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## USA: A CIVILIZATION OF ITS OWN?

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### INTRODUCTION

"The object [America] is wholly new in the world. It is singular...Nothing in history is parallel to it."<sup>1</sup>

-----Edmund Burke

Distinct civilizations can have common origins.<sup>2</sup> Byzantine, Western and Islamic civilization each grew its separate way from Judaic and Hellenic roots. In similar fashion, the United States of America may well be in the process of branching off to form a civilization increasingly distinguishable from European civilization. The separation has been gradually but steadily underway since 1776. However, in civilizational time, 240 years represent a rather short period. The division has not yet fully matured. So the precise lines of demarcation are less than crystal clear, but the general contours are visible. It is time to entertain the idea of two civilizations – (North) American<sup>3</sup> and European – where we have traditionally spoken of a single Western civilization.

Of course, the cousin civilizations will continue to share much in common, as do Byzantine and Islamic civilization, for instance. But they may differ enough to merit distinction. As erstwhile ISCS member Max Lerner argued in *America as a Civilization* in 1957, "recognizing the ties of America with Europe, one can [nevertheless] argue for America as a civilization."<sup>4</sup>

Like Lerner then, I do not now seek to offer yet another rendition of "American Exceptionalism." The theory was celebrated in the 1950s, then castigated in the 1970s, and recently perhaps resuscitated. Sources and symptoms of America's alleged uniqueness range from the absence of an aristocracy (and a working class), to the open frontier, to the Constitution, to inventive genius, to immigration, to denominationalism, to anti-intellectualism, to sports, and even to the assertion itself of being exceptional.<sup>5</sup>

We have matured enough to understand that any society, when viewed up close enough, can appear exceptional and, when viewed at great distance, can seem similar to others. Below I do contend that America is different from Europe (in some key but hardly all respects) but not that it is necessarily exceptional, that is, following a specific

course of development open to no other peoples. On the contrary, the phenomenon of worldwide Americanization will figure prominently in my argument.

I employ a methodology that follows the lead of European intellectuals. If the self-appointed gatekeepers of Western civilization have persistently viewed America as being alien and even threatening to Europe, as I argue they have, then perhaps the birth child has in fact grown into something genuinely distinct from the parent.

Samuel Huntington defines civilization as “the biggest ‘we’ within which we feel culturally at home as distinguished from all the other ‘thems’ out there.”<sup>6</sup> To Europe’s cultivated class America has seemed more like a “them” than a “we.”

Three distinguishing characteristics stand out in the depictions and analyses of America produced by European intellectuals from 1776 to the present. I choose to label these 1) the exaltation of the ordinary, 2) the relaxation of self-criticism, and 3) the liberation from history. Europeans, of course, employed a plethora of expressions to characterize America, but most fall into one of these three depictions.

The three characteristics helped to give birth to -- but then were themselves deeply fortified by -- three social developments in American history which particularly grabbed the attention of European observers. I call these 1) democratization, 2) consumerism, and 3) postmodernism.

Each has persisted and intensified since its birth around the turn of the nineteenth, the twentieth, and the twenty-first century respectively. The cultural characteristics and social developments combined in a way that made America appear increasingly stranger to European savants. To the extent that aspects of these cultural characteristics and social developments surfaced in Europe, they were widely viewed as “Americanization,” that is, as undesirable importations from an alien civilization.

Some important caveats are in order regarding the methodology of viewing America through European lenses. I treat the differences between America and Europe that Europeans have stressed and largely ignore other differences (and similarities) that may or may not be critical to making an ultimately compelling case for a separate American civilization. Similarly, the alleged causes of American difference discussed below are those Europeans have underscored.

My argument, then, is knowingly incomplete and suggestive rather than exhaustive and conclusive. I aim to provoke debate among readers by pointing out that the lion’s share of European intellectuals refused

and refuse to admit America as a *bona fide* member of their cherished civilization.

Whether their perspective is accurate or needs to be augmented is for readers to decide. My central task is to present their perspective. Limited space makes it impossible to treat all European thinkers who mused about America. I stress views from a variety of countries to show that similar opinions were held across Europe. Needless to say, total conformity scarcely obtained. But, again in the interest of limited scope, I overlook the minority of mavericks who bucked the trend regarding impressions of America. I also ignore the European masses who, judging by large-scale immigration to America, did not see eye to eye with their preceptors.

### KEY TRAITS OF NORTH AMERICAN CIVILIZATION

European elites have long described America as a place where the ordinary rule over the extraordinary rather than vice versa. In *L'Aristocratie en Amérique* of 1883 Frédéric Gaillardet, for instance, argued that America had effectively ennobled the masses: "The United States' political and social constitution has poeticized power and glorified the rabble." He may have been thinking of Karl Marx's earlier remark that, "given its political and social organization, ordinary people of good will can accomplish feats which only heroes could accomplish in the old world."<sup>7</sup> Talk of the endless possibilities for average folks had been a staple of European travel reports since colonial times. Michel Guillaume Jean Crèvecoeur (better known by the pseudonym J. Hector Saint John), for instance, wrote of the colonies: "There is room for every body in America: has he any particular talent, or industry? He exerts it in order to procure a livelihood, and it succeeds. Is he a merchant? The avenues of trade are infinite; is he eminent in any respect? He will be employed and respected. Does he love a country life? Pleasant farms present themselves; he may purchase what he wants...."<sup>8</sup>

Other Europeans echoed the Frenchman. "Happy is the country," wrote Harriet Martineau in the 1830s, "where the factory-girls carry parasols, and pig-drivers wear spectacles." American laborers, according to Francis Grund, enjoyed "comforts which would hardly enter the imagination of similar orders in Europe."<sup>9</sup>

From the European perspective, America was a society in which the herd stampeded freely and ferociously over anyone who sought to shepherd it. In contrast to Europe, where gods, emperors, kings, lords, even ideas reigned, in America the ordinary man ruled. Society existed

to serve his interest rather than the other way around. As Harold Laski summarized the difference in 1948, “the ordinary man has the conviction that no gates may be barred to his entry...there is no assumption that he is moving outside the boundaries to which by his origins, he ought to be confined.

