany, it sought to acquire allies and supporters in anticipation of a showdown with its powerful neighbor to the east. The United States, with its vast wealth and potential military and naval power, was an obvious target for French solicitations. As the German Empire intensified its contacts with the substantial German-American communities in the Mid-West, New York, and Pennsylvania, the French foreign ministry recognized the need to identify and exploit sources of common interest between the two countries. The memory of France's support during the American War for Independence was a possible trump to play, but the memory of Lafayette and Rochambeau had faded from most Americans' minds. The ideological affinity of the two "sister republics" symbolized by the Statue of Liberty offered another opportunity for promoting

Franco-American solidarity. But that ploy was complicated by a number of inconvenient matters, such as the negative image of France among American Catholics caused by the anti-clerical policies of the Third Republic. Instead, the Quai d'Orsay decided that culture rather than politics should be the touchstone for the campaign to win the hearts and minds of the American people. And by culture the French officials did not mean popular culture. Young notes the irony of a democratic republic promoting its high-brow cultural heritage to the economic and educational elite of another democratic republic.

The vehicles for this campaign of cultural propaganda in the United States were non-governmental organizations dispersed throughout the United States but concentrated in the Northeast, such as the *Alliance Française*, which boasted two hundred chapters and eighteen thousand members by the mid-1920s; the *Maisons Françaises* that had been established on most major college and university campuses; and the American Association of Teachers of French, in a country in which (by the mid-1920s) two-thirds of college and university students studying foreign languages had chosen the language of Voltaire, compared to 2% who had opted for the language of Goethe. To supplement these permanent agencies devoted to the promotion of French culture and civilization, a steady stream of notable French academics, such as André Siegfried, Charles Cestre, and Bernard Fäy, turned up at American universities to deliver guest lectures or to take up residence as visiting professors. In time, exchange programs for American students studying in France and French students studying in America appeared on the scene.

Young admirably demonstrates how the First World War severely tested the determination of the French government to pursue this subtle, long-range strategy of cultural penetration and influence. German ambassador Johann von Bernstorff pulled out all the stops in an aggressive, no-holds-barred campaign to win favor with the American public in general and the German-American and Irish-American community in particular by appealing to mass emotion. But this was not the approach of French Ambassador Jules Jusserand, the dean of the Washington diplomatic corps who had taken up his post in 1902. So gifted in English was this erudite amateur scholar that he wrote literary works in that language, won the first Pulitzer Prize in history, and was later elected president of the American Historical Association. Consequently, Jusserand played a powerful role in shaping American attitudes toward France. He was adamantly opposed to propaganda that included exaggerations, misstatements, or appeals to emotion rather than reason. He preferred discretion, caution, and veracity, because he knew that Americans bitterly resented misrepresentations by foreign powers intent on influencing American policy. He successfully squelched efforts by the advocates of a more aggressive form of propaganda, both in Paris and in New York (where a Bureau of French Information had been set up under the leadership of the journalist Stéphane Lauzanne), always insisting that the proper method was to patiently plant seeds of cultural influence that would eventually bear fruit many years later.

Once the U.S. intervened in the war in 1917, the tone of French propaganda became more heavy-handed, though no more so than the jingoistic fulminations of Wilson's Committee on Public Information against the barbaric Hun. But once the war was over, France promptly reverted to the long-term, cultural approach, which it continued to pursue for the remainder of the 1920s and early 1930s. It maintained this stance even in the face of a hard-hitting campaign by the Weimar Republic against the provisions of the peace treaty that was reinforced by propaganda from France's former ally Great Britain, which had developed second thoughts about the Versailles settlement. Mounting disputes over reparations, war debts, tariff protectionism, and naval disarmament caused the brief spirit of comradeship in 1917-18 to unravel. American revisionist histories cast doubt on Germany's responsibility for starting the war, while isolationists charged that Washington had been duped by the European allies and their American stooges into entering it to support imperialistic objectives. Supplementing the energetic German propaganda campaign, the Hearst press the Fox News of the interwar period trotted out all the old wartime tales about the French government charging the American Expeditionary Force rent for the use of trenches at the front, Parisian shopkeepers overcharging doughboys, the promiscuity of French women, and man in the overcoat near the Eiffel Tower hawking "fealthy peekchurs." This was the negative side of the French image in America that had to be counteracted by a well-orchestrated campaign to remind Americans of Molière, Delacroix, and Debussy.

Though Jusserand was recalled from Washington in 1924, his long shadow hung over the French propaganda operation in the U.S. for the rest of the interwar period. The Quai d'Orsay continued to target the Francophile literary and moneyed elite of the east coast, which would in turn help to shape American public attitudes toward France amid widespread public ignorance of or indifference to events abroad. This target group was a very thin slice of American society. Young calculates that as late as 1940, only 1% of Americans had graduated from college and

were therefore likely to have had been exposed to France's literary and artistic traditions. He concludes that French strategy made sense since this small educated elite, which regularly read one of the handful of newspapers that covered foreign affairs--the New York Times, Christian Science Monitor, and Washington Post-- exercised a powerful and probably decisive influence on U.S. foreign policy.

