

ANTI-AMERICANISM IN TWENTIETH CENTURY EUROPE

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL REVIEW

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Abstract

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, European observers and commentators have frequently employed the term ‘Americanization’ to make sense of the astonishing rise of the USA to the status of a world power. More specifically, they used this term to describe the social changes brought about by industrialization and urbanization. In this context, European intellectuals have often used ‘America’ as shorthand for ‘modernity’: across the Atlantic, they believed, it was possible to learn and see the future of their own societies. Criticism of ‘the Americanization of Europe’ – or the world – easily led to outright anti-Americanism, i.e. a radical and reductionist ideology which held the USA responsible for the economic, political, or cultural ills of modern societies. The war in Iraq in 2003 and the alienation between the USA and France and Germany that followed provided a new impetus for studying the history of European perceptions of America. A large number of studies have since been published that deal with the history of the ‘Americanization of Europe’ and anti-Americanism, and several monographs, which are based on original research and promise new insights, will be the focus of this historiographical review.

I.

When the British journalist William T. Stead published a study on the 'Americanization of the World' in 1902, he provided European intellectuals with a most attractive catch-phrase.¹ Throughout the twentieth century, journalists, politicians and academics have used the term to assess the global impact of the USA's rise to the status of a world power, and to make sense of the dramatic and bedazzling social changes brought about by industrialization and urbanization. European intellectuals have rarely resisted the temptation to use 'America' as shorthand for 'modernity': across the Atlantic, European observers believed, it was possible to learn and see what their own societies would look like in the future. Conveniently, the concept of 'Americanization' shifted the blame for the problems of modernity away from Europe; America thus became an easy scapegoat for the social and economic upheavals that followed industrialization. Complaints about the Americanization of Europe – or the world – could easily be turned into outright anti-Americanism, i.e. a radical and reductionist ideology which made the USA responsible for all the ills of society, be they economic, political, or cultural. A substantial body of literature has dealt with these processes in detail and shows how America was perceived, disdained, criticized, and hated by Europeans throughout the twentieth century.² The

¹ William T. Stead, *The Americanization of the world, or: the trend of the twentieth century* (London, New York, 1902).

² Donald Roy Allen, *French views of America in the 1930s* (New York, 1990); David Barclay, Elisabeth Glaser-Schmidt, eds, *Transatlantic images and perceptions. Germany and America since 1776* (Cambridge, New York, 1997); Earl R. Beck, *Germany rediscovers America* (Tallahassee, 1968); Volker

invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the following rift in transatlantic relations gave the history of European perceptions of America a new impetus. Among the large number of studies devoted to the history of 'Americanization' and anti-Americanism that have been published in recent years, several monographs, based on original research, promise new insights and deserve close attention.

II.

From the perspective of a literary critic, Victor Otto has added to the already impressive number of studies on German discourses of America in the first half of the twentieth century, the period when Germans searched for ways of coping with the 'crisis of classical modernity' (Detlev Peukert) and often turned to America for inspiration.³ The main part of Otto's book consists of case studies of

Berghahn, *The Americanization of West German industry* (Cambridge, 1986); Frank Costigliola, *Awkward dominion: American political, economic and cultural relations with Europe 1919-1933* (Ithaca, London, 1984); Georg Kamphausen, *Die Erfindung Amerikas in der Kulturkritik der Generation von 1890* (Weilerswist, 2002); Rob Kroes, *If you've seen one, you've seen the mall. Europeans and American mass culture* (Urbana, 1996); Alf Lüdtkke, Inge Marßolek, Adelheid von Saldern, eds, *Amerikanisierung. Traum und Alptraum im Deutschland des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1996); Comer Vann Woodward, *The old world's new world* (Oxford, New York, 1991).

³ Viktor Otto, *Deutsche Amerikabilder. Zu den Intellektuellendiskursen um die Moderne 1900-1950* (Munich, 2006). See Detlev J. K. Peukert, *Die Weimarer Republik. Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne* (Frankfurt/Main, 1987); Ulrich Ott, *Amerika ist anders. Studien zum Amerika-Bild in deutschen*

individual authors: we learn about Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Jünger, Carl Schmitt, Heinrich Hauser and Carl Zuckmayer's views of America. The study opens with an extended review of relevant research literature that makes up almost a third of the whole text and demonstrates the author's familiarity with a vast number of specialized works on the subject. Otto struggles, however, to position his own contribution within this body of scholarship; the specific aims of his study remain unclear. He presents his approach as a combination of the 'history of mentalities' and 'discourse theory', but ends up writing a conventional piece of literary criticism.⁴ His main thesis repeats a notion that is well established and accepted in the specialized literature, namely that the debates about Americanism and Americanization were a barely disguised discourse on the industrial, technological and cultural modernization of German society. Especially during the Weimar Republic, evoking 'Americanization' provided German intellectuals with a medium to discuss the rapid social changes they witnessed. Otto has included a short chapter on the reception of Karl May's 'wild West' novels, which are indispensable for a study of the German image of

