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**NARRATIVES OF RESENTMENT:  
NOTES TOWARDS A LITERARY HISTORY  
OF EUROPEAN ANTI-AMERICANISM**

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This essay investigates the history and internal functioning of a specifically *literary* form of anti-Americanism that, for more than two hundred years, has played a key role in the propagation of negative images of the United States. Literary anti-Americanism, as I propose to call this tradition in European literature in particular, is important both in terms of literary history and the history of anti-American discourse in general. Not only is antagonism towards American civilization a significant thematic strain in literature from the late eighteenth century to the present day; literature also articulates this antagonism in a distinctive and highly effective manner based on its capacity for narrative and figurative representation. In the following discussion, I draw out three distinctive strands of this trend in European literature with the aim of demonstrating how literary anti-Americanism, while retaining a basic set of medium-specific properties, is inflected by shifting narrative strategies and ideological biases. Ultimately, I argue, these instances of resentment-driven writing tell us less about the reality of the United States than about the construction of Europe as a common cultural space through the negative representation of its American “other.”

The past decade has seen the emergence of a large body of scholarship on anti-Americanism, divided, with few overlaps, between varieties originating in the social sciences and the field of cultural history.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the former variety focuses on the

contemporary extent and intensity of anti-American attitudes, typically basing its conclusions on opinion polls and statistics, the latter concerns itself with anti-Americanism as a discursive tradition and often relies heavily on fictional literature as a source of hard-hitting quotes and examples of hostile attitudes towards the United States in different historical periods.<sup>2</sup> This prominence of literature in cultural histories of anti-Americanism is not surprising. Whether justified or not, the celebrity and presumed intellectual authority of literary writers lend a certain weight to their pronouncements on American civilization; moreover, it is often in literature that we encounter the most unambiguous and programmatically extreme instances of anti-American resentment.

Yet even as fictional literature is mined for examples, its specific contribution to anti-American discourse has not yet been made an object of independent inquiry.<sup>3</sup> In studies of European anti-Americanism, literary texts are mostly addressed anecdotally, as a means of providing illustrations for the authors' main historical points. Instead of engaging with the structure and style of individual works, these studies scan them for instances of anti-American rhetoric, preferring canonized writers and often following the rule that the more extreme the views, the better. By focusing on isolated statements made either by the narrator or the characters, this approach evidently runs the risk of misjudging the precise status of these statements within the work as a whole, for example by overlooking how they are modified, contradicted, or even undermined by their context or mode of articulation. However, a far greater problem lies in the fact that going à la carte in this way leads scholars to underestimate the significance that anti-Americanism can assume within a work of fictional literature.

Anti-Americanism in literature is precisely not limited to isolated attacks on the United States. In a range of canonical literary works from Romanticism to the present day, anti-American ideas are woven into the very fabric of the texts to such a degree that anti-Americanism, far from being incidental, rises to the status of a comprehensive literary strategy. The antagonism towards the United States in these works is not confined to explicit statements, but manifests itself equally in the description of backgrounds and scenes, the imagery, the portrayal of characters, the structure and development of the plot, and the treatment of themes and motifs; and often these different levels are interconnected to such an degree that anti-American attitudes can be said to dictate the composition and design of the text from beginning to end. In works of this type, the specific resources of literature are mobilized in view of producing a consistently negative representation of the United States that derives its strength and power of persuasion from its literary form rather than its vitriolic eloquence. This comprehensive use of anti-Americanism as a literary strategy cannot be understood adequately simply by scanning the texts for anti-American views. Literary anti-Americanism is literature through and through and should be studied *as* literature with the tools and methodologies of literary criticism.

This essay consequently explores the discursive specificity of literary anti-Americanism, defining its central concept as a species of intercultural resentment directed not against individual persons or individual national characteristics, but against American civilization as a whole.<sup>4</sup> The key hypothesis is that the medium-specific features of fictional literature has allowed this genre of writing to contribute much more than is generally assumed to the development and dissemination of anti-American discourse. This idea is pursued in two steps. The first, analytical part of the paper discusses three varieties of anti-American literature—exemplified in turn by

Charles Dickens's *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843–44), Georges Duhamel's *Scènes de la vie future* (1930), and Graham Greene's *The Quiet American* (1955)—with the aim of pinpointing the dominant narrative forms in three successive historical periods and thereby providing a framework for a literary history of anti-Americanism.<sup>5</sup>

As a second step, the paper presents a more systematic take on literary anti-Americanism aimed at identifying its main formal characteristics and the way in which they produce the anti-American outlook of individual literary works. By way of conclusion, the final section points towards the obsession with European identity as a transhistorical constant of literary anti-Americanism throughout its more than two-hundred-year history.

### The Disillusioned Emigrant

The single most influential specimen of anti-Americanism in European literary history is no doubt Charles Dickens's novel *Martin Chuzzlewit*, which was published in monthly installments in 1843–44 and written under the impression of the author's first visit to America in 1842—a trip that also supplied material for the travel book *American Notes* (1842). This novel does not have the United States for its main theme, yet it does offer a lengthy episode tracing the protagonist's journey to America in an unsuccessful attempt to earn a fortune as an architect on the western frontier. Malcolm Bradbury has argued that Dickens included this episode for opportunistic reasons, motivated by the fact that this particular novel was selling relatively modestly compared to earlier successes such as *Oliver Twist* and *The Old Curiosity Shop*—the author was well aware that satirical assaults on the American “cousins” would be popu-

lar with his domestic readership.<sup>6</sup> Yet the American episode is in fact more successfully integrated into the overall design of the novel than this anecdote suggests. As Dickens points out in the preface to the 1850 edition, the overarching theme of *Martin Chuzzlewit* is selfishness, represented via the infighting of a large and colorful family over the fortune of old Chuzzlewit. Exploring this theme, Dickens casts the United States as the national incarnation of this disposition and further accords the American excursion a therapeutic role in curing the protagonist's egoistic tendencies; witnessing the pervasive selfishness of the Americans makes Martin Chuzzlewit realize his own failings in this respect and persuades him to mend his ways.