For the ordinary American citizen no trace has remained of that feudal heritage which still has deep influence on the social relationships of most European countries.” He added that “this difference in expectation is...vital to the understanding of the difference between the American tradition and that of Europe.”<sup>10</sup>

America is also the land in which history seems not to matter. “Nothing perishes which history sanctified,” professed Novalis.<sup>11</sup> But for Henry Ford, “history is bunk.”<sup>12</sup> Many Europeans italicize the ahistoricist assumptions buttressing America’s foundation. Crèvecoeur wrote that “*He* is an American, who leav (es) behind him all his ancient prejudices and manners.”<sup>13</sup> To the American, remarked Alexis de Tocqueville, “nothing either is or ought to be fixed forever.”<sup>14</sup> More than a century later, while repeating his compatriot’s famous tour of America, Jean Baudrillard found the same to be true. Americans, he averred, inhabit a “perpetual present.” They experience their past as neither bane nor benefit. In fact, they do not experience it at all. It is simply irrelevant.<sup>15</sup> Laski had noted a generation earlier that the American “is rarely interested in his past because he is so certain that his future will bear no relation to it.”<sup>16</sup>

America further stands out in the European imagination as a land neither burdened nor enriched by serious reflection. Call it “pragmatism,” “getting on,” “live and let live,” or “aimlessness,” “spiritual death,” “collective idiocy,” Americans tend not to engage in serious reflection of any kind, especially self-reflection. They do not brood like Europeans. Baudrillard, echoing an argument put forth by Hannah Arendt in *On Revolution*,<sup>17</sup> traces the anti-intellectualism to the American Revolution. The revolutionaries, he explains, wasted little time philosophizing and instead jumped headlong into the act of creating a tangible new commonwealth. By contrast, philosophers got the upper hand in the French Revolution and established an ideology to govern actors. Europeans have ever since evaluated their actual politics against this ideal and come up, of course, lacking. Without such a standard Americans have taken thoughtless but soothing pride in their accomplishment.<sup>18</sup>

Mindlessness has long caught the attention of Europeans interested

in America. As early as 1770 Guillaume-Thomas abbé de Raynal was disgusted by the fact “that America has not yet produced a good poet, a skillful mathematician, a man of genius in any art or science.”<sup>19</sup> “In no country in the civilized world,” Tocqueville observed, “is less attention paid to philosophy than in the United States.”<sup>20</sup> The “Yankees have no ideas,” asserted Ferdinand Lassalle.<sup>21</sup> “Prolonged reflection,” Friedrich Nietzsche complained, “almost gives people a bad conscience.”<sup>22</sup> Indeed, observed Laski, they “equate contemplation with laziness.”<sup>23</sup> “These Americans are dead, stone-dead as far as intellectual life is concerned,” wrote Nikolaus Lenau to his brother.<sup>24</sup> According to Bismarck, “God has a special providence for fools, drunks, and the United States of America.”<sup>25</sup> George Bernard Shaw declared “the hundred percent American to be ninety-nine percent idiot.”<sup>26</sup>

Along the way somewhere Americans seemed to lose the ability to discriminate. Isaiah Berlin once called them “the sort of people, who want yes or no for an answer. No nuances.”<sup>27</sup> “Never did American culture,” in the eyes of eminent Dutch historian Johan Huizinga, “challenge the individual to pause and reflect, to find coherence and meaning, to consummate rather than merely to consume.”<sup>28</sup> “In America,” found Simone de Beauvoir, “no one needs to read because no one thinks.”<sup>29</sup> “I can’t live with people incapable of subtle ideas, however virtuous they are,” complains the protagonist of Henri Beyle Stendhal’s *Lucien Leuwen*. “I’d a hundred times rather the elegant ways of a corrupt court.”<sup>30</sup>

This nation of ninnies famously mistook quantity for quality, exuberance for excellence. “The primacy of sheer quantity,” claimed Martin Heidegger, “this is the principle we call Americanism.”<sup>31</sup> Graham Greene spoke of “the eternal adolescence of the American mind.”<sup>32</sup> The nuances of supreme sophistication as well as the delights of refined cultivation simply blow past most Americans without notice. Theirs seems to the European pedant a language confined to cant.

## DEMOCRACY

Democracy flourished in America more than in Europe and helped further to advance the three attributes distinguishing the budding American civilization. Following 1776, European visitors flooded into the United States as if into a zoo to see an exotic creature: democracy.<sup>33</sup> Most of them sent missives homeward and even published their observations — so many, that early in the nineteenth century publications about America comprised “a major share of the European publishing

industry.”<sup>34</sup> “Men whom the reading of philosophic books had secretly converted to the love of liberty,” noted the marquis de Condorcet, “became enthusiastic over the liberty of a *foreign* people while they waited for the moment when they could recover their own.”<sup>35</sup>

When that moment arrived in 1789 with the French Revolution democrats around Europe rejoiced as they had in 1776. But it did not take long before their hopes were blighted. When the historic struggle on behalf of *Liberté, Égalité, and Fraternité* degenerated into despotism, it occasioned lachrymose gloom. In 1815 Benjamin Constant complained that “all the constitutions which have been given to France guaranteed the liberty of the individual, and yet under the rule of these constitutions, it has been constantly violated.”<sup>36</sup>

Tocqueville later concurred: “of all ideas and sentiments which prepared the Revolution, the notion and the taste of public liberty strictly speaking have been the first ones to disappear.” Whereas “in America men have the opinions and passions of democracy;” he added, “in Europe we have still the passions and opinions of revolution.”<sup>37</sup> Friedrich Schiller spoke of “a generation unprepared to receive” liberty.<sup>38</sup> Friedrich von Gentz lamented: “The door of hope seemed to me closed forever, to Germany and to Europe.” For “the men of the Revolution intended to unite all of the nations of the earth in one great cosmopolitan confederation, but they succeeded only in unleashing the cruelest world war that has ever shaken society and torn it apart.”<sup>39</sup> Napoleon’s despotic antics so enraged Beethoven that he tore the dedication to the emperor from the score of the *Eroica* Symphony.

