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Whitney Walton, *Internationalism, National Identity, and Study Abroad: France and the United States, 1890-1970*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 2010. 280 pp. \$65 U.S. (cl). ISBN 10: 0804762538.

Review by Irwin Wall, University of California, Riverside.

This small book examines mutual French and American study abroad from the 1890s through 1970 in an effort to provide an alternative vantage point from which to examine French-American relations. Walton goes so far as to suggest a different narrative of French-American relations than the existing one that the author believes is excessively focused on Americanization and anti-Americanism as themes, which are for the most part juxtapose with one another. There are two problems with this approach. The first is that the Americanization/anti-Americanism paradigms, which are usually presented as opposed to one another, seem to me taken together to constitute a straw man that does not capture the full richness of the existing literature on Franco-American relations. The second is that the narrow study of students abroad poses questions that answer themselves. That is to say, students abroad are a self-selected group. They choose to go abroad to study because they are aware that different cultures exist worthy of study and they want to experience, compare, and contrast different national identities. They already have, to some extent, the broader outlook, tolerance for difference, even sympathetic understanding and empathy that they later claim to acquire from the experience of studying abroad.

There is thus no surprise in Walton's findings: students abroad learn about foreign cultures and often find them in some ways equal to or superior to their own. In learning about cultural diversity national stereotypes are often undermined, pride in one's own national identity is rendered relative, and even new national identities negotiated. Students return home as partisans of the culture they have studied, and they frequently go for the purpose of becoming that: teachers of the French language, or French history, as the case may be, they return as Francophiles, a welcome antidote to the otherwise normal American Francophobia. French students in America similarly become favorable propagandists for America at home. Students in both countries, having been abroad, demonstrate broader outlooks about foreign cultures generally and are often standard-bearers of internationalism. The problem in America, however, has always been that the academy harbors the Francophiles. The rest of the population remains anti-French.

This is not to say, however, that Walton's study is devoid of interest. On the contrary, I found it, if unsurprising in its conclusions, rich in specific kinds of information I had never inquired into or thought about. One learns that before the Great War the French were deeply concerned about the prominence of Germany as the preferred place of study for young Americans, and anxious to develop their own attractiveness as a Mecca of learning. Scholars like Gilbert Chinard, Professor of French at UC Berkeley, were already advocating reforms of French higher education along American lines in the hope of attracting American students. Attracting Americans was seen as a vital national interest. The opportunity arose with the First World War. A very large potential American student body was present in France with so many

soldiers waiting for demobilization and transportation home. The French organized the *Cours de civilisation française* for foreigners at the Sorbonne and in other French universities, enrolling some 3000 Americans who found themselves in postwar France with idle time on their hands. Many reported that they found much to admire in the leisured and cultivated lifestyles of their hosts, which they contrasted favorably with their own culture's puritan ethic of hard work. Nor were the French content to pull out all the stops for Americans who wanted to study in France. The French-Jewish internationalist banker Albert Kahn, established "around the world" scholarships for French students, allowing them a glimpse of American academic life which they brought back home. Kahn lost his fortune in the Great Depression and his program ceased operations, but not before over 200 students had taken advantage of it, and its spirit lived on in the Fulbright, Ford, and Rockefeller programs in America.

I taught once at Smith College and knew that it had pioneered in formal American "junior year abroad" programs between the wars. I did not know that the University of Delaware, of all places, had been first in the field, however, although it discontinued its program after World War II. Nor had I bothered to inquire about gender difference in study abroad despite being at Smith; Walton shows us that American students in France generally have consistently been characterized by a preponderance of women, even during the interwar period when women were still a minority in higher education. Not surprisingly this has never pleased the sexist French, although they always took what they could get. But then American culture has always perceived France in feminine terms; Paris is still seen as a city of aesthetics, culture, elegance, and refinement, while Germany was regarded as a nation of iron and steel and technological innovation. France is refined, Germany is militaristic. American diplomatic dispatches in the postwar era constantly referred to the French as flighty, irrational, and fickle, typical feminine stereotypes never applied to Germans or Englishmen.

Gender ranks high among Walton's concerns and her more interesting chapters are those in which she focuses on its impact. Consistently over time the same stereotypes have prevailed. American "girls" have always been seen by the French as having loose morals, promiscuous, self-assured, even brazen, as compared to the proper model of more restricted, demur, and modest "jeunes filles." On the other hand, American parents hesitated to send their daughters to France where the men were regarded as seducers; and American girls foolish enough to marry one would be sure, within ten years, to be confronted by the necessity of living *la vie à trois*. To counter the stereotypes the Smithies who went to France in the interwar period found themselves burdened with more restrictions than they faced on their campuses at home. Lodged with host families, they were chaperoned wherever they went, restricted to their hosts' homes from 9 p.m. in the evening, and told to dress conservatively, all in the hope of keeping the infamous Latin seducers at bay.