While Dickens scholars sometimes deny that the American chapters of *Martin Chuzzlewit* are anything other than a good-natured satire, comparable to the author's critical digs at his own country,<sup>7</sup> the attack on the United States in this novel is in fact remarkably aggressive; moreover, rather than being tied to the perspectives of individual characters, the negative views are almost always voiced directly by Dickens's authoritative narrator. In the typical style of early Victorianism, the novel particularly pokes fun at what Dickens's contemporary and fellow novelist Fanny Trollope called the "domestic manners" of the Americans,<sup>8</sup> exemplified here by tobacco chewing and public spitting, low standards of personal hygiene, filthy table manners, poor conversation skills, loud and intolerant patriotism, as well as a pervasive materialism that not only undermines morality, but ultimately makes all values subject to that of the dollar. True to the panoramic style of his novelistic writings, Dickens furthermore acquaints us with a broad selection of American types. The men, from newsboys to senators, are represented as loud and obnoxious swindlers. The women are perceived exclusively in terms of their deviation from the Dickensian ideal of the domes-

tic angel and are consequently portrayed either as insipid (“strangely devoid of individual traits of character”) or as manly and excessively emancipated (“of masculine and towering intellect”).<sup>9</sup> Finally, Dickens—like many British writers of this age—never tires of mocking the pronunciation and linguistic usage of the Americans, which he finds to be a perfectly suitable vehicle for vulgar American ideas.

The anti-Americanism of Dickens’s novel consists to a large extent in this relentless satire of American manners and social customs. The extraordinary range of the critique is itself a testimony to the fact that the author is not simply attacking individual American or isolated aspects of the United States, but, in the manner of true anti-Americanism, is offering a broad denunciation of America as a civilization. This is particularly evident from the persistence with which Dickens targets the symbols of the United States as a political and national community. Thus, the Stars and Stripes is dismissed variously as an “idle rag” (266) and a “sorry fustian” (347), while the American eagle in the words of Martin’s servant ought to be drawn “like a Bat, for its shortsightedness; like a Bantam, for its bragging; like a Magpie, for its honesty; like a Peacock, for its vanity; like an Ostrich, for its putting its head in the mud, and thinking nobody sees it” (516). By systematically desecrating America’s national symbols in this way, Dickens invents what has since become a standard practice of global anti-Americanism.

However, if one only took into account this layer of explicit critique, the overall verdict might well confirm the idea that the American episode of *Martin Chuzzlewit* is simply an example of sustained satire by an author who was not always kind to his own people either. In order to measure the true extent of this novel’s anti-Americanism, it is necessary to investigate how the protagonist’s excursion to the United States, in terms of its narrative structure, is designed primarily to produce a

negative account of American civilization. Since this narrative design is not directly a part of Dickens's burlesque satire and not dependent on the increasingly jaded perspective of the protagonist but makes up a more fundamental layer of the text, it is critically important for understanding the image of America projected by the novel.

The form Dickens chooses for the American episode of *Martin Chuzzlewit* is a standard model of nineteenth-century literary anti-Americanism that can be conceptualized as the *narrative of the disillusioned emigrant*. Historically, this narrative paradigm is a literary reaction to the onset of mass emigration from Europe to the United States, particularly from the 1830s onwards. A phenomenon of major political and cultural significance on both sides of the Atlantic, this wave of migration was accompanied by—and to an extent further strengthened—a quasi-mythological perception of America as the land of freedom and unbounded opportunity. Since the flipside of this popular mythology was a much less enthusiastic image of Europe as a continent of oppression and poverty, it provoked antagonistic reactions among the European elites who worried about depopulation and still believed firmly in the cultural superiority of the Old World vis-à-vis the New. In an attempt to counter the popular, often heavily romanticized emigration narratives of this period, a different demographic of writers consequently set about producing cautionary tales of emigrant disillusionment in the morally and culturally backward United States. Dickens's story of Martin Chuzzlewit is simply the most enduring example of this alternative, anti-American tradition which also includes contemporary writers such as Austrian Nikolaus Lenau, Frenchman Gustave de Beaumont (Tocqueville's travel companion in America), and Ferdinand Kürnberger, also of Austria, whose vitriolic novel *Der Amerikamüde* (1855) represents the most extreme version of this anti-emigration and anti-American genre.



Answering popular enthusiasm for America with stories of failed emigration, the narratives of disillusionment all conform to the same highly codified pattern. *Martin Chuzzlewit* is a remarkably pure example, and it is worth dwelling briefly on the structure of this version simply because it is replicated so often in nineteenth-century European literature. True to the generic norm, the American subplot begins with the arrival of the title character at the New York harbor. At the outset, Martin is filled with excessive hopes of financial success, but his enthusiasm starts to wear off *even before* he sets foot on American soil, as he watches in disbelief the rowdiness of American newspaper sellers representing publications such as the “New York Sewer” and the “New York Keyhole Reporter.” In a manner characteristic of anti-American discourse, the reversal from infatuation to disenchantment resembles an immediate allergic reaction,<sup>10</sup> and from this point onwards the disappointments follow in rapid succession. From seemingly honest acquaintances, Martin learns of a utopian settlement on the frontier with the alluring name Eden and is persuaded by aggressive sales tactics to invest in a plot of land. As it turns out, he has been deceived. Rather than a roaring boomtown set in a terrestrial paradise, Eden is a handful of ramshackle huts in a poisonous swamp that seems to have been lifted directly from French naturalist Buffon’s well-known descriptions of America as a cold and noxious continent unfit for human life.<sup>11</sup> Martin immediately falls ill and nearly dies before eventually recovering. It is during this sickness, which was caused by American fraudulence, that the protagonist has an epiphany regarding selfishness. With this moral lesson learnt, and with the loss of both his money and his American illusions, the protagonist returns to England.