But it was more than the success in one land and failure in another of a system of government that caught Europeans’ attention. In America democracy transformed into a way of life that generated leveling influences throughout society. Tocqueville opened *Democracy in America* with the following lines:

Among the novel objects that attracted my attention during my stay in the United States, nothing struck me more forcibly than the general equality of condition among the people. I readily discovered the prodigious influence that this primary fact exercises on the whole course of society; it gives a peculiar direction to public opinion and a peculiar tenor to the laws; it imparts new maxims to the governing authorities and peculiar habits to the governed.<sup>40</sup>

The Frenchman and other Europeans were observing what Robert Wiebe calls the “revolution in choices,”<sup>41</sup> that is, the thorough-going democratization of political, economic and social life (for white men)

which transpired during the maverick republic's first fifty years. "Privilege in all its forms came under attack," writes Joyce Appleby,<sup>42</sup> creating, according to Liah Greenfield an environment of "unreserved and unparalleled egalitarianism."<sup>43</sup>

Extensive democratization propelled forward the exaltation of the ordinary, relaxation of self-criticism, and liberation from history. In America ordinary man unshackled himself and forced his interests, however base, to the top of society's agenda. Duc de La Rochefoucauld sententiously observed that even backwoods wretches "consider themselves on an equal footing with the best educated people of the country, and upon the principle of equality they intrude themselves into every company."<sup>44</sup>

Tocqueville marveled that an uncouth boor like Davy Crockett could stand for, let alone win election over, a wealthy, refined opponent.<sup>45</sup> Heinrich Heine deplored an America, "where the most repulsive of all tyrants, the populace, hold vulgar sway."<sup>46</sup>

With leaders like Crockett, deep thought lay imperiled. Superficial thinking expressed itself most saliently in mammonism. Unalloyed materialism became a simple-minded way to evaluate the quality of one's life. European observers repeatedly complained about money-mad Americans' one-track mind. Rochefoucauld, who had sought refuge in America from Robespierre's Reign of Terror, deplored in his safe haven "an immoderate love of money."<sup>47</sup>

Compatriot Benjamin Saint-Victor wrote in his *Letters from the United States of America* (1835), "the main question here (and it's the *alpha* and *omega* of life), is to gain money, and then to use this money to gain even more."<sup>48</sup> In *The Charterhouse of Parma* (1839) Stendhal had the Duchess seek to dissuade Fabrizio from immigrating to America by depicting for him "the cult of the god dollar, and the respect that must be paid to merchants and artisans in the street, who by their vote determine everything."<sup>49</sup>

Heine too grumbled that "worldly pursuits are their true religion, and money is their God, their only Almighty God."<sup>50</sup> Dickens recalled from his visit that "all their cares, hopes, joys, affections, and associations seemed to be melted down into dollars."<sup>51</sup> English Captain Frederick Marryat went so far as preposterously to assert that "dollar worship" affected Americans' physiology and caused them all to look alike: "this produced a certain contraction of the brow, knitting of the eyebrows, and compression of the lips."<sup>52</sup>

Fanny Trollope held that no conversation took place in America



without mention of the word “dollar.” “Such unity of purpose...can, I believe, be found nowhere else except, perhaps, in an ants’ nest.”<sup>53</sup> It was Trollope’s *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), which immortalized the picture of America as a vast bog of vulgarity where the tasteless habits of the lowly asphyxiated the good manners of the respectable. The Germans would read a similar tale in Ferdinand Kürnberger’s bestselling novel, *Amerikamüde* (1855).

Besides poverty, nothing insured that the lower classes in Europe would be trapped in the same destiny as their ancestors more than the legal hierarchies of the *ancien régime*. America never had a formal aristocracy, but after 1776 virtually all legal statuses distinguishing rank disappeared (for white males). Legal equality coupled with boundless economic and social opportunity enabled Americans (with time and industry) to escape their bleak pasts. This liberation from history lured millions of immigrants (from Europe and elsewhere) to America where they set out to make themselves anew. As one Old World scholar put it, “the immigrant arrives with centuries of inherited experience, but America makes him young, almost childish.”<sup>54</sup> James Bryce agreed: “the intellectual and moral atmosphere into which the settlers from Europe come has more power to assimilate them than their race qualities have power to change it.”<sup>55</sup>

## CONSUMERISM

Interest in American democracy hardly disappeared in the second half of the nineteenth century, or in the twentieth century for that matter. Bryce, for instance, published his favorable and much read analysis of *The American Commonwealth* in 1888. By this time, however, Europeans began detecting another critical difference between America and Europe beyond democratization. At home persons consumed to live. But across the Atlantic they lived to consume. Though the precise term “consumerism” would not be coined for years to come, this is what the Europeans were glimpsing — and increasingly dreading.

Consumerism arose toward the end of the nineteenth century and came to dominate American life by the 1920s. Its influence stretched far outside economics into politics, religion, science, culture and beyond<sup>56</sup> As with the “revolution in choices” at the end of the eighteenth and beginning of the nineteenth century, the consumerist “revolution” a century later further set American apart from European civilization. In America and Europe consumerism originated with the urban middle classes<sup>57</sup> But in America it spread quickly (though hardly immediately<sup>58</sup>)

down what remained of the social hierarchy and out into the countryside, becoming a shared national way of life. In Europe, by contrast, entrenched forces, often the same ones that impeded democracy, slowed consumerism.<sup>59</sup> As a result, America became a middle-class society, but Europe merely a society with a middle class.

No one was more aware of America's leadership in consumerism than the Europeans. As always, the Americans had more money to spend than Europeans. Thus Urbain Gohier bemoaned America's "fat, well-dressed, well-scrubbed, well-rested workers" who earn the "salary of professors at the Collège de France."<sup>60</sup> But the Americans excelled in selling as well. British advertisers were so impressed that they aped their American counterparts.<sup>61</sup>

A Swiss visitor to America noted that giant department stores were to be found not only in the biggest metropolises, as in Europe, but in many smaller cities as well. A German window dresser visiting the USA in the 1920s conceded that his American counterparts greatly outshone himself and his European colleagues. While the latter still "barricaded" their storefronts with "bargain goods," the Americans had learned how "to allure the imagination," "stir up insatiable appetites," and "transform goods into roses." A regular French visitor sensed such a change between 1901 and 1925 that he concluded, "the very basis of the *American civilization* is no longer the same."<sup>62</sup>