Reiseberichten des 20. Jahrhunderts (Frankfurt/Main, 1991); Philipp Gassert, *Amerika im Dritten Reich: Ideologie, Propaganda und Volksmeinung, 1933-1945* (Stuttgart, 1997); Egbert Klautke, *Unbegrenzte Möglichkeiten. 'Amerikanisierung' in Deutschland und Frankreich, 1900-1933* (Stuttgart, 2003); Mary Nolan, *Visions of modernity. American business and the modernization of Germany* (New York, Oxford, 1994); Alexander Schmitt, *Reisen in die Moderne: der Amerika-Diskurs des deutschen Bürgertums vor dem Ersten Weltkrieg im europäischen Vergleich* (Berlin, 1997).

⁴ Otto, *Deutsche Amerikabilder*, p. 57.

America, but not central for the discussions about Americanism in the 1920s and 1930s. The choice of authors he concentrates on is never accounted for; the inclusion of the legal and political theorist Carl Schmitt, the only author who did not write fiction, seems odd. While Schmitt has become a classic author in political philosophy and remains a highly controversial and fascinating figure in German intellectual history, he did not contribute significantly to the debates about Americanization during the Weimar Republic and the Third Reich. His anti-Americanism developed only after the Second World War when the former ‘crown jurist of the Third Reich’ complained bitterly about American hypocrisy.⁵ Otto’s decision to focus on individual authors could have enabled him to show how clichés and stereotypes about America changed their meaning in subtle ways according to the context in which they were used. But his broad and unspecific use of the term ‘anti-Americanism’ – he takes any negative comment or criticism of the USA as evidence of ‘latent’ anti-American attitudes – prevents him from a more differentiated analysis. Far too often, Otto compiles long excerpts from his sources and lets them ‘speak for themselves’; there is little interpretation and contextualization of these texts. The book also lacks a proper conclusion that could have provided a comparative interpretation of the authors he has focused on, and offered an explanation for the apparently similar images of America they held, despite substantial political and personal differences. Overall, while providing a useful overview of the themes and topics of German

⁵ On Schmitt see Jan-Werner Müller, *A dangerous mind. Carl Schmitt in post-war European thought* (New Haven, 2003); Reinhard Mehring, *Carl Schmitt. Aufstieg und Fall* (Munich, 2009).

images of America in the interwar period, Otto's ambitious study lacks a distinct argument and does not live up to the high expectations it has created.

Christoph Hendrik Müller's study is the first monograph that deals systematically with anti-Americanism in the Federal Republic of Germany during the period of the 'long 1950s'.⁶ Müller is aware of the pitfalls of the term 'anti-Americanism' and stresses that not every criticism of American society can be taken as a sign of anti-Americanism. To be a useful analytical term, the label should only be applied to views that show a high level of coherence and radicalism. As Müller convincingly shows, popular views of American society in the 1950s resembled, and sometimes even repeated, the debates of the Weimar Republic. Common clichés about American society differed little from the 1920s and 1930s, when Americans were regularly accused of materialism, superficiality, and lack of culture. The Americanization of the German economy remained a controversial topic of public debate, but whereas in the 1920s 'Fordism' and 'rationalization' had epitomized American influences, in the 1950s the new self-service 'supermarkets' became the 'potent symbol for that sort of crass materialism and consumerism' the USA was notorious for.⁷ Of particular concern for conservative Germans was the 'American woman', presented as 'driven by sexual desire', as 'selfish, hedonistic and too powerful'. Adopting the American model of gender relations, the critics feared, again reiterating a well-known argument from the inter-war period, would undermine

⁶ Christoph Hendrik Müller, *West Germans against the West: Anti-Americanism in media and public opinion in the Federal Republic of Germany, 1949-1968* (Houndmills, 2010).

⁷ Ibid., p. 91.

the centuries-old, natural order between the sexes and destroy the very foundations of the nation. In a similar vein, American films and popular music represented the dangers of cultural Americanization. Prolonged exposure to the products of the 'culture industry', the critics feared, would have severe consequences for the moral education of German youth.⁸ American films were belittled as superficial kitsch, in contrast to German *Heimatfilme*, while television was increasingly seen as the latest incarnation of American superficiality.⁹ Popular music was equally dominated by American imports; while German intellectuals and middle-class youth increasingly valued Jazz and accepted it as a serious form of art, thus de-Americanizing and Europeanizing it, rock 'n' roll music caused alarmist warnings when concerts in the mid-1950s ended in vandalism and riots among youths in West Germany and West Berlin. On the whole, West Germans had little new to say about the US in the 1950s: "America" had vague connotations of a society in which, to express it negatively, everything was commodified and where technical-civilizational progress and growing wealth were traded against cultural superficiality.¹⁰