The anti-American point of this story is evident: American emigration is an endeavor doomed to failure, and Americans are despicable people who lack manners

and are chronically dishonest in their business dealings. However, the attraction of this narrative paradigm to a novelist such as Dickens lies not only in the way in which it sets up this conclusion as justified and inevitable, but also in the fact that it provides the means of exposing the protagonist to different parts and aspects of contemporary America: different geographical settings, different social groups, and a wide range of different characters and situations, all of which testify unanimously to the loathsomeness of American civilization. In this sense, the narrative of the disillusioned emigrant serves a double purpose. On the one hand it sets out a path leading with seemingly logical and necessary steps from enthusiastic arrival to disillusioned departure. On the other hand, as a counterpoint to this linearity, it allows for an expansive accumulation of critical details and observations. The true anti-Americanism of a novel like *Martin Chuzzlewit* should be looked for here: not in isolated remarks and programmatic denunciations, but in a narrative compromise between sequenced progression and episodic illustration, formed with the ultimate aim of denigrating the United States.

#### Literary Futurology

In the period between the World Wars, a new narrative paradigm centered on the modernity of the United States rises to prominence in anti-American literature. During this period, a gap had opened up between war-torn Europe and the burgeoning America of the 1920s. In becoming a civilization of automobiles, high-rise buildings, cinemas, and mass consumerism, the United States had taken a significant lead over the Old World in the process of modernization. As a consequence, anti-American discourse acquires a new temporal orientation: rather than poking fun at

the backward and ill-mannered provincials on the far side of the world, it now focuses on the futuristic aspect of America, and the journey across the Atlantic Ocean is increasingly seen as a journey in time as much as in space, the destination being the pinnacle of modernity. For interwar Europeans, studying the United States was an exercise in practical futurology, and the idea that “we can read *our own* future by an imaginative scrutiny of what is occurring, and what is so plainly destined to occur there” achieves almost paradigmatic status in contemporary European discourse on America.<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that this futurological perception of the United States was by no means uniformly negative; thus, to less conservative observers America’s modernity seemed to hold a promise of cultural regeneration. However, the cultural elite was mostly horrified at the prospect of an “Americanized” future and tended to cast the United States, not as a political enemy, but as Europe’s antagonist in a life-or-death struggle of civilizations.

The narrative form corresponding to this mindset can be referred to as *anti-American futurology*. The best-known example is Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1932). Set in London in the twenty-sixth century, this novel barely mentions the United States, and it would be an exaggeration to label it as outright anti-American. However, when imagining British society of the future, Huxley clearly draws on the contemporary European critique of America as a rampant and excessive manifestation of modernity. This is true of the overall concept of the novel, namely the vision of machines and technology replacing artisanal skill and ultimately taking over control of human life and reproduction. Yet the reference to contemporary America is even more conspicuous in the features with which Huxley equips his future society: high-rise buildings, dollars, consumerism, synthetic music, multisensorial films (“feelies,” a logical next step after Hollywood’s “talkies”), sexual promiscuity, sports,

social conformism, and a complete indifference to history, spiritual life, and art<sup>13</sup>—these features being the main causes of concern over the United States among interwar conservatives. Tellingly, Henry Ford is revered as a god: London's Big Ben has been renamed "Big Henry," the citizens use expletives such as "Oh, Ford!" and the calendar sets the birth of the great American industrialist as its starting point, the plot taking place in the year 632 A.F. Seen in this light, Huxley's novel strikingly exemplifies the temporal structure of literary anti-Americanism of the interwar period. This novel is not just a pioneering work of science fiction, but at the same time an oblique critique of contemporary American modernity.

While *Brave New World* is not overtly anti-American, it clearly subscribes to the view that the progress of modernization in the United States constitutes an existential threat to European civilization. This was a widely held view among European literary authors of the 1920s and 1930s, particularly those of a cultural conservative mindset. It is articulated forcefully by French author Georges Duhamel, who visited the United States in 1928 and published his impressions in 1930 in the form of a highly essayistic novel with the characteristic title *Scènes de la vie future* ("Scenes of Future Life," translated into English under the equally characteristic title *America the Menace*). In this book, Duhamel represents the United States as the high-point of an out-of-control modernity in the process of dismantling the cultural heritage of the West. The alarmist tone is indicative of the anxiety that modern America provoked. Like many conservative writers of this period, Duhamel regarded Europe as threatened by two emerging civilizations of non-European provenance, the Soviet Union and the United States. Although his conservative humanism was fundamentally at odds with communism, he nevertheless saw the latter as the greater danger by far: communism, he claims, is just a social experiment confined to the

sphere of politics, whereas the United States is a full-blown “civilization” offering new values and ideas bearing on every aspect of human existence.<sup>14</sup> Because of its all-encompassing reach, “Americanism” has the power to utterly destroy Europe, and Duhamel’s book is therefore conceived somewhat dramatically as a call to arms on behalf of Europe’s “moral” civilization against the “material or mechanical” civilization of the Americans.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of narrative structure, *Scènes de la vie future* is an extreme example of literary anti-Americanism’s tendency to supplement the syntagmatic progression of the plot with a paradigmatic accumulation of observations and criticisms. Within the framework of a loosely organized narrative telling the story of a Frenchman undertaking a study trip to the United States, Duhamel presents us with a succession of impressionistic sketches addressing the constituent elements of American modernity: cars, films, factories, advertisements, sport, technology, commerce.