It was roughly during these same years that European high brows coined the term "Americanization" to stand for the increasing number of concessions to American consumerism they witnessed at home. The exact origins of the notion "Americanization" elude us, but by the turn of the twentieth century it was uttered everywhere (in Europe at least). Baudelaire was surely among the first coiners of the term when he referred to his century as "Americanised by its zoocratic industrial philosophers."<sup>63</sup> "From the 1870s on," Fritz Stern relates, "conservative writers in imperial Germany expressed fear that the German soul would be destroyed by 'Americanization,' that is by mammonism, materialism, mechanization and mass society."<sup>64</sup>

Nietzsche, for instance, in the *Gay Science*, maintained that America "is already beginning ferociously to infect old Europe and is spreading a spiritual emptiness over the continent."<sup>65</sup> Rudyard Kipling, who married an American, predicted that America "will sway the world with one foot as a man tilts a seesaw plank."<sup>66</sup> So entrenched was the notion of Americanization that *fin de siècle* psychiatric literature creat-

ed a “nosological” category called “Americanization,” an illness of modern life.<sup>67</sup> W.T. Stead published *The Americanization of the World* in 1901. Georges Duhamel later echoed the same theme in *America: The Menace* (1931). The concept of “Americanization,” and particularly the derogatory tone with which it was invariably discussed, reveal that, at least as far as European literati were concerned, imports from America were deemed alien and threatening to European civilization.

Relentless consumerism further fortified the three characteristics that distinguished American from European civilization. The exalted status of the common man in America often invokes images of pandering to the masses and settling for the lowest common denominator. Or as John Kenneth Gailbraith put it, “the bland lead the bland.”<sup>68</sup> Such metaphors actually miss the mark, at least as far as consumerism is concerned. For the power of consumerism reposed in transforming the common and ordinary into something seemingly grand, even virtuous.

Put differently, American consumerism achieved for its adherents the highest common denominator. In 1884 Sir Lepel Griffin described an American culture in which “mediocrity is allowed to take the highest place.”<sup>69</sup> The market seemed able to provide plain folks with the privileges only the most powerful had enjoyed once upon a time. The grandest department stores deliberately designed their interiors to give customers a sense that they were strolling through lavish halls. Often giving themselves regal names like “Palace,” “Majestic,” “Empire,” cinemas went for the same effect.<sup>70</sup> Modern appliances were invariably marketed to consumers as an escape from the plebeian drudgeries of life.<sup>71</sup> Businesses instructed employees to treat customers like kings and queens, an American proclivity that aroused particular indignation in Europe.<sup>72</sup> In this way consumerism blurred distinctions between the cultivated and the crass by lifting the latter rather than demeaning the former.

Consumerism further invigorated the deeply rooted anti-intellectualism in America. In 1930 the Europeans awarded Sinclair Lewis the Nobel Prize for Literature in large part to applaud his scathing depiction of the effects of consumerism in *Babbitt* (1922). For the protagonist, “these standard advertised wares – toothpastes, socks, tires, cameras, instantaneous hot-water heaters – were his symbols and proofs of excellence; at first the signs, then the substitutes, for joy and passion and wisdom.”<sup>73</sup> But this was hardly the first time European elites had drawn disparaging attention to American superficiality. Well before consumerism came of age, A. D’Alembert in the 1850s had devoted an entire chapter

of his encyclopedia to “*Les Beaux-Arts en Amerique.*” He sardonically left the pages blank.<sup>74</sup>

Fellow Frenchman, Georges Clemenceau, decades later described American history as a “progression from barbarism to decadence without a detour through culture.” Wilhelm von Pelenz contended that the “Americanization of culture means trivialization, mechanization, stupefaction.”<sup>75</sup> Mathew Arnold insisted that “America...is without general intelligence” — a “fool’s paradise.”<sup>76</sup> No one’s tongue was sharper than that of George Bernard Shaw, who sneered at the so-called “Hundred percent American.”

He was a bombinating sort of man, if I may coin the expression. He was monumental; but he was so void of anything new or different that we in Europe staggered when we contemplated his immensity and its utter insignificance. We said, what is the secret of this tremendous man, who talks so splendidly and has nothing to say? This man whose mind, although it is evidently an intensely live mind, might just as well be an intense absence of mind, because he doesn’t seem to know anything of any particular consequence. He is always in a state of vociferous excitement about entirely trivial things. He quotes the poets thunderously to give point to piffle.<sup>77</sup>

No dream did consumerism help better to fulfill than the wish to escape the past. Advertising gave instructions to millions of immigrants on how to blur their backgrounds and take on a genuine American appearance often in no more than one generation’s time. The urge to “close a deal” moved many (not all) to suppress prejudices of race, ethnicity and creed inherited from the past<sup>78</sup> Consumerism further dealt history a blow in the celebration of the cult of the new. Consumers were told they had to have the latest models and newest products. Older goods (and sadly even people) were downgraded as undesirable and dispensable. German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, in 1925, scorned the things without history pouring into his beloved *Vaterland* from America:

Now there come crowding over from America empty, indifferent things, pseudo-things, DUMMY-LIFE...A house, in the American understanding, an American apple or vine, has NOTHING in common with the house, the fruit, the grape into which the hope and meditation of our forefathers had entered...The animated, experienced things that SHARE OUR LIVES are coming to an end and cannot be replaced.<sup>79</sup>

Rilke was in effect mourning the erosion of historicism, the idea expressed by the likes of Hegel, Darwin and Marx that the past inex-

orably determines the future. Historicist thinking dominated European culture throughout the nineteenth century. Thus, Gustave Flaubert declared, “we are above all in a historically minded century.”<sup>80</sup> How different and alien could America be?

### POSTMODERNISM

After WWI and especially WWII, Europeans devoted countless pages to inspection of the new Western hegemon. The latter’s democracy and consumerism figured prominently. But Europe’s cutting-edge thinkers eventually discerned and articulated something new on the American horizon: postmodernism.