The occupation of Germany by American troops after the Second World War provided, however, a different context for these well-rehearsed views and opinions; it gave a number of the old stereotypes a new meaning. In the immediate post-war period, Müller argues, Anti-Americanism became a function of the *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or 'coming to terms with the past' of West Germans. Criticising the Americans was a way to counter the accusation

⁸ Ibid., pp. 134-137.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 138-147.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 177.

of a German ‘collective guilt’ for the Second World War: ‘German war crimes were set in relation to American war crimes in order to rescue the German commitment to nationalism.’¹¹ The bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the treatment of German prisoners of war by the US army, and race relations in the USA were evoked to show the hypocrisy of American occupation policies in Germany. While Germans after the Second World War relied on the same body of clichés and stereotypes about the Americans as in the inter-war period, their criticism now targeted ‘real’ Americans who had occupied their country, were allegedly planning to de-industrialize their economy, and tried to re-educate the whole population according to American standards. According to Müller, the occupation of Germany gave anti-American views a new urgency since it served a purpose in the most pressing public debates in the immediate post-war period; it often worked as a reflex for Germans who insisted they could not be made responsible for Nazi crimes.

In contrast to France, anti-American views in Germany in the 1950s were mainly to be found on the political right: another continuity from the interwar period. Müller has found genuine anti-Americanism in the right-wing ‘counter-culture’ of the FRG, e.g. within the secret right-wing organization *Erste Legion*, and the ‘right-wing umbrella organization’ *Nationale Sammlung*.¹² With the growing success of the Federal Republic, these right-wing organizations lost their significance and were dissolved or pushed to the fringes of mainstream society and politics.¹³ It seems to have been rather difficult to find genuine anti-

¹¹ Ibid., p. 32.

¹² Ibid., p. 97.

¹³ Ibid., p. 12.

American authors in post-war Germany—the most obvious example, Leo L. Matthias, who published an anti-American treatise in 1953, gets only a brief mention.¹⁴ Instead, Müller presents statements that are only mildly critical of the USA, or discusses at length anti-liberal authors who tried to defend German traditions against Western ideas in the 1950s, even though they did not particularly target the USA. Most of the authors Müller has identified as the main representatives of anti-Americanism belonged to an older generation which was familiar with the debates of the 1920s: he discusses Carl Schmitt, the novelist Ernst von Salomon, the sociologist Arnold Gehlen as well as Hjalmar Schacht, Martin Heidegger, Otto Strasser, and Hans Zehrer. In trying to locate genuine anti-Americanism in the early Federal Republic, Müller had to stretch his own definition of anti-Americanism: von Salomon's bestseller *Der Fragebogen*, a radical critique of the process of de-nazification, was certainly full of contempt of the hypocrisy of American occupation and re-education policies, but not an anti-American treatise; neither Schmitt nor Gehlen published anti-American books. Too often, then, Müller takes any criticism of the USA, or even any anti-liberal argument, for anti-Americanism.¹⁵ By the late 1950s, it seems, anti-Americanism had been pushed to the margins of political discourse in West Germany, without changing the clichés and stereotypes that had been circulating for generations. In the 'long 1950s', Müller argues, there was hardly any left-wing anti-Americanism in West Germany; even the critique of American imperialism and capitalism of the student rebels of '1968', he

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 64-65. See Leo L. Matthias, *Die Entdeckung Amerikas anno 1953 oder das geordnete Chaos* (Hamburg, 1953).

¹⁵ Müller, *West Germans*, pp. 74-89.

maintains, was radical, but does not qualify as ‘anti-Americanism’, since in this discourse ‘America’ was not used as shorthand for ‘modernity’.¹⁶ His personal sympathies might have inspired this mild interpretation of the ‘new left’; even transatlantic networking and the adoption of forms of protest first introduced by the civil rights movement in the USA did not prevent German student activists from adopting anti-American views. Müller’s text thus illustrates the difficulties involved in locating genuine anti-Americanism as a political ideology, despite the ubiquity of clichés and stereotypes about the USA, most of them not exactly flattering.

Seth D. Armus’s study of French anti-Americanism focuses on the 1930s and 1940s. Until recently, Armus claims, French anti-Americanism was ‘under-explored, but historiographically over-determined’.¹⁷ Published shortly after the English translation of Philippe Roger’s massive monograph on the topic, he was faced with formidable competition. Even though he has produced a much slimmer and less comprehensive volume than Roger, Armus’s study emerges

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 179.