The futuristic aspect of American civilization is seen to manifest itself with particular clarity in the American metropolis, which Duhamel interprets in aesthetic terms as defying the classicist ideals of harmony, symmetry, and happy proportions. Since these ideals presume the human being as their universal, timeless measure, this defiance implies that American cities are unfit as human habitats. Stretching over thirty miles along the shores of Lake Michigan, the city of Chicago—Duhamel’s main example—is already inhuman by virtue of its horizontal extension, and it grows at such an alarming rate that the Frenchman, using his favored oncological imagery, feels justified in describing it as “the tumour, the cancer among cities” (78). Vertically, too, Chicago exceeds human understanding. At night, towering far above the street, the “immoderate” skyscrapers blaze “with every light that pride can invent” (83). For Duhamel, these American towers of Babel represent the disharmony that characterizes

the country as a whole: “The American people have raised their inhuman cities on a soil that never invites moderation. Lakes, valleys, rivers, forests, plains—all are huge; nothing seems made to incline man to thoughts of harmony. Everything is too big; everything discourages Apollo and Minerva” (89–90). To make matters even worse, Chicago’s unreasonable proportions are supplemented by its extraordinary pace and restless activity. Duhamel tries to convey an impression of this overwhelming dynamism by recounting a breathless car ride through the city. As a sublime experience in the sense of Burke and Kant, it is represented using metaphors drawn from nature in uproar. Thus, the trains of the “Elevated” zoom by “like iron storms over an unclean and stupid crowd” (81), and the car traffic at street level is a “horizontal cataract,” thundering on at the insane speed of thirty-five miles per hour: “Cars are turned loose there like toys that have gone mad. They seem free at last to rush against one another, to defy one another. There are no pedestrians, and no horses. That space they have conquered for themselves—for their very own” (80).

The logic underlying this representation of the American metropolis informs Duhamel’s analyses of the United States in general. Everywhere the constituent elements of American modernity are cast as futuristic threats to the harmony and authenticity of the Old World. If Chicago is seen as the antithesis to the European village with its historical roots and harmonious integration into the natural environment, then, similarly, its famous stockyards are interpreted as “death-factories” where the age-old compact between humans and domestic animals is rescinded in favor of mechanical cold-bloodedness, while its cinemas are viewed as an assault by the ignorant masses on the refined and intellectually demanding cultural traditions of Europe. These images of modern America are relatively commonplace as manifestations of a widespread conservative hostility towards modernity in the interwar

period. Yet the narrative form is important. By casting the journey to the United States as a journey to the future, Duhamel not only creates a framing device for his essayistic observations; the futurological form also allows him to make the United States a scapegoat for the threatening processes of modernization that had also taken hold in Europe and that, strictly speaking, had no particular national origin. Seen in this light, the narrative form of *Scènes de la vie future* is a means of crafting and upholding a double fantasy: one of Europe as the continent of unspoiled authenticity, and one of America as the continent of modern decadence.

#### The Anti-American Tribunal

Gaining prominence in the postwar period, the third narrative paradigm of literary anti-Americanism is characterized by being outspokenly political in its perception of the United States. This is a new development. Anti-American literature of the nineteenth century mostly ignored politics in favor of cultural objections to what was seen as the poor manners and philistinism of the American people. In the interwar period, anti-American literature may well have been sharply divided between Left and Right, but although the two resulting varieties represented the United States ideologically as the incarnation of either capitalism or modernity, they rarely concerned themselves with the specific political dispositions of the American government, whether at home or abroad. This situation changes fundamentally after World War II. The United States now becomes the object of intense political and moral scrutiny, focused particularly on its new superpower status and increasingly activist foreign policy, but also addressing domestic issues such as racial segregation

and social inequality. Thus, literary anti-Americanism takes a turn towards politics, and for the first time in the history of this discourse the resentment against the United States has its strongest following on the Left.

In response to America's new prominence in world politics, and as a vehicle for political critique, this period sees the emergence of a new type of literary anti-Americanism that can be described as the *anti-American tribunal*. This narrative form is designed with a view to demonstrating, through the medium of literature, the inherent criminality of the United States, not only as a political actor, but as a civilization and a collective mindset replicated at the level of the individual. This idea of the anti-American tribunal receives a striking expression in French novelist Henri de Montherlant's *Chaos and Night* (1963), in which the somewhat quixotic protagonist passes censure on America in a characteristically general manner: "A single nation that has succeeded in lowering the intelligence, the morality, the quality of the human race almost throughout the globe is a phenomenon never before experienced since the beginning of the world. I accuse the United States of being in a constant state of crime against humanity."<sup>16</sup> However, as in the previous examples, the anti-American tribunal is not just a matter of expressing a hostile view of the United States. It is, first and foremost, a means of configuring the narrative structure in such a way that it resembles a legal proceeding against the United States, encompassing a comprehensive indictment, a final verdict, and often also an immediate fulfillment of this verdict.

This use of literature as a political tribunal, with the United States as the defendant, becomes a dominant form of literary anti-Americanism after World War II, and its history closely tracks the most controversial American policy choices of the post-war period. Soon after the outbreak of the Cold War, it manifests itself in a French



communist writer such as Roger Vailland, whose censored 1952 drama *Le Colonel Foster plaidera coupable* (“Colonel Foster pleads guilty”) speaks in legal terms even in its title and presents a comprehensive indictment of what it portrays as American war crimes and imperialism in Korea. In the late 1960s, literary tribunalism features prominently in the international resistance to the Vietnam War, perhaps most characteristically in German dramatist Peter Weiss’s docudrama *Viet Nam Diskurs* (“Vietnam Discourse”) (1968), a literary equivalent to Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre’s International War Crimes Tribunal with which the author was closely associated. Finally, this narrative form has recently been given a new lease of life as the main type of literary anti-Americanism of the George W. Bush era. To offer just a single example, British spy-novel master John le Carré’s *Absolute Friends* (2003) may not use overt legal fictions to the same extent as Vailland and Weiss, yet in addition to arguing the illegality of the 2003

Iraq War, this novel also makes the barely disguised accusation that the Bush administration masterminded 9/11 and the threat of fundamentalist terror as a pretext for starting a self-serving “War on Terror.”<sup>17</sup> Here, as in the previous examples, the plot is predicated on the idea of the deep criminality of the United States both as a nation and a civilization.