Postmodernism has myriad meanings. Central to any definition, though, is a sense of unlimited contestedness. Nothing is sacrosanct. Deities, truths, canons, definitions, laws, customs, styles, institutions which were once taken for granted and that gave direction, meaning and purpose to life come under attack and lose much of their authority and vitality. In this utterly shifting, indefinite environment the power of perception, persuasion and performance reign supreme. If one can persuade (but also coax, trick, cajole, manipulate) persons to believe that something, however outlandish, is true and real, then for them, at least, it is true and real until, of course, a superior persuader enters the stage. That prince of postmodernism, Andy Warhol, captured the essence of the concept when he said of his field: “Art is what you can get away with.” The American postmodernist Stanley Fish characterizes his position as “anything goes which can be made to go.”<sup>81</sup>

Postmodernism has its philosophical origins in Europe in a line of thinkers stretching from Nietzsche through Heidegger and Wittgenstein up to Derrida and Foucault. However, particularly European analysts maintain that postmodernism constitutes in America a budding style of life rather than, as in Europe, merely a theory about contemporary lifestyles. A chief reason for this is something I term “the virtual revolution,” which follows in the wake of the democratic and consumerist “revolutions.” The former has been transpiring in America since WWII. At its heart lies the astonishing achievement of turning fiction into fact.

What is meant by the term “virtual revolution?” “America is a gigantic hologram,” wrote Jean Baudrillard in 1986<sup>82</sup> A few years earlier Umberto Eco titled his tour of America *Travels in Hyperreality*<sup>83</sup> These and other authors perceive a phantasmagoric America gradually but relentlessly substituting fiction for fact. The image, simulacrum, icon — in a word virtual reality — has become so tantalizing, ubiqui-

tous and credible as to become a serious, indeed necessary, alternative to actual reality. In this America "the absolute fake" becomes a "substitute for reality, as something even more real."<sup>84</sup> "Illusions...present themselves as truth" and obtain an "autonomy of the virtual, henceforth liberated from the real."<sup>85</sup> "Today there is only a single truth, the simulacrum, the truth which tells us that there is no truth beyond the image itself."<sup>86</sup> We are dealing with nothing less than "the murder of reality."<sup>87</sup>

The precise origins of the "disappearance of the real" elude us. Agreement exists, though, that they lie in the nation's legendary entertainment industry and its kindred profession of advertising. Already in 1925 F. Scott Fitzgerald has Daisy Buchanan say to Jay Gatsby, "You resemble the advertisement of the man."<sup>88</sup> Hollywood produced films about its own power to mold society as early as 1937 (*A Star Is Born*) and 1941 (*Citizen Kane*). Warhol and the Pop Art movement of the 1950s and 1960s underscored the power and ubiquity of the icon.

But the 1980s stand out as the period when this virtual revolution truly came of age. Needless to say, it helped to inaugurate the decade by putting a movie star in the White House. Not only did the "Gipper" often confound real and celluloid life, he and his handlers proved especially adroit at image management. They spun Reagan's message so adroitly, that he became known as the "Teflon president," to whom no criticism stuck. His successors, not to mention virtually every other successful politician, honed image manipulation to such a point that one advisor to George W. Bush gloated that "when we act, we create our own reality."<sup>89</sup> Indeed, in 2003 the White House managed to convince a majority of credulous Americans that Saddam Hussein possessed weapons of mass destruction and links to Al Qaeda.<sup>90</sup>

The substitution of fiction for fact has seeped into many walks of life beyond politics. In *The Truman Show* (1998) and *The Matrix* (1999) Hollywood toyed with the idea of an entirely feigned society around whose virtual edges its real (maybe virtual?) members could not see. Americans now regularly tour virtual houses, try on virtual clothes (even faces), root for virtual sports teams, worship at virtual shrines, lust after virtual porn stars, even lead virtual (or second) lives.

In America, claim European commentaries, the phony has simply gotten better at being real than reality. "What television and film have brought us is images realer than reality."<sup>91</sup> "Illusion is not the opposite of reality," asserts Baudrillard, "it is a more subtle reality." Reality winds up appearing like a cheap imitation of itself when pitted against the fabricated image. Additionally, the latter amasses converts by being

a “consoling illusion of truth.” In other words, the bowdlerized reality almost always appears more interesting and soothing to cuddle than actual reality. Furthermore, in this “*coup de théâtre*” the image-makers have perfected the art of disguising their own techniques. “The cinematographic illusion faded as the technical prowess increased.” “We live in a world where the highest function of the sign is to make reality disappear and, at the same time, to mask that disappearance.”<sup>92</sup>

The virtual revolution has strengthened America’s three distinguishing traits. If America had long offered ordinary man a comfortable home, this new hallucinatory America represents a funhouse at a carnival. Reality — the monotonous humdrum of everyday life — has always been the bane of ordinary man’s existence. While extraordinary man danced through a life filled with exhilarating, spectacular turns, ordinary man had to slosh through the endless bog of tedium and drudgery. Not so, once “the US is utopia achieved.” For in an America where the “screen take[s] precedence over reality,” common folk can at will turn off drab reality and click on anodyne, mesmerizing virtual reality. Moreover, in this “true fiction” the conventional rules of reality — always stacked against ordinary man — no longer apply.<sup>93</sup>

Paradoxes somehow make sense. Poverty turns into plenty, indolence into industry, banality into profundity. “All...dreams come true.”<sup>94</sup> Reality’s age-old demons — always nastier to ordinary man — are exorcised. Age is overcome through cosmetic surgery, disease through wonder drugs, death through cloning. Even enemies fade, at least as we once experienced them, namely, as genuine adversaries. In “America as fiction”<sup>95</sup> one deals not with a foe’s actual attributes, rather, one picks and paints an adversary of one’s choosing (“Evil Empire,” “Butcher of Baghdad,” “Axis of Evil,” “Islamofascism”).<sup>96</sup>

The virtual revolution has added a new twist to America’s inveterate disregard for history. On the one hand, it further erodes the presence and power of the past. Like no other, the virtual world lives off rootless, fleeting images that disappear without a trace as soon as they surface. It happily digests trends and fads that apotheosize the new and anathematize the old. Baudrillard likens all of American life to a giant screen replete with ceaselessly changing images but behind which there lies nothing — no depth, no substance, no time.<sup>97</sup> “A nation without essence or fixed being,” claims fellow Frenchman Bernard-Henri Lévy.<sup>98</sup>