Young discovered that the advent of the Nazi regime in Germany had a profound impact on the French propaganda campaign in the United States. Hitler and Goebbels showed Americans what propaganda could really be like, and their tub-thumping broadsides against the *Diktat* of Versailles reflected well on the French campaign, which continued to operate with prudence and discretion and to focus on the finer things of life. Even after Hitler came to power, Young notes, "cultural propaganda remained the 'fundamental' element in the [French foreign] ministry's efforts to secure its minimal objective, namely America's 'moral support' " (p. 115). But this modest, old-fashioned approach had its drawbacks: Only belatedly in the 1930s did the French begin to exploit the new media of the radio and the cinema as propaganda vehicles to supplement its standard fare of books, pamphlets, and public speeches, and the result was far from impressive. Technical difficulties with shortwave radio transmission plagued French news broadcasts beamed across the Atlantic. The French cinema, once the world leader, was not effectively marketed in America, while the French embassy complained about a steady stream of unflattering portraits of France in Hollywood films (such as Paramount's *Beau Geste*, a negative portrayal of life in Foreign Legion).

With the advent of the Second World War, France revived a version of the old inter-ministerial propaganda commission that had operated toward the end of the last war. But it was so starved for funds and plagued by bureaucratic incompetence that the French ambassador in Washington sarcastically boasted that his job had been rendered easier because the Americans would have no justification whatsoever for complaining about French meddling in American affairs. Young cites opinion polls to reveal that American support for France increased dramatically during the early stages of the war, though that sympathy for France never translated into approval for U.S. military support for that embattled country as it struggled to defend itself before the catastrophe of May-June 1940.

The question that continued to occur to me as I read this masterly tale about the French propaganda campaign in America was the one that Young himself raises on occasion throughout the book. How can the effectiveness of propaganda directed at a foreign audience be accurately measured. After noting that the Versailles treaty and the Franco-American security pact both failed to pass the U.S. Senate in 1919-20, he concedes that "neither development had much to do with foreign propagandists" (p. 70). He might have noted that Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, member of the intellectual and moneyed elite, francophone and francophile, and personal friend of Ambassador Jusserand, did more than anyone else to prevent American endorsement of the security system on which France had depended so heavily after the Great War. It is obvious that he, and many of his fellow senators who killed the treaties that Wilson had signed in Paris, were prompted by concerns that had nothing to do with attitudes toward France that might be subtly influenced by the "information campaign" from Paris.

As for the increasing American sympathy for France from the beginning of the Second World War to the German breakthrough of 1940 that was recorded in the newly established Gallup Poll: Is it possible to attribute that change in U.S. public attitudes to the perpetually under-funded and often inept efforts of French propaganda agents on both sides of the Atlantic? Or might it have been a natural extension of increasing American revulsion at the behavior of the Nazi regime that had nothing whatsoever to do with French propaganda, particularly the low-key type that was in vogue? Young himself seems to stop short of the former claim, admitting that there was "little sign that French policy makers and opinion makers did much to make or shape American foreign policy" (p. 174). To recapitulate: French propaganda did not succeed in bringing the United States into the war against Germany in 1914. It had nothing to do with the U.S. intervention on France's side in 1917, which was prompted by Germany's submarine policy. It did not secure senatorial consent to the Versailles treaty or the security treaty in 1919-20. It did not obtain American assistance during France's time of trial in 1939-40. In light of the history of Franco-American relations during the forty-year period covered in this book, one is entitled to ask whether the entire undertaking that Young examines with such skill was worth the time, effort, and money that was expended.

And yet one could argue that it was a remarkable success on the basis of the criteria developed by its founders and continued by their successors. If, as Young puts it in his conclusion, France's cultural propaganda was "[i]ntentionally designed for the long haul rather than to elicit a specific response at a predetermined moment" (p.

175), then it succeeded admirably in keeping alive the image of France as a cultural Mecca of abiding interest to a certain category of Americans, particularly those in the academic community. As proof, one may cite the flourishing of groups such as the Society for French Historical Studies and this H-Net list, which devote an amount of attention to the study of that country's history and culture far out of proportion to its size, population, or gross domestic product (which is roughly equal to that of California). Freedom fries and cheese-eating surrender monkeys may occasionally emerge to tarnish the image of France in the United States. But, as Ambassador Jusserand or his successors might well have said during one of the occasional outbursts of anti-French feeling in America with which they had to cope, "les universités nous sont favorables."

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