In the postwar era such restrictions disappeared, but the stereotypes still existed. The students, however, encountered a different reality than the stereotypes prepared them for. The French in America were puzzled by the phenomenon of dating; not to have a date for the weekend on an American campus was a reason to contemplate suicide. In France, young Americans welcomed the French practice of going out in groups without bothering to segregate themselves into pairs. That came informally and later. However, the French were puzzled by the American practice of kissing and petting without going "all the way," and then despising the girls who were willing and prizing those who resisted before the ultimate sexual act. In turn, Americans were shocked by the public displays of affection between Parisian couples; such practices were frowned upon at home. The Americans were also prompted to rethink race relations, noting that the French seemed to take no notice of inter-racial dating and pairing.

The 1960s were politicized years, while the student body going abroad became more numerous, diverse, multi-ethnic, and less sophisticated. Americans encountered more questions about racial oppression at home and imperialism abroad, many of which they found themselves ill-equipped to answer. Bewildered by the radicalism of French students in the 1960s, they watched with often shallow understanding as France appeared to teeter on the edge of rebellion in May 1968. Walton appears ill-equipped to venture into the debate about May 1968 and its subsequent meanings, however, and she is too quick for my taste to side with those who see *les évènements* as psychodrama. The events of May were that, to be sure, but they were much more, at once precipitating the departure of de Gaulle and heralding more profound social change to come. A book dealing with student exchange during the 1960s, in my view, has an obligation to treat student protest during that decade in France and the United States in greater detail.

Others have observed that the contrast between American and French students who studied in each other's countries was instructive for both in ideological ways. French students in America discovered more pragmatic approaches to protest, which often dealt with concrete issues on campus, but they criticized their hosts' lack of ideological instruction. American students in France were bewildered by Maoists, Trotskyists, Anarchists and Situationists in the French student movement who turned campus issues into ideological proclamations about the inevitable collapse of capitalism. The New Left was relegated to the fringes in America, whereas in France it briefly bridged the gap between students and workers, igniting massive social protest in the whole of society. Walton makes no effort to deal with this contrast, but it certainly was impressed upon students who experienced the sixties through study abroad in France and America.

Walton is aware of diplomatic relations between the two countries: she summarizes the virtual subordination of France to American hegemony in the 1950s, and notes France's proud effort at emancipation from the American yoke under de Gaulle in the 1960s. What is interesting from her point of view is how little the diplomatic tensions between the two countries, whether over Algeria or Vietnam, impacted on programs for study abroad. Americans flocked to France to study, in larger numbers than any other country outside North America, Great Britain included. And equal numbers of French came to America, which has long profited from playing host to the world's best students. And both continued to report positively on their experience abroad, showing increased breadth of vision and understanding, manifesting feelings of patriotic internationalism rather than nationalistic sentiments of superiority, exploding stereotypes, learning to value the host culture, and all the while serving as people-to-people ambassadors of good will. The French in America quickly became enamored of the American university system, and post-1968 France embarked upon university reforms inspired by American example. Strung out over fourteen or so campuses in the Paris region, the University of Paris appears to resemble the University of California in overall organization. It remains to be seen whether the French universities will follow the American example of higher tuition and virtual privatization, steps the current British government, amid French-style student protest, now seeks to impose on its own universities with dramatic immediacy. We are getting far beyond the cutoff point in terms of Walton's concerns. On the other hand, the theme of Americanization versus modernization will never lose its salience.

Walton finishes more or less where she began. Students abroad over the eighty-year span of her study more or less found what they went to look for. They undermined national stereotypes and learned to appreciate one another's cultures. They learned a foreign language and a new way of thinking. They familiarized themselves with a different culture and enriched and put into perspective their appreciation of their own national experience. In the process they found themselves questioning and renegotiating their own identities. All the while they accomplished what they had set out to do.

Walton has performed a largely anecdotal history. She has interviewed many former students about their experiences and culled from their answers a workable narrative with considerable skill. She has produced a readable and interesting narrative that is informative and enlightening. It is quite impossible to calculate to what extent the interchange between the two countries impacted their relations, but it could only have done so in beneficial ways. France and America have had their own form of the so-called special relationship, a term that is traditionally reserved for Great Britain in its relations with its former colony. Education abroad, like tourism, for Americans, often seems to begin with France. And the United States looms as the focal point of French diplomacy and interstate relations. Those Americans who studied in France, and those French who studied in America, often grew up actually to conduct the relations between the two countries. It is perhaps in this way that Walton might have sought to bridge the gap between study abroad, tourism, and diplomacy between states. Her history is not, for all that, an alternative to the traditional narrative of state-to-state relations between France and the United States, nor is it particularly surprising in its conclusions. But it is definitely worth reading.

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