¹⁷ Seth D. Armus, *French anti-Americanism: critical moments in a complex history* (Lanham MD, Plymouth, 2007), p. 3. See David Strauss, *Menace in the West: The rise of French anti-Americanism in modern times* (Westport, 1978). On French ‘views of America’ more generally see Richard Kuisel, *Seducing the French: the dilemma of Americanization* (Berkeley, 1993); Jacques Portes, *Une fascination réticente: Les Etats-Unis dans l’opinion française* (Nantes, 1990). For comparative studies see Costigliola, *Awkward dominion*; Klautke, *Unbegrenzte Möglichkeiten*.

well from a comparison.¹⁸ Roger's book provides a sweeping survey of French criticism and hatred of America from the eighteenth to the twentieth century. He concentrates exclusively on French haters of America—of which there were enough to fill the five-hundred pages of his book with ease—but for that very reason, his study is based on a simplified assumption. By systematically ignoring pro-American voices, Roger exaggerates the coherence and continuity of 'French thinking' and suggests that anti-Americanism has always been the dominant feature of French attitudes towards the USA. Roger's method recalls Dan Diner's essay on German anti-Americanism, first published in 1993, which presented the German case in a similar fashion and provided a similarly misleading picture of the 'German image' of America.¹⁹ Anti-Americanism and pro-Americanism usually go hand-in-hand; both positions have always been present at the same time, and cannot be separated without distorting the historical record.²⁰

¹⁸ Armus, *French anti-Americanism*; Philippe Roger, *The American enemy. The history of French Anti-Americanism*. (Chicago, 2005).

¹⁹ Dan Diner, *Verkehrte Welten. Antiamerikanismus in Deutschland: Ein historischer Essay* (Frankfurt, 1993); idem, *America in the eyes of the Germans: an essay on anti-Americanism* (Princeton, 1996); idem, *Feindbild Amerika: über die Beständigkeit eines Ressentiments* (Berlin, 2002). See Philipp Gassert, 'The Anti-American as Americanizer' *German Studies Review* 27 (2009), pp. 24-38.

²⁰ See Jessica Gienow-Hecht, 'Always blame the Americans: anti-Americanism in Europe in the twentieth century' *American Historical Review* 111 (2006), pp. 1067-1091.

Armus, in contrast to Roger, is much more careful with generalizations and has managed to avoid gross simplifications, even though he too has focused on individual intellectuals who ‘served as anti-American spokesmen within their historical “moments”.’ Critical of authors who sacrifice ‘depth for breadth’ and end up merely cataloguing anti-American stereotypes, he concentrates on writers ‘with individual idiosyncrasies’ who still ‘epitomized larger tendencies’.²¹ This approach might remind more theoretically-minded readers of an old-fashioned form of the ‘history of ideas’ and its problems, in particular a built-in elitism that ignores the majority of second-rate authors who do not belong to the literary canon, but provide a better insight into average, common views. Armus is aware of the limits of his approach and does not suggest that the authors he has studied represented French culture as a whole. He maintains, however, that French anti-Americans, even if few in number, were capable of directing, and sometimes even dominating, socio-political debates.

Aware of the long tradition of French criticism of the USA, Armus concentrates on the 1930s as ‘the key moment when French anti-Americanism moved from the opportunistic to the ideological. In the confusion of the interwar, when threats to civilization seemed to be emerging with equal vigor from Right and Left, a sort of transcendent anti-American stance became standard among a fascinating cohort of so-called “non-conformists”.’²² These non-conformists, a rather incoherent group of angry young intellectuals, were united in their quest to overcome the ‘spiritual crisis’ of French society in the interwar period. They were bitterly opposed to the self-satisfied liberalism of the

²¹ Armus, *French anti-Americanism*, p. 1.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 6.

‘established order’ of the Third Republic, but equally detested any form of Marxist socialism. Most importantly for Armus, non-conformists such as Robert Aron and Arnaud Dandieu, Thierry Maulnier, and Emmanuel Mounier shared a strong aversion against anything American and campaigned against the ‘Americanization’ of French society. To the non-conformists, the USA embodied everything that was wrong with the current order of state and society: standardization, materialism, and the rule of the masses had replaced the unique qualities of French civilization. The only conceivable remedy for this crisis was a revolution that would overthrow the liberal order and purge France of the ‘American cancer’. For good reasons, then, these non-conformists have been compared to the German ‘conservative revolutionaries’ who developed similar unorthodox right-wing ideas at the same time, even though anti-Americanism seems to have been more prevalent among the ‘new right’ in France than in Germany.²³

Armus stresses the long-term importance of non-conformist intellectuals—seen by some as ‘proto-fascist’, by others as forerunners of the project of a united Europe—who were mostly able to re-establish their careers after the Second World War, sometimes after a dramatic social-political re-orientation. Historically, Armus explains, and in similar fashion to the German case, anti-Americanism was firmly anchored on the political right: the

²³ Hans-Wilhelm Eckert, *Konservative Revolution in Frankreich? Die Nonkonformisten der Jeune Droite und des Ordre Nouveau in der Krise der 30er Jahre* (Munich, 2000). The term ‘non-conformists’ was introduced by Jean-Louis Loubet del Bayle, *Les non-conformistes des années trentes: une tentative de renouvellement de la pensée politique française* (Paris, 1969).