This perfected, ubiquitous superficiality further liberates America from history in a way that an old Europe shackled by the past never can copy. “America ducks the question of origins; it cultivates no origin or

mythical authenticity; it has no past and no founding truth. Having known no primitive accumulation of time, it lives in a perpetual present. Having seen no slow, centuries-long accumulation of truth, it lives in perpetual simulation, in a perpetual present of signs."<sup>99</sup>

The virtual revolution also spelled doom for an already torpid critical culture. "American civilization" is thus "monstrously non-aesthetic."<sup>100</sup> The cinematic society so speeds up life that even those given to refinement and reflection have little time to stop and think. If the intellectually curious take the time, whatever riddle they ponder is, once they solve it, so irrelevant, outdated, or obscured that serious reflection is pointless. Traditional savants are more inconsequential now in America than any time in their pathetic history.<sup>101</sup>

In a climate of lame *bona fide* intellectual caretakers, Baudrillard points out, banality goes unchallenged and infects all like a "mental form of AIDS." "The power of unculture" takes hold and creates a vast "anti-utopia of unreason" in which ignorance is a virtue and intelligence a vice. Lacking any "need for metaphysics," credulous Americans ignore altogether Europe's "unhappy intellectualism" and "moribund critical culture" and delight in the mindless conviction of their own superiority.<sup>102</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Needless to say, this essay puts much stock in the views of European intellectuals. It turns on the premise that if so many of them have deemed America alien — a "them" rather than "we" — then comparative civilizationalists ought at least to explore the idea of separate civilizations — European and American. No one but a fool, of course, would deny that the two represent kindred civilizations with much in common. But is this also not true of Byzantine and European civilization? European savants, precisely because they do act as the protectors and preceptors of their civilization, can help alert us to the subtle but significant differences that distinguish America from Europe.

It was, for instance, Tocqueville (among others), who showed that democracy represents a form of government in Europe, but an entire way of life in America. Likewise, it was from the plethora of European critics — Rochefoucauld, Trollope, Dickens, and the like — who decried but also discerned American mammonism that we learned that while Europeans may consume to live, Americans live to consume — a critical distinction indeed. Baudrillard and Eco taught that postmodernism, while a theory about reality in Europe, constitutes an escape



from reality in America – the replacement of fact with fiction. Needless to say, these Europeans often indulge in the kind of stereotyping that fails to capture the totality of the American experience. But taken together as a pattern that runs across European periods and countries the observations help to illuminate America’s prodigious non-European features.

To take these European observers seriously is, I believe, to treat the differences as ones of kind rather than degree. Democratization, consumerism, and postmodernism each can be found in Europe and America, but they were experienced in profoundly different ways in each setting. In America, we realize in large part thanks to the analyses of Europeans, the three developments forged but were also themselves transformed by three defining qualities of the American experience – the exaltation of the ordinary, the relaxation of self-criticism, and the liberation from history – that did not emerge in Europe. Had they, the European masses would not have needed or wished to immigrate to America in droves. Nor would European Brahmins feel so urgently compelled to denounce Americanization unless they thought there was something genuinely different about Europe worth preserving.

Americanization raises the issue of a global civilization. For Europe is hardly the only part of the planet experiencing the phenomenon. Some globalization scholars refer to America as the “Rome”<sup>103</sup> of today; others speak of “McWorld.”<sup>104</sup> They all point to the emergence of a single, global civilization bearing a “Made in the USA’ label.”<sup>105</sup> Some even predict that long after the United States of America loses its geopolitical hegemony, its global civilization, even if centered in, say, China, will still be profoundly American in its core values and institutions in the way that Europe is still deeply Roman.<sup>106</sup>

Globalization would appear to undermine the notion of a separate American civilization. The idea of global civilization, even if America is acknowledged as its incubator, suggests diminishing distinctions between once separate civilizations. Or if we designate America as the newest leader of what David Wilkinson calls “Central civilization,”<sup>107</sup> this serves only to emphasize America’s similarities and continuities with earlier leaders such as ancient Greece and Rome or modern Europe.

I am not convinced that the global perspective, however valuable, negates the premise of this essay. European literati hardly embrace the so-called global civilization as a larger “we.” On the contrary, they number among the most vehement critics of globalization precisely

because they interpret it as Americanization.<sup>108</sup> When they insist that Europe has something important to contribute to an emerging global culture, say its generous welfare state or far-sighted environmentalism, the contribution is invariably characterized as distinctly European (meaning non-American).

This, for instance, is the theme of Jürgen Habermas' *The Divided West* and of Gret Haller's *The Limits of Solidarity*.<sup>109</sup> So we wind up back where we started. If European thinkers resist accepting America as an extension of European civilization on the opposite shores of the Atlantic; if they too refuse to count themselves as part of a (highly Americanized) global civilization, then where exactly does America belong in Huntington's sense of "we" and "them?" If the USA does not fit into the European "we," then is it not indeed a civilization of its own?

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. Paul Langford (Oxford: 1981), 2: 194.

<sup>2</sup> For their valuable comments on the first draft of this essay I want to thank all those who took part in the roundtable on civilizations at the ISCSC meeting in Minneapolis on June 10, 2005, as well as CCR's anonymous reviewer.

<sup>3</sup> I am inclined to include Canada in this civilization, though the case of Canada is too complex to treat in this limited essay. "Figuratively, on a scale of zero to one hundred, with the U.S. close to zero on a given trait and Britain at one hundred, Canada would fall around thirty." Seymour Martin Lipset, "American Exceptionalism Reaffirmed," in Byron Shafer, ed., *Is America Different: A New Look at American Exceptionalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 1-2. I am inclined to exclude Mexico because of its ties to Spain as well as Latin America. For the remainder of the essay I will refer to the USA as "America." I apologize to all those Americans who live outside the United States of America. So many of the sources I quote refer to the USA as "America" that, for the sake of consistency and flow, I have reluctantly adopted the geographical misnomer in my prose.

<sup>4</sup> Max Lerner, *America as a Civilization: Life and Thought in the United States Today* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1957), p. 59.

<sup>5</sup> See Michael Kammen, "The Problem of American Exceptionalism: A

Reconsideration,” *American Quarterly* (March 1993): 1-43.

