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William Cloonan, *Frères Ennemis: The French in American Literature, Americans in French Literature*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018. xiii + 299 pp. Notes, selected bibliography, and index. \$120.00 U.S. (cl) ISBN 978-1-78694-132-9.

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Long before the uneasy bromance between Emmanuel Macron and Donald Trump, Franco-American relations endured plenty of rough patches between those public displays of affection that remind us of France's special standing as the first great ally of the United States. When the Continental Army upset the British at Saratoga, Benjamin Franklin persuaded Louis XVI to support the American colonies in their struggle for independence. The 1778 treaty was altogether pragmatic, based on mutual self-interest and shared enmity for Great Britain, and it formed an enduring yet complicated bond.

William Cloonan picks up the story in the nineteenth century, explaining at the outset, "Although historical and cultural contexts figure heavily in this study, I believe the best way to uncover the special nature of literature's contribution to an understanding of Franco-American tensions requires careful, close reading" (p. 4). This approach delivers a generally informed and insightful discussion of nine representative novels and a score of similar works, all published between the 1870s and the present by French or American authors. Applying the Brooks and Warren New Critical approach, Cloonan's readings locate revealing themes and symbolic patterns. He references cultural events, especially in the later chapters, and includes a few nods to French theory, mainly to elucidate the behavior of fictional characters and their national attributes.

Cloonan describes a "paradigm" that informs most literary works in his purview. The French, he says, perceive Americans as "forceful and wealthy, but uncultivated and naïve" while Americans typically view the French as "well-educated" and culturally sophisticated but "somewhat untrustworthy" and often financially pinched. He further elaborates a series of "rigid dichotomies" (p. 4) underlying these novels, paired oppositions that identify key differences in national types. In several novels these oppositions undergo inversion, however, maintaining national differences but reversing implied power relations. His nine featured novels include five American and four French titles. A professor of modern languages, Cloonan moves easily from English to French, citing secondary scholarship and criticism in both languages. He also draws attention to how language functions socially in each novel, and how it signifies adaptability or intransigence. Coherent, jargon-free, and well-organized, *Frères Ennemis* provides an enjoyable tour of changing national perceptions, as revealed by selected titles. The resulting chronological

study ranges from Henry James's *The American* (1877) to Diane Johnson's *Le Divorce* (2013), moving back and forth from American and French authors and between U.S. and French settings.

The French novels, discussed in chapters two, five, six, and eight, form a curious mix. Cloonan's discussions illuminate texts that seem both more diverse and less predictable than American treatments of Franco-American relationships. Villiers de l'Isle-Adam aims in *L'Ève future* (1886) to portray Thomas Edison paradoxically as a singular yet characteristic American. He associates the Menlo Park world of Edison with darkness rather than light (or lightbulbs), possibly to emphasize his sorcery but perhaps also to hint at moral darkness. For his friend Lord Ewall, the inventor has constructed a lifelike, female android named Hadaly. She has been programmed for subservience, suggesting both Edison's misogyny and his general "disdain for human beings" (p. 61). Set entirely in the United States and devoid of French characters, the novel embodies in Edison the "brilliance" and "superficiality" of the American nation that was already challenging France (p. 65). Villiers here works the rich vein of science fiction exploited by compatriot Jules Verne. But Cloonan overlooks this link, missing a fertile Franco-American connection, the influence of Edgar Allan Poe, not just on Verne but on Villiers himself. Cloonan instead attributes Villiers's skeptical view of America solely to Baudelaire's account of Poe's misfortunes. But Villiers had also read Poe himself and surely knew "Maelzel's Chess-Player," Poe's analysis of a mechanical man (translated by Baudelaire in 1862) that directly anticipates *L'Ève future*. Cloonan's nuanced treatment of Edison's genius scarcely suffers from this oversight, however, and he advances a troubling account of the American inventor.

Simone de Beauvoir's novel *Les Mandarins* (1954), by contrast, captures the intellectual climate of the post-World War II era, the three decades dubbed by the French *Les Trentes Glorieuses*. The relationship between a French woman, Anne Dubreuilh, and the American man, Lewis Brogan, forms the crux of de Beauvoir's national comparison. Cloonan writes: "Lewis's image as a spoiled child and Anne's acquiescence to his whims provide a telling image of the relations between the United States and France during the Cold War" (p. 143). The "mandarin" in this novel is Anne's husband Robert, an aging intellectual whose anti-American sentiments and pro-Communist leanings reflect one alternative for France, caught between American and Russian influence. Anne's attraction to Lewis captures the other course—of embracing the United States and its contradictions, accepting in the process the humiliations of dependency. Cloonan nicely elucidates the historical context to enrich this analysis. The novel includes several other key characters reacting variously to the overarching political dilemma, but Anne's decision to follow Lewis to America and then break with him, returning to France, captures the cultural and political predicament of the French in the post-war era.