‘understandable temptation to see French anti-Americanism as a mostly left-wing tendency’ is a phenomenon of the post-war era, when many of the arguments first introduced by non-conformist intellectuals were adopted by the French left. Armus excels in analysing the transfer and diffusion of anti-American thinking after the Second World War. Emmanuel Mounier, for instance, the founder of the journal *Esprit*, personally represented this process: he ‘went from non-conformism, to soft collaboration, to *marxisant* radicalism, yet, throughout, his anti-Americanism remained perfectly intact, surviving his many changes in politics.’²⁴ George Bernanos is a similar example: his intellectual journey started out on the extreme right, but he later deradicalized his views when he joined the French resistance against Nazi Germany. His anti-Americanism, however, changed little: ‘Bernanos was a true believer in a sort of mythical France that must fight a lonely battle against all the amoral enemies of culture—not only, but not least, America.’²⁵

In a chapter on Pierre-Antoine Cousteau, Armus deals with the relationship between anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism. The connections between the two ideologies were complicated, he argues, and have rarely been explored by historians. Cousteau, the brother of the marine biologist Jacques, was the America-expert of the right-wing journal *Je suis partout* in the 1930s, and author of a book entitled *Amérique-juive*, published during the Second World War. While Cousteau is most important as a dyed-in-the-wool anti-Semite and collaborator with the Nazi regime, he ‘reminds us that anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism both have roots in the struggle with modernity,

²⁴ Armus, *French anti-Americanism*, pp. 7, 57-82.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 127-149.

destiny, and national identity'.²⁶ Despite the apparent similarities between anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism, however, Cousteau's merging of the two ideologies seems to have been the exception, not the rule. With the important exception of the Nazi wartime propaganda, including their French acolytes, of which Cousteau's treatise formed part, most French – and German – anti-Americanists distinguished clearly between both ideologies. Most often, then, anti-Americanism was not a form of anti-Semitism, but an alternative to it; it served as a vehicle for authors who moaned about the disastrous consequences of economic and cultural modernity, but did not blame 'the Jews' for it.

Andrei Markovits presents the relationship between anti-Semitism and anti-Americanism as a more straightforward affair: borrowing a term from André Glucksmann, he sees the two ideologies as 'twin brothers': 'they have gone hand in hand with each other since at least the early nineteenth century'.²⁷ The USA and the Jews were both associated with modernity, hence anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism overlapped considerably: 'It was the fear and critique of capitalism that brought these two resentments together. America and the Jews were seen as paragons of modernity: money-driven, profit-hungry, urban, universalistic, individualistic, mobile, rootless, and hostile to established traditions and values.'²⁸ Historically, Markovits maintains, the 'European Right' typically propagated such views since it hated both America and the Jews as

²⁶ Ibid., p. 10.

²⁷ Andrei S. Markovits, *Uncouth nation: why Europe dislikes America*, (Princeton, Oxford, 2007), p. 151.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 155.

‘representatives of an unstoppable modernity’.²⁹ From the late 1960s, however, the European Left ‘has been the most prolific mediator between anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism’.³⁰ Precisely because anti-Semitism was historically associated with the political right, Markovits argues, ‘the Left enjoyed a kind of bonus or free ride on matters relating to Jews and Israel’.³¹ Most of Markovits’s chapter does not deal with the relationship between anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism but with this ‘new’, left-wing anti-Semitism disguised as anti-Zionism, which one finds all over the ‘left-liberal’ milieu. The *Guardian*, the *Independent*, the BBC, as well as the Schröder government in Germany are all guilty of propagating what appears to Markovits as anti-Semitism. Like Dan Diner’s essay on German anti-Americanism, his book addresses left-wing circles who practise with good conscience a form of anti-Americanism-cum-Zionism, but are unaware of the right-wing origins of the clichés they regularly employ. The notion of anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism as ‘twin brothers’ works best for the most recent history where the conflation of both ideologies can indeed be observed on several levels. However, Markovits does not provide any new evidence to prove the thesis that anti-Americanism has always been merely a variety of anti-Semitism.

Markovits’s book is as much a personal manifesto as an academic study; it is never boring, but rarely convincing. He is a political scientist with a presentist outlook and mainly interested in explaining contemporary European societies. Next to the argument that anti-Americanism and anti-Semitism are

²⁹ Ibid., p. 172.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 159.