- <sup>6</sup> Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 43.
- <sup>7</sup> Quoted in Philippe Roger, *The American Enemy: A Story of French Anti-Americanism*, trans. Sharon Bowman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), p. 118 and 231.
- <sup>8</sup> Quoted in David Potter, *People of Plenty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), pp.78-79.
- <sup>9</sup> Both quoted in C. Vann Woodward, *The Old World's New World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 108.
- <sup>10</sup> Harold Laski, *The American Democracy: A Commentary and an Interpretation* (New York: Viking, 1948), pp. 24-25.
- <sup>11</sup> Novalis, “Christendom or Europe,” in *Hymns to the Night and Other Selected Writings*, trans., Charles E. Passage (New York: Liberal Press, 1960), p. 48.
- <sup>12</sup> Quoted in Catherine Albanese, *America: Religions and Religion* (Belmont: Wadsworth, 1981), p. 258.
- <sup>13</sup> St. John de Crèvecoeur, J. Hector, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: Penguin, 1981), pp. 69-70.
- <sup>14</sup> Quoted in Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Times and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University press, 2004), p. 86.
- <sup>15</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *America*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1988), p. 76.
- <sup>16</sup> Laski, *American*, p. 5.
- <sup>17</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (New York: Viking, 1963).
- <sup>18</sup> Baudrillard, *America*, pp. 75-105.
- <sup>19</sup> Quoted in Roger, *American Enemy*, p. 23.
- <sup>20</sup> Quoted in Richard Wolin, *The Terms of Cultural Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), p. xvi.
- <sup>21</sup> Quoted in August Nimitz, Jr., *Marx, Tocqueville, and Race in America* (Lanham: Lexington, 2003), p. 7.
- <sup>22</sup> Quoted in James W. Ceasar, *Reconstructing America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), p. 173.

- <sup>23</sup> Laski, *American*, p. 15.
- <sup>24</sup> Hans-Jorgen Grabbe, "Weary of Germany – Weary of America: Perceptions of the United States in Nineteenth-Century Germany," in David Barclay and Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt (eds.), *Transatlantic Images and Perceptions: Germany and America Since 1776* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 71-72
- <sup>25</sup> Quoted in Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2001), p. vii.
- <sup>26</sup> Quoted in Dan Diner, *America in the Eyes of the Germans*, trans. Allison Brown (Princeton: Markus Reiner, 1996), p. 23.
- <sup>27</sup> Quoted in Isaiah Berlin, "A Letter on Human Nature," republished in *New York Review of Books* (September 23, 2004): 26-27.
- <sup>28</sup> Quoted in Robert Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the World, 1869-1922* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), I, p. 156.
- <sup>29</sup> Simone de Beauvoir, *America Day by Day*, trans. Carol Cosman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999, original 1948), p. 171.
- <sup>30</sup> Quoted in Roger, *Enemy*, p. 52.
- <sup>31</sup> Martin Heidegger, "Hölderlins Hymne" *Gesamtausgabe* vol. 53 (Frankfurt: Vittorio Klostermann, 1975), p. 86.
- <sup>32</sup> Quoted in Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: Critiques at Home and Abroad 1965-1990* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 376.
- <sup>33</sup> Joyce Appleby, *Inheriting the Revolution: The First Generation of Americans* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000), p. 265.
- <sup>34</sup> Woodward, *Old World's*, p. xvi.
- <sup>35</sup> Quoted in Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation. The Science of Freedom* (New York: Norton, 1996), p. 558. The italics are mine.
- <sup>36</sup> Quoted in Biancamaria Fontana, *Benjamin Constant and the Post-Revolutionary Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 90

- <sup>37</sup> Quoted in Arendt, *Revolution*, p. 62 & 224.
- <sup>38</sup> Friedrich Schiller, *Letters on the Aesthetic Education of Mankind* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 13.
- <sup>39</sup> First sentence quoted in Peter Fritzsche, *Stranded in the Present: Modern Time and the Melancholy of History* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 30; the second in Denis de Rougemont, *The Idea of Europe*, trans. Norbert Guterman (New York: MacMillan, 1966), p. 195.
- <sup>40</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America*, vol. 1 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1945), p. 3. Needless to say, inequalities hardly disappeared altogether. See Rogers Smith, *Civic Ideals* (New Haven: Yale University press, 1997).
- <sup>41</sup> Robert Wiebe, *The Opening of American Society: From the Adoption of the Constitution to the Eve of Disunion* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1984), p. 146. Wiebe's account is more compelling because more detailed but its thrust is of a piece with Laski's, *American*, pp. 23-38.
- <sup>42</sup> Joyce Appleby, *Capitalism and a New Social Order: The Republican Vision of the 1790s* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), p. 69.
- <sup>43</sup> Liah Greenfield, *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), p. 365.
- <sup>44</sup> Quoted in Woodward, *Old World's*, p. 110.
- <sup>45</sup> August Nimitz, Jr., *Marx, Tocqueville, and Race in America* (Lanham: Lexington, 2003), p. 16.
- <sup>46</sup> Heinrich Heine, *The Romantic School and Other Essays*, trans. and ed. Jost Hermand & Robert Holub (New York: Continuum, 1985), p. 263.
- <sup>47</sup> Quoted in Woodward, *Old World's*, p. 19.
- <sup>48</sup> Benjamin Saint-Victor, *Lettres sur les États-Unis d'Amérique* (Paris: Perisse Frères, 1835), pp. 26-27.
- <sup>49</sup> Quoted in Roger, *American Enemy*, p. 52.
- <sup>50</sup> Heine's remark comes in Diner, *America in the Eyes*, p. 39.
- <sup>51</sup> Quoted in Woodward, *Old World's*, 41.
- <sup>52</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, p. 43.