In British literature, the classic example of anti-American tribunalism is Graham Greene’s *The Quiet American*.<sup>18</sup> Set in Saigon in the final phase of the First Indochina War, this novel is both the story of an intercultural love triangle and a political thriller complete with war, terrorism, and espionage. The narrator is middle-aged British war correspondent Thomas Fowler, who has left his wife and native country in favor of a new existence in Vietnam centered on his relationship with the local woman Phuong. A self-professed cynic, Fowler refuses to take sides in the ongoing

conflict. In this he is the direct opposite of the young idealist Alden Pyle, the title's "quiet American," whom he meets and befriends in Saigon. Officially, Pyle works for the American Economic Aid Mission, but in reality he is an agent of the newly established CIA. Religiously committed to the views of his mentor, the (fictitious) Indochina expert York Harding, Pyle operates on the premise that neither the French colonial masters nor the communist insurgents should be allowed to win the war, and that American interests are best served by secretly sponsoring a "third force" capable of transforming Vietnam into a U.S.-friendly democracy. In pursuing these plans, Pyle gets involved with a Vietnamese outfit responsible for terrorist attacks on the civilian population. At the same time, he succeeds in stealing away the narrator's partner, who is won over by his offer of marriage and financial security. In conjunction these events finally lead Fowler to take action by providing his communist contacts with the information needed to assassinate the American.

In order to understand Greene's tribunalism, it is important to note that the narrative model of this novel is the inverted plot structure of detective fiction: it opens with the discovery of Pyle's body and the efforts of the French police to identify the culprit, and only very gradually reveals the events leading up to the murder. Fowler's involvement is immediately suspected, and the questioning prompts him to justify his actions, more to himself and the readers than to the police, by telling the story of his ambiguous friendship with Pyle. However, Fowler's selfjustification essentially takes the form of an all-out attack on Pyle and the country of which he is seen as a representative, and it is therefore a key constituent of the novel's anti-Americanism. Fowler is precisely not content with establishing that the murder of Pyle was necessary and just; he also produces an indictment against American civilization in general, seen in this novel as naïve, yet lethally dangerous.

The charges against Pyle and his country are double, cultural as well as political. The cultural anti-Americanism is apparent even in the novel's title. The idea of Pyle as a "quiet American" is formed in contrast to the traditional anti-American image of the rowdy, uncultured Yankees, incarnated in this case by Fowler's American colleagues, to whom the Englishman refers as "noisy bastards."<sup>19</sup> Yet the decibel level of American conversation is only a small part of the problem. The narrator's denunciation of the United States is made up of a wide range of seemingly random elements, much in the style of Dickens and Duhamel: an obligatory stab at the American love of dollars (75); a desire to see Pyle married to "a standardised American girl who subscribed to the Book Club" (27); a tiredness with "the whole pack of them with their private stores of Coca-Cola and their portable hospitals and their too wide cars and their not quite latest guns" (26). In a particularly telling passage, which emphasizes the perceived gap between America and Britain/Europe, Fowler speaks of the opposition between what was once called "sterling qualities" and what must now be called "dollar love." The formerly unshakeable pound sterling has fallen into disrepair, and the same is true of the emotional and evaluative authenticity it stood for. Instead the American dollar has taken over as the global reserve currency. In the narrator's analogy, this is presented as the triumph of American middle-class values—"dollar love" means "marriage and Junior and Mother's Day, even though later it might include Reno or the Virgin Islands or wherever they go nowadays for their divorces" (63). This striking metaphorical integration of monetary and normative values is significant: it reveals how Fowler's anti-Americanism is founded on—and tries to compensate for—what is seen as the decline of British and European civilization. In this sense, the narrator's resentment against Pyle and his country reflect an Englishman's anger at seeing the United States displace Britain as a world power.

Whereas these cultural objections belong to the standard repertoire of European anti-Americanism, the novel's political critique is more idiosyncratic. Critics have typically described America's post-World War II foreign policy as cynical and self-interested. However, in presenting the case against Pyle, Fowler highlights instead what he sees as its exaggerated idealism. There is a serious point to the sarcasm when Fowler asks to be saved from "the innocent and the good" (12) and later attacks Pyle's charitable intentions, expressly portraying this attitude as typically American: "I wish sometimes you had a few bad motives, you might understand a little more about human beings. And that applies to your country too, Pyle" (148). In Fowler's analysis, the problem with America's foreign policy stance lies in its idealism—in the fact that the United States sets itself impossibly high-minded goals and has little appreciation of political realities. Returning to more commonplace territory, the narrator further asserts that Pyle's crusade for liberty and democracy is founded on a shocking lack of knowledge of the world outside the United States. According to this view, America's will to world improvement is purely theoretical and characterized by an almost complete ignorance of local conditions, whether political or cultural. Pyle arrives in Vietnam without the slightest practical experience, equipped simply with the complete works of York Harding, which, according to Fowler, testify to a "psychological world of great simplicity" (94) and contain nothing but "mental concepts" (101)—lofty ideas without any connection to the realities of the ongoing war.

Having diagnosed Pyle as naïve and ignorant, Fowler goes on to show that this typically American mindset, when confronted with the moral ambiguity of the real world, tends to transform itself into its polar opposite: a recipe for violence and ruthless cynicism. As leader of the America-friendly "third force," Pyle picks a politically isolated warlord, General Thé, who becomes the beneficiary of covert American aid.

As it turns out, Thé is a brutal terrorist, and Pyle, in his misguided attempts to further the cause of democracy, supplies him with the means of making bombs that are later used in terrorist attacks. This allegation that the CIA was involved in a terrorist campaign against Vietnamese civilians in the early 1950s seems to be without historical basis (this obviously does not excuse later atrocities committed by Americans in Southeast Asia). However, even if Greene overstates his case, his disagreement with American policies in Indochina is not in itself indicative of anti-American bias. The critique only turns anti-American when it rejects any consideration of the political and historical context (the Cold War) and instead explains the political actions of the Americans by pointing towards a specific American mindset typical of a “damned Yankee” (12) like Pyle. In the antagonistic perspective of Graham Greene’s novel, this mindset brings together three features: a missionary idealism, an almost complete ignorance of the world, and an acceptance of violence as a means of achieving a higher political goal.