³¹ Ibid., p. 173.

intrinsically linked, he makes two major points. First, he argues that since 2001, and despite its long history, European anti-Americanism has for the first time ‘entered the European mainstream’ and he even speaks of the voluntary *Gleichschaltung* of ‘the public voice and mood’ in the countries that he has studied in relation to the USA.³² The USA, Markovits maintains, has become ‘the other’ for Europeans; anti-Americanism provides them with the enemy image that is necessary to create a common European ‘identity’: ‘Anti-Americanism has been promoted to the status of West Europe’s lingua franca.’³³ Markovits thus continues a well-established research tradition that is based on a notion of American exceptionalism and can explain anti-Americanism only as a form of social pathology, ‘a kind of neurosis rooted in “envy”.’³⁴ The empirical parts of the study are based on his personal press archive: he seems to have collected hundreds of clippings from European newspapers and magazines which he uses as sources for ‘European’ views of America. Not surprisingly, Markovits has found out that journalists make ample use of common, well-established clichés about American society and the American ‘mind’. Whether these press articles represent the ‘public opinion’ of Europeans must, however, remain doubtful. Secondly, Markovits insists that anti-Americanism was not

³² Ibid., p. 3.

³³ Ibid., p. 2.

³⁴ Max Paul Friedman, ‘Anti-Americanism and U.S. foreign relations’ *Diplomatic History* 32 (2008), pp. 497-514, at p. 498. Friedman refers to Stephen Haseler, *The varieties of Anti-Americanism* (Washington D.C., 1985) and Paul Hollander, *Anti-Americanism: critiques at home and abroad* (Oxford, 1992).

invented during the debates over the war in Iraq. Rather, the ‘West Europeans’ unconditional rejection of and legitimate outrage over abusive and irresponsible American policies (...) rest on a substantial sediment of hatred toward, disdain for, and resentment of America that has a long tradition in Europe and has flourished apart from these or any policies.’³⁵ No historian of transatlantic images and perceptions would deny this point. Markovits, however, is content with pointing out some obvious continuities of European anti-Americanism; we learn little about its history, mainly because he treats it as a constant, never-changing trait of modern European history. Ironically, then, his stress on the historical character of anti-Americanism shows Markovits as an essentially a-historical thinker. His book will frustrate readers who expect a subtle and patient analysis of a broad and complex topic. In the style of a political journalist, he ignores evidence that contradicts his main thesis, or brushes it aside. Like Roger or Diner, he is aware of pro-American sentiments in Europe, but chooses to ignore them since he is not concerned with a survey of the history of European–American relations, but solely with ‘the very real phenomenon of the persistence and current accentuation’ of European anti-Americanism.³⁶ His definition of anti-Americanism repeats a common notion; citing the German journalist Joseph Joffe and ‘Paul Sniderman’s pioneering work on prejudice’, he informs us that anti-Americanism shows all the signs of a fully-fledged prejudice that tells us little about the reality of the USA, but a lot about the people who hold such views: ‘I see anti-Americanism as a generalized and normative dislike of America and things American that often lacks distinct

³⁵ Markovits, *Uncouth nation*, p. 9.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

reasons or concrete causes. Anti-Americanism has all the tropes of a classic prejudice.’³⁷ Even though Markovits agrees that ‘opposition to U.S. policies in no way connotes anti-Americanism’,³⁸ he treats nearly any criticism of American society as a sign of anti-Americanism. He thus puts European commentators and observers in an impossible situation: they can either praise American culture and society as a whole, and wholeheartedly, or they qualify as anti-Americanists.

III.

The majority of recent studies on Americanization and anti-Americanism are multi-authored volumes, usually the outcomes of the numerous conferences, symposia, and lecture series that were held in the wake of the war in Iraq and the subsequent crisis of transatlantic relations. Some of these books are useful additions to the literature on anti-Americanism; more often we are faced with rather incoherent volumes that rarely present new insights or results.³⁹ The

³⁷ Ibid., p. 17.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

³⁹ See for example Frank Becker, Elke Reinhardt-Becker, eds, *Mythos USA: ‘Amerikanisierung’ in Deutschland seit 1900* (Frankfurt/Main, 2006); Sebastian M. Herrmann, ed., *Ambivalent Americanizations. Popular and consumer culture in central and eastern Europe* (Heidelberg, 2008); Frank Kelleter, Wolfgang Knöbl, eds, *Amerika und Deutschland: Ambivalente Begegnungen* (Göttingen, 2006); Lars Koch, ed., *Modernisierung als Amerikanisierung? Entwicklungslinien der westdeutschen Kultur 1945-1960* (Bielefeld, 2006); Georg Kreis, ed., *Antiamerikanismus. Zum europäisch-*

volume edited by Behrends, von Klimó, and Poutrus is a representative example of this kind of literature.⁴⁰ The editors and Konrad Jarausch introduce the topic with solid overviews of the existing literature on European anti-Americanism. Not surprisingly, they struggle to provide a convincing definition of the term ‘anti-Americanism’; they suggest the need to distinguish between ‘classical’ and ‘radical’ anti-Americanism. The former would include any form of negative stereotyping; the latter only ideologies where the USA are viewed as the absolute enemy. This terminology merely covers up the problem of distinguishing between legitimate criticism of the USA, its culture, society, and policies, and genuine anti-Americanism as a radical political ideology. Most contributors of the volume have, however, ignored these definitions. The quality and range of the individual articles differ widely. Some stand out, for instance Philipp Gassert’s reflections on left-wing anti-Americanism in West Germany, or Gabor T. Rittersporn and David Feest’s study that shows how American society served as a role model in the early Soviet Union. Marcus Payk’s essay