- <sup>53</sup> Quoted in *ibid*, p. 44.
- <sup>54</sup> André Siegfried, *America Comes of Age: A French Analysis*, trans. H.H. and Doris Hemming (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), p. 18.
- <sup>55</sup> James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, Vol. 1 (New York: Putnam Capricorn Books, 1959), p. viii.
- <sup>56</sup> Fuller descriptions of consumerism appear in Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon, 1984); T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (New York: Pantheon 1981); and William Leach, *Land of Desire* (New York: Pantheon, 1993).
- <sup>57</sup> Gareth Shaw, "The European Scene: Britain and Germany," in John Benson and Gareth Shaw (eds.), *The Evolution of Retail Systems c. 1800-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), p. 29.
- <sup>58</sup> See Roy Rosenzweig, "*Eight Hours for What We Will*": *Workers and Leisure in an Industrial City, 1870-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
- <sup>59</sup> Victoria de Grazia, "Changing Consumption Regimes in Europe, 1930-1970," in Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, & Matthias Judt (eds.), *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), pp. 65-69.
- <sup>60</sup> Quoted in Roger, *American Enemy*, p. 241.
- <sup>61</sup> Thomas Richards, *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England: Advertising and Spectacle, 1851-1914* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990), p. 12.
- <sup>62</sup> Leach, *Desire*, Swiss, p. 20; German, p. 308; French, p. 266. Italics are mine.
- <sup>63</sup> Quoted in Denis Lacorne and Jacques Rupnik, "France Bewitched by America," in Denis Lacorne, Jacques Rupnik, Marie-France Toinet (eds.), *The Rise and Fall of Anti-Americanism: A Century of French Perception*, trans. Gerry Turner (New York: St. Martin's, 1986), p. 3.
- <sup>64</sup> Fritz Stern, *The Politics of Cultural Despair: A Study in the Rise of*

*Germanic Ideology* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1961), p. 241.

- <sup>65</sup> Quoted in Ceaser, *Reconstructing America*, p. 173.
- <sup>66</sup> Quoted in Woodward, *Old World's*, p. 77.
- <sup>67</sup> Sander Gilman, "Introduction" to *Diner, America in the Eyes*, p. xiv.
- <sup>68</sup> Quoted in Jackson Lears, *Fables of Abundance: A Cultural History of Advertising in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), p. 252.
- <sup>69</sup> Quoted in Woodward, *Old World's*, p. 50.
- <sup>70</sup> Lary May, *Screening Out the Past: The Birth of Mass Culture and the Motion Picture Industry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 166-77.
- <sup>71</sup> Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1976), p. 161.
- <sup>72</sup> Lears, *Fables*, p. 395.
- <sup>73</sup> Sinclair Lewis, *Babbitt* (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 81.
- <sup>74</sup> Woodward, *Old World's*, p. 48.
- <sup>75</sup> Quoted in *Diner, America*, p. 23 and p. 49.
- <sup>76</sup> Quoted in Rydell and Kroes, *Buffalo Bill*, p. 151-2.
- <sup>77</sup> Bernard Shaw, *The Political Madhouse in America and Nearer Home* (London: Constable & Co., 1933), p. 14.
- <sup>78</sup> Leach, *Desire*, p. 11.
- <sup>79</sup> Quoted in Lears, *Fables*, p. 398.
- <sup>80</sup> Quoted in Anderson, *Ascendancy*, p. 333.
- <sup>81</sup> Stanley Fish, *The Trouble with Principle* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 307. Good treatments of postmodernism can be found in Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: a Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); and Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

- <sup>82</sup> Baudrillard, *America*, p. 29.
- <sup>83</sup> Umberto Eco, *Travels in Hyperreality* (San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1983).
- <sup>84</sup> Eco, *Hyperreality*, p. 8.
- <sup>85</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*, trans. Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1996), p. 92 and 97.
- <sup>86</sup> Norman Denzin, *The Cinematic Society: the Voyeur's Gaze* (London: Sage, 1995), p. 195.
- <sup>87</sup> Baudrillard, *Crime*, p. 0.
- <sup>88</sup> Quoted in Stephen Fox, *The Mirror Makers* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1984), p. 79.
- <sup>89</sup> Quoted in Anthony Grafton, "The Ways of Genius" *New York Review of Books* (December 2, 2004), p. 40.
- <sup>90</sup> Douglas Kellner, *Media Spectacle and the Crisis of Democracy: Terrorism, War, and Election Battles* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2005), p. 219.
- <sup>91</sup> John Ralston Saul, *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West* (New York: Vintage, 1992), p. 428.
- <sup>92</sup> Quotations (except "*coup de théâtre*" p. 75 of *America*) come from Baudrillard, *Crime*, p. 85, p. 27, p. 30, and p. 5. See Eco, *Hyperreality*, pp. 36-46 for a similar argument regarding the power of illusion.
- <sup>93</sup> Baudrillard, *America*, p. 77, p. 55, p. 95.
- <sup>94</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 77-79.
- <sup>95</sup> *Ibid*, p. 29.
- <sup>96</sup> Baudrillard, *Crime*, pp. 109-10.
- <sup>97</sup> Baudrillard, *America*, p. 55.
- <sup>98</sup> Bernard-Henri Lévy, *American Vertigo: Traveling America in the Footsteps of Tocqueville* (New York: Random House, 2006), p. 252.
- <sup>99</sup> Baudrillard, *America*, p. 76.
- <sup>100</sup> Robert de Herte and Hans Jurgen Nigra, "Il était une fois l'Amérique" *Nouvelle Ecole* (Autumn-Winter 1985): 46.
- <sup>101</sup> Dane Claussen, *Anti-intellectualism in American Media* (New York:



Peter Lang, 2004) updates the classic of Richard Hofstadter, *Anti-intellectualism in American Life* (New York: Vintage, 1962).

<sup>102</sup> Baudrillard, *America*, p. 103, 78, 97, 87, and 123.

<sup>103</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *American Empire* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 244.

<sup>104</sup> Benjamin Barber, *Jihad vs. McWorld* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1995), p. 17.

<sup>105</sup> Nancy Snow, *Propaganda Inc.: Selling America's Culture to the World* ((New York: Seven Stories Press, 1998), p. 27.

<sup>106</sup> Anatol Lieven, *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>107</sup> David Wilkinson, "Fluctuations in the Political Consolidation of Civilizations/World Systems" *Comparative Civilizations Review* (Spring 2005): 92-102.

<sup>108</sup> For a thorough description and analysis of these anti-American voices in Europe, see Andrei S. Markovits, *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), pp. 81-134.

<sup>109</sup> Jorgen Habermas, *Der gespaltene Westen* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004); Gret Haller, *Die Grenzen der Solidarität* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 2002).