Seen in this light, *The Quiet American* is an anti-American tribunal in the form of a novel. It presents a comprehensive indictment of an American character, Pyle, who is expressly seen as representative of his country. The fact that this indictment serves as a legal and moral defense for the narrator himself, who also had personal reasons to assist in the killing of the American, does not in any way alter the narrative logic of the plot, which brands the United States as culturally vulgar and politically dangerous. With this view established, the assassination of Pyle not only appears as legitimate and necessary, but acquires additional significance as a symbolic execution of the United States itself.

Fictional Literature as a Medium of Anti-Americanism

The three narrative paradigms discussed in the previous sections are only a very rough outline of the literary history of European anti-Americanism, which is ultimately made up of a multitude of highly diverse literary works critical of American civilization. However, apart from summing up the general outlook of literary anti-Americanism in three different historical periods, all of which are high points in the history of anti-American discourse, the examples also provide material for a comparative analysis of how fictional literature operates as a specific medium of anti-Americanism.

In addressing the question of why literary texts should be taken seriously in a discussion of European anti-Americanism, it makes sense to begin by calling attention to the broad impact of fictional literature relative to most other media.<sup>20</sup> Popular works of literature have large and socially diverse readerships, and in the case of canonized authors, this readership continually renews itself and expands. Even though the massive European-wide success of Duhamel's *Scènes de la vie future* proved short-lived, the three novels discussed above are all cases in point. Each was a major bestseller when it first came out and was immediately translated into a range of European languages. The novels by Dickens and Greene have never been out of print, and their popularity has been boosted by adaptations for cinema or television—four times in the case of *Martin Chuzzlewit*, twice for *The Quiet American*.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, these authors have each served as major sources of inspiration for other writers denouncing the United States: thus, Dickens's story of emigrant disillusionment was emulated by a host of nineteenth-century writers from Ferdinand Kürnberger to Victorien Sardou, while Duhamel's novel served as a key reference for other

French accounts of American modernity of this period, most notably Louis-Ferdinand Céline's watershed novel *Journey to the End of the Night* (1932). When adding to this the frequent use of Dickens and Greene in secondary and tertiary education around the world, the cumulative audience of these novels can safely be counted in millions.

For these reasons alone, fictional literature, particularly the genre of the novel, should be taken seriously as a major factor when studying the dissemination of anti-American discourse. In order to understand fiction's contribution to this discourse, however, we need to take into account the specific resources of literature itself. As the analyses have shown, it is not sufficient when dealing with anti-American literature to focus on the explicit utterances made against the United States either by the characters or the narrator. It is the hallmark of literary anti-Americanism, as opposed to other (written) varieties of anti-Americanism, that it does not simply put forward its antagonistic ideas discursively, as propositions that can be argued *pro et contra*, but articulates them instead in the form of narrative. It is characterized by reversing the formula that underlies anti-American discourse as such: where anti-Americanism in the broad sense proceeds by generalizing from individual observations, literary anti-Americanism conversely turns generalized views into individualized narratives. This "emplotment" of anti-Americanism not only brings the discourse to life in vividly concrete rather than abstract forms; it is also a strategy of legitimization, seeking to offer proof of its resentment by means of storytelling rather than discursive reasoning.

The translation of anti-American discourse from the plane of ideas to that of narrative is highly significant in terms of the dissemination of anti-Americanism. To offer just a single example, the American chapters of *Martin Chuzzlewit* contain little

that Dickens and his readership had not already encountered in contemporary English travel writing on the United States—ideologically, it takes a line very similar to that of Fanny Trollope, Frederick Marryat, or Thomas Moore, whom Dickens quotes approvingly on several occasions. Nevertheless, few works of literature have had greater influence on European anti-Americanism. Setting aside Dickens's huge international readership, this influence must be put down to the literary structure of the novel's American parts, in particular the storyline describing the protagonist's disillusionment with the United States, but also to Dickens's ability to create a satirical panorama of what are seen as typical American incidents and characters. Whereas a purely discursive form of anti-Americanism is based on arguments (thereby exposing itself to counterarguments and, ultimately, refutation), the literary form speaks to very different mental dispositions. Anti-American literature relies on identification with a protagonist who offers an individualized and personally invested perspective on the United States, thereby limiting the scope within the text for alternative viewpoints. Further, it exploits the disposition of readers to immerse themselves in the work and tempts them into accepting uncritically a fictional world that casts the United States in purely negative terms. By transforming abstract judgments into narrative episodes in this way, literature provides anti-American object lessons while at the same time making anti-Americanism immune to rational critique.

Above all, however, literary anti-Americanism depends for its impact on its narrative form. Narrative can be defined as a synthesis of heterogeneous elements, uniting characters, actions, and settings within a structure that imbues a contingent series of occurrences with an appearance of necessity or probability—thereby articulating chaotic information in an orderly and meaningful way.<sup>22</sup> The anti-American narratives discussed above are evidently cases in point. As we have seen,



these narratives bring together a panoramic dimension, consisting of seemingly endless lists of complaints against the United States, and a sequential dimension, which establishes logical links between individual incidents and actions. This duality enables literary anti-Americanism to flesh out in great detail its numerous grievances with the United States while at the same time uniting this multitude of observations within an overall structure designed to lend a sense of necessity and irrefutability to its conclusions. The three narrative paradigms of the disenchanting emigrant, the futuristic America, and the anti-American tribunal all operate in exactly this fashion: each contain an encyclopedic range of critical motifs within an overall storyline that establishes the United States, respectively, as the land of disillusionment, the menace of modernity, and the global archcriminal.