amerikanischen Verhältnis zwischen Ablehnung und Faszination (Basel, 2007); Brendon O’Connor, *Anti-Americanism: history, causes, themes*. (Westport, 2007); Robert W. Rydell and Rob Kroes, *Buffalo Bill in Bologna: The Americanization of the world, 1869-1922* (Chicago, 2005); Alexander Stephan, ed., *The Americanization of Europe* (New York, Oxford, 2006); Jochen Vogt, Alexander Stephan, eds, *Das Amerika der Autoren: Von Kafka bis 09/11* (Munich, 2006).

⁴⁰ Jan C. Behrends, Árpád von Klimó, Patrice G. Poutrus, eds, *Antiamerikanismus im 20. Jahrhundert: Studien zu West- und Osteuropa* (Bonn, 2005)

focuses on a group of journalists who started out as fellow travellers of the Nazi regime, produced anti-American propaganda during the Second World War, went on to deradicalize their views after 1945, and swiftly became integrated into the increasingly successful Federal Republic. The contributions by Jan C. Behrends, Thomas Lindenberger and Patrice G. Poutrus are particularly welcome since they study anti-Americanism behind the 'iron curtain', in Poland and the GDR during the early Cold War era. Despite some outstanding and original contributions, the volume as a whole suffers from imbalances in terms of the chronological range and geographical coverage: while the majority of the essays deal with the period after 1945, the first half of the twentieth century is under-represented. Essays on the French and German debates on America in the inter-war period, crucial to an understanding of European anti-Americanism in the twentieth century, are missing. And even though articles on Hungary in the inter-war period (Árpád von Klimó), France in the 1990s (Richard Kuisel) and Italy after 1945 (David Ellwood) are included, the book has a clear focus on Germany; it does not provide an overview of European anti-Americanism. Despite these shortcomings, and set beside other, even more incoherent multi-authored volumes, the book clearly shows the pan-European dimension of anti-Americanism and can help to stimulate further research, particularly of a comparative nature. It cannot, however, be a substitute for a comprehensive survey on the topic as suggested by its title.

A number of general conclusions can be drawn from recent literature on European anti-Americanism and on Americanization more broadly. First, there is a clear focus on the period of the Cold War. The study of the second post-war of the twentieth century has been fully embraced by historians, while political scientists, their erstwhile rivals, have moved on to analyse the twenty-first

century. Secondly, the full dimension, importance, and impact of French anti-Americanism has finally been recognized, not least because of Roger's and Armus's studies.⁴¹ During the Cold War, the natural 'home' of West European anti-Americanism was France, where it flourished across the political spectrum. In West Germany, in contrast, anti-Americanism quickly lost its appeal and became marginalized, not least because the GDR had adopted anti-Americanism as part of its official state propaganda in accordance with the stipulations of the Soviet Union. This provided a major incentive for conservatives in West Germany to deradicalize their views on the USA and abandon traditional anti-American positions. For the same reason, left-wing anti-Americanism in West Germany was almost unknown in the 1950s and developed only belatedly with the emergence of the 'new left' in 1960s. The logic of the Cold War, then, determined and structured the continuity of European anti-Americanism, with different outcomes in different countries, notwithstanding the underlying pan-European similarities and continuities.

The recent literature shows clearly that anti-Americanism was a pan-European phenomenon; no single country or nation can claim to have 'invented' it. However, studying *European* anti-Americanism in all its complexities includes a number of conceptual and practical problems. Markovits exposes the difficulties of an approach that treats Europe as a homogenous entity, a

⁴¹ See also Olivier Dard and Hans-Jürgen Lüsebrink, eds, *Américanisations et anti-américanismes comparés* (Villeneuve d'Ascq, 2008); Reiner Marcowitz, ed., *Nationale Identität und transnationale Einflüsse. Amerikanisierung, Europäisierung und Globalisierung in Frankreich nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Munich, 2007).

perspective that is common in the USA: the gain in breadth is paid for by the loss in depth. He does not cover Europe as a whole but concentrates on Germany, the UK, and France. Spain, Italy, Austria, and Portugal play minor roles in his narrative, and Scandinavia, the Benelux countries, and the whole of Eastern Europe has been left out of his survey of 'Europe'. Markovits assumes that views of the USA in the 'New Europe' are overwhelmingly positive and that his findings would have been markedly different had Eastern Europe been included. In this respect, it is all the more surprising that he has chosen not to do so.⁴² The most thorough and original studies published in recent years, then, namely those by Armus and Müller, avoid a comparative perspective and remain within the traditional framework of national histories.

The very terms 'anti-Americanism' and 'Americanization' pose numerous problems. Historically, these terms have suggested conceptual precision, but caused confusion; this confusion can still be found in some of the academic literature. The problematic catch-all phrase 'Americanization' was, after all, introduced as a chiffre for the abstract terms 'modernization' and 'modernity'. 'Americanization' is sometimes the 'object' of study, at other times it is used as an analytical term by historians. As such, it has been criticized from a number of different angles; most historians agree now that its usefulness is limited since it suggests a unilinear influence, exerted by the USA on other countries. For these reasons, an important recent study of 'America's advance through 20th-century

⁴² Markovits, *Uncouth nation*, p. 9. Ivan Krastev argues that the differences in attitude between 'New' and 'Old Europe' were much smaller than Markovits assumes; see I. Krastev, 'The anti-American century?' *Journal of Democracy* 15 (2004), pp. 5-16, at p. 9.

Europe' hardly mentions 'Americanization' and avoids it as an analytical term.⁴³ Champions of a transnational approach to history have stressed that the exchange of ideas, goods, and practices across the Atlantic was never a one-sided affair. Where there was Americanization, there always was Europeanization, too.⁴⁴ And, more importantly: the 'America' that imposes its culture, values and goods on other nations was never a monolithic block, but itself underwent constant, sometimes dramatic, changes. And even if clear American 'influences' on European societies can be identified – be it Hollywood films, popular music, production methods, business models, or political values – these 'Americanisms' immediately change their meaning once they are transplanted into a different society and become appropriated. On the receiving end of processes of 'Americanization' are people whose very *Eigensinn* prevents their simple Americanization by means of American products or ideas. For this reason, 'Americanization' has been rejected as too simplistic a term to describe the cultural, political and economic changes in twentieth-century Europe. But alternatives are hard to come by; substitute terms such as Europeanization, Westernisation, or globalization, introduced to avoid the notion of a static 'America' that imposed its values and culture on Europe, suffer from similar shortcomings. Any of these terms seem too general and unspecific to describe the social, economic, and cultural history of Europe during the twentieth century. Westernization, for example, favoured by the German historian Anselm

⁴³ Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible empire: America's advance through twentieth century Europe*. (Boston, Mass., 2005).

⁴⁴ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic crossings: social politics in a progressive age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1998).

Doering-Manteuffel, makes far more sense from a German than from a French, British, or even American perspective, and works best when the ‘West’ is detected as an ideological construct of the Cold War era.⁴⁵

‘Anti-Americanism’ has proved to be similarly difficult to define. Most scholars agree that the use of often negative stereotypes to characterize the USA is not sufficient to qualify as ‘anti-Americanism’. A high level of radicalism and coherence needs to be present in anti-American statements to distinguish it from mere negative stereotyping or even legitimate criticism of the USA. Our understanding of the term anti-Americanism is further complicated by its dual character as political slogan and heuristic tool. In contrast to the inflationary use of this catch-phrase in present-day USA, it was absent from European debates about ‘Americanism’ and ‘Americanization’ in the interwar period, even though the phenomenon can be clearly identified. During the Cold War, it was increasingly used as a political term to defend the USA against unfair criticism. According to Philipp Gassert, Golo Mann introduced the term ‘anti-Americanism’ to German debates in 1953, while in France it had already been adopted in the late 1940s.⁴⁶ In contrast to other political ideologies such as socialism, fascism, or liberalism, anti-Americanism has never been used by its champions as a positive label; similarly it has never become institutionalized in parties or other political associations – another important difference between

⁴⁵ Anselm Doering-Manteuffel, *Wie westlich sind die Deutschen? Amerikanisierung und Westernisierung im 20. Jahrhundert*. (Göttingen, 1999); Marcowitz, *Nationale Identität*.

⁴⁶ Golo Mann, ‘Urteil and Vorurteil’ *Mercur* 8 (1953), pp. 390-394; Gassert, *The anti-American as Americanizer*, p. 25.

anti-Americanism and its 'twin brother' anti-Semitism. Hence an 'official' definition of anti-Americanism by its chief representatives that could guide historical research is missing. In the political arena, 'anti-Americanism' remains an accusation thrown at anyone who disagrees with American policies, practice, or values. A way of dealing with this situation could be further research into the history of the very term 'anti-Americanism': Despite the numerous works that have studied processes of 'Americanization' and 'anti-Americanism' as a political ideology, a thorough conceptual history of these terms that meets the standards of the handbook *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe* remains a desideratum.⁴⁷ Such a study would clarify our understanding of the diverse and changing meanings of 'anti-Americanism' as a catch phrase, a political slogan, and an analytical term. It should also include a study of the American understanding of the term 'Americanization', i.e. the integration of immigrants into the society of the USA.

⁴⁷ *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe. Historisches Lexikon zur politisch-sozialen Sprache in Deutschland*, eds Otto Brunner, Werner Conze, Reinhart Koselleck, 8 vols, (Stuttgart, 1972-1997).