Yet apart from supporting the dissemination of anti-American discourse, narrative emplotment also has a productive side to it. Anti-Americanism is not a fixed stock of ideas that exist independently of the media through which they are articulated. The form is constitutive rather than accidental, and for this reason anti-American literature is not simply a vehicle for communicating ideas developed in other contexts, but one of the places in which these ideas come into being. Narrative is a means of interpreting the world, and anti-American narratives consequently offer modes of perceiving and understanding the United States. Literature's specific contribution to anti-American discourse should be sought here: not in aggressive posturing and editorializing, but in its sustained acts of narrative interpretation and the compellingly concrete ways in which they are framed.

Literary Anti-Americanism and European Identity

As we have seen, literary anti-Americanism operates in more subtle and subterranean ways than that of the open statement, and for this reason it can only be studied adequately by paying close attention to the rhetoric as well as the structure and formal design of individual texts. The image of the United States found in anti-American literature is hardly ever particularly original, yet the narrative paradigms discussed in this article provide the means of articulating commonplace ideas in new and engaging ways. These paradigms produce their effects by showing rather than telling, by inviting readers to identify with the perceptions and experiences of the protagonist, and by using the plot to make their anti-American conclusions appear as the necessary and logical endpoint to a sequence of interconnected events. These features go a long way in explaining the considerable impact of fictional literature on anti-American discourse in general.

Having examined the “how” of literary anti-Americanism, the question remains as to the “why”—that is, the ends to which literary texts craft their negative representations of the United States. Even though individual variations are somewhat counterbalanced by the high degree of uniformity that characterizes anti-Americanism as a discourse, it is unlikely that this question can find a single, definitive answer. However, when surveying the literary history of European anti-Americanism, it is conspicuous that political issues have only a very limited role to play, at least before 1945. This near absence of politics is particularly striking in nineteenth-century literature. Dickens, for example, focuses almost exclusively on the “domestic manners” of the Americans and only considers the political institutions of the United States in terms of their adverse effects on American culture; in fact, his disgust with the American habit of chewing tobacco takes up more space in his novel than his somewhat weightier and more creditable objections to slavery. In twentieth-century litera-

ture politics becomes increasingly prominent as a result of America's rising power. Yet Duhamel clearly perceives America, not as a political threat, but as a ruthless competitor to Europe at the level of civilization; and while the political dimension is strong in Greene's *The Quiet American*, the actions of the American characters are still interpreted as indicative of a specific American mentality rather than as a question of political outlook.

The relative absence of politics in anti-American literature prior to World War II is significant: it shows that anti-American discourse predates the rise of the United States as a superpower and further suggests that anti-Americanism in its original form is a question of conflicting cultural values and worldviews rather than political disagreement. Specifically, literary anti-Americanism tends to posit European and American civilization as antithetical entities, thereby establishing a common European identity in contradistinction to the United States. Seen in this light, literary anti-Americanism must be seen as a form of "continentalism": a discourse that transcends nationalism by imagining a degree of continental unity, yet only achieves this at the price of transplanting the nationalistic logic of differentiation from the national to the continental level—that is, by defining Europe in contrast to the United States as its inferior "other." A similar connection between anti-Americanism and European identity was suggested in the wake of the 2003 Iraq War by, among others, Andrei S. Markovits and Timothy Garton Ash; the argument here was that contemporary anti-Americanism fosters a sense of European communality, which in turn provides the basis for continued political integration within the framework of the European Union.<sup>23</sup> However, in the specific context of literature, the functional link between anti-Americanism and European identity actually precedes the project of European unification by more than a century. The continentalist outlook

has been a constant, if not defining, feature of literary anti-Americanism right from its earliest beginnings around 1800. While lacking the aim of political integration, this variety of anti-American discourse revolves around a constant distinction between, on the one hand, what is seen as the culturally and morally corrupt America and, on the other hand, Europe as a manifold unity that manifests itself differently in different regions, yet is able to assure itself of its cultural homogeneity via the comparison with the United States. This logic can already be found in the works of Romantic writers representing America as a deeply philistine country, while at the same time gesturing repeatedly towards a common European heritage with roots in Greco-Roman antiquity and the Middle Ages.<sup>24</sup> Later in the nineteenth century, literary authors seemingly had little difficulty uniting their ever stronger nationalism with continentalist ideas of a great Atlantic divide. In the case of Dickens and his contemporaries, the encounter with America seems to lift the cultural self-reference from the national to the continental level, causing them to think of themselves, not primarily as British, German, or French, but as Europeans. A similar continentalism manifests itself in twentieth-century literature. In the interwar period, Duhamel is only one among many conservative writers who urge Europeans to defend their civilization against the onslaught of American modernity (“Save yourself, Europe!”<sup>25</sup>); and after World War II, the anti-American tribunal of Graham Greene continues to depict Europeans as morally and culturally superior to the ignorant Americans.

Thus, if recent political developments have turned anti-Americanism into a means of producing a common European identity, then this use of the discourse is prefigured in fictional literature of the past two centuries. Literary anti-Americanism is precisely a European discourse in a twofold sense. On the one hand, it exhibits a re-

markable degree of similarity across all parts of the continent<sup>26</sup>—whatever local color there might be tends to fade in comparison with the high degree of supranational uniformity. On the other hand, literary anti-Americanism is intimately connected with the idea of Europe as common cultural space. In this sense, anti-American literature not only imagines America, but at the same time provides a powerful vision of Europe itself.

#### NOTES

1 Peter J. Katzenstein and Robert O. Keohane, eds., *Anti-Americanisms in World Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 2007); Brendan O'Connor, ed., *Anti-Americanism: Histories, Causes, and Themes* (Oxford: Greenwood, 2007). Philippe Roger, *L'ennemi américain: généalogie de l'antiaméricanisme français* (Paris: Seuil, 2002); Dan Diner, *Feindbild Amerika: Über die Beständigkeit eines Ressentiments* (Munich: Propyläen, 2003). Andrei S. Markovits's *Uncouth Nation: Why Europe Dislikes America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2007) notably combines political and cultural approaches into a multifaceted account of European anti-Americanism. For an extensive review of recent scholarship on anti-Americanism, see Brendon O'Connor, "The Anti-American Tradition: A Literature Review," Working Paper of the US Studies Centre, Sydney University (October 2009), [http://ussc.edu.au/s/media/docs/publications/0910\\_oconnor\\_antiamerica.pdf](http://ussc.edu.au/s/media/docs/publications/0910_oconnor_antiamerica.pdf). Accessed August 30, 2013.

2 This extensive use of literature as historical source material is characteristic of almost all existing cultural histories of European anti-Americanism. The above-mentioned studies by Roger, Diner, and Markovits are all cases in point.

3 A number of studies exist, however, of the general image of America in European literature. See Malcolm Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages: Transatlantic Mythologies and the Novel* (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1995); Peter Conrad, *Imagining America* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980); Richard Ruland, *America in Modern European Literature: From Image to Metaphor* (New York: New York Univ. Press, 1976). The present study further develops a line of argument advanced in my recent monograph *Anti-Americanism in European Literature* (New York: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2011).

4 For fuller definitions of anti-Americanism, and in particular its difference from political criticism of the United States, see Markovits, *Uncouth Nation*, 11–37; Russell A. Berman, *Anti-Americanism in Europe* (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2003), xii–xiv; Joseph Joffe, *Überpower* (New York: Norton, 2006), 69–77.

5 Although this paper discusses literature from different European countries, the methodology is not comparative in the sense of highlighting national differences. At the level of discourse (but not necessarily at the level of motivations), anti-Americanism is a “pan-European discourse” and exhibits little variation across different European countries. See Markovits, *Uncouth Nation*, 46.

6 Malcolm Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages*, 103–4. As Bradbury notes, Dickens himself had joked about this fact of Victorian publishing in *The Pickwick Papers*.

7 Thus, Bradbury glosses over the novel’s rampant attacks on America as “a kind of British literary custom, almost an act of friendship.” *Dangerous Pilgrimages*, 117.

8 Fanny Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (London: Penguin, 1997).

9 Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit* (London: Penguin, 1999), 265, 353.

10 The protagonists of Beaumont’s *Marie, ou L’esclavage aux États-Unis* (1835) and Kürnberger’s *Der Amerikaniide* (1855) undergo similarly abrupt conversions from infatuation to despair when first disembarking in the United States. For an account of anti-

Americanism as “a systematic opposition—a sort of allergic reaction—to America as a whole,” see Marie-France Toinet, “Does Anti-Americanism Exist?” in *The Rise and Fall of Anti-Americanism: A Century of French Perception*, ed. Denis Lacorne, Jacques Rupnik, and Marie-France Toinet (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990), 219.

11 See, for example, Georges-Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon, “From Natural History, General and Particular,” in *Was America a Mistake?: An Eighteenth-Century Controversy*, ed. Henry Steele Commager & Elmo Giordanetti (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 51–74.

12 Wyndham Lewis, *America and Cosmic Man* (Garden City, NY: Country Life Press, 1949),

12. See also Richard Pells, *Not Like Us: How Europeans Have Loved, Hated, and Transformed American Culture Since World War II* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 201–3.

13 See David Bradshaw’s introduction to the Vintage edition of the novel, Aldous Huxley,

*Brave New World* (London: Vintage, 2004), vii ff.

14 In the words of D.H. Lawrence: “Bolshevism only smashes your house or your business or your skull, but Americanism smashes your soul.” See *The Plumed Serpent* (Ware: Wordsworth Classics, 1995), 35.

15 Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future* (Paris: Mille et une nuits, 2003), 10.

16 Henri de Montherlant, *Chaos and Night*, trans. Terence Kilmartin (London: Weidenfeld

& Nicholson, 1964), 241.

17 Jesper Gulddal, “The One Great Hyperpower in the Sky: Anti-Americanism in Contemporary European Literature,” in *The Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 20, no. 4 (2007): 682–86.

18 For a discussion of Graham Greene's lifelong anti-Americanism, see Boyd Creasman, "Twigs in the Spokes. Graham Greene's Anti-Americanism," *Studies in the Humanities* 14, no. 2 (1987): 106–15. See also Martin Amis, "Graham Greene," in *Visiting Mrs Nabokov and other Excursions* (London: Penguin, 1994), 1–7.

19 Graham Greene, *The Quiet American* (London: William Heinemann & The Bodley Head, 1973), 8, 15.

20 Film is conceivably the only legitimate rival in terms of influence. Although the differences between the verbal and visual media need to be considered carefully, several of the points I make in this article regarding literature's descriptive and narrative representation of the United States also apply to film.

21 Much to the chagrin of the author, however, the 1958 Mankiewicz production left out most of the novel's anti-Americanism. See Kevin Lewis, "The Third Force: Graham Greene and Joseph L. Mankiewicz's 'The Quiet American,'" in *Film History* 10, no. 4 (1998): 477–91.

22 This neo-Aristotelian view of narrative is the center point of Paul Ricœur's *Temps et récit* (Paris: Seuil, 1983–85).

23 See Andrei S. Markovits, *Uncouth Nation*, 201–23; Timothy Garton Ash, *Free World* (London: Penguin, 2005), 54–94.

24 For a particularly striking example, see Thomas Moore, "Epistle VIII. To the Honourable W. R. Spencer. From Buffalo, Upon Lake Erie," in *Epistles, Odes, and other Poems* (London: James Carpenter, 1806).

25 Georges Duhamel, *Scènes de la vie future*, 154.

26 See Markovits, *Uncouth Nation*, 46 et passim.