Two later novels, Jean Echeroz's *Cherokee* (1986) and Dominique Falkner's *L'Amérique n'existe pas* (2010), reflect a more positive view of the United States. Cloonan titles the Echeroz chapter "Embracing American Culture" and describes an experimental novel deeply inspired by both jazz and American movies. The novel derives its title from a jazz composition, and this underscores the improvisational principle of the story it unfolds. But Cloonan also contends that *Cherokee* is "a complex, well-structured comedy" (p. 153). It is moreover a cinematic comedy, in which the characters Georges and Fred discuss films but also act as if their lives are part of a movie-in-the-making, giving *Cherokee* a metafictional edge. Cloonan concludes, "*Cherokee* is a novel about the making of a modern Franco-American comedy based on French consumerism represented primarily by the influence of American films on the French psyche" (p. 174). But it also hints that France can absorb elements of American culture without losing its own identity. If a warehouse

full of French novels signifies the decline of traditional culture, Cloonan suggests that the nation's prestigious literary legacy yet remains available for intellectual sustenance. Falkner's novel, on the other hand, depicts a road trip across the upper Great Plains from Chicago to Missoula, Montana. Cloonan opens the chapter with a succinct survey of fourteen recent French novels that explore American subjects. But he then explicitly contrasts Jean Baudrillard's meditation, *L'Amérique*, with Falkner's novel. Whereas Baudrillard theorizes America as a site of hyper-reality, where reality and illusion cannot be distinguished, Falkner's travel notebook returns insistently to real people living in actual places, telling their different stories. Baudrillard's *Amérique*, with its fascination for California, remains on the level of "abstraction," while *L'Amérique n'existe pas* draws its title from Henry Miller's claim that America is an "idea." Falkner nonetheless particularizes "concrete parcels of land and peoples" (p. 225). His novel typifies a trend among French writers since 9/11, ready to abandon earlier national stereotypes and to "reimagine the meanings of being American" (p. 229).

Cloonan's chapters on James, Wharton, Hemingway, Auster, and Johnson conversely suggest the relative rigidity of American views of the French. The chapter on Henry James's *The American* (1877) introduces Cloonan's "paradigm" to explain the difficulties that derail Christopher Newman's search for a French wife. Arguing that James read Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, Cloonan briefly cites traits that Tocqueville associated with Americans, including Newman's conformist views and industrious habits. But Tocqueville's biases or blind spots as a French observer of America go unquestioned. This quick swerve back to fiction typifies Cloonan's rather cautious use of history. He focuses instead on Newman's interactions with the Bellegarde family and the clever courtesan, Mademoiselle Nioche. Cloonan briefly compares Newman, the washtub manufacturer, to Benjamin Franklin, but elides the story of Franklin's life in Paris and engagement with the French (as well as French fascination with him). Instead, he underscores the Bellegardes' inability to regard Newman as other than a vulgar, commercial person, which is to say, an American. The fact that Newman speaks little French, despite the lessons of Noémie Nioche (cited as "Noémi"), prefigures both the inability (or refusal) of subsequent fictional Americans to speak French and the growing dominance of English in international relations. Cloonan rightly questions the apparent lameness of Newman's refusal to use the power afforded him by his knowledge of a wicked family secret. But whether he renounces his trump card—and possible marriage to Claire—because he "reverts to a business model" (p. 37) or because he saw too much violence in the Civil War is a nice question.

If Newman exercises restraint, Wharton's Undine Spragg in *The Custom of the Country* (1913) by contrast epitomizes audacity. She is "the quintessence of the female American social climber who finds in Europe the perfect background to display her one great creation: herself" (p. 73). In Cloonan's view, Wharton does not pass judgment on Undine, who remains, throughout the novel, "egocentric, crass, and ambitious" (p. 70). Despite her determination, Undine's gender represents a "major handicap"; if she is "quite capable of succeeding in a man's world, she cannot do so without a man" (p. 72), and her three divorces indicate her problematic situation. For Cloonan's purposes, Undine's third marriage to Frenchman Raymond de Chelle provides the deepest insight into shifting Franco-American relations. Indeed, Wharton inverts the dynamics of James's *The American*, making the Frenchman a naïve victim and the American woman a ruthless and exploitative figure. Undine belongs to a smart set of Americans engaged in what Cloonan calls "*urban colonization*" (p. 82). Paris provides "an elaborate theatrical setting for what these social climbers want" (p. 88), and they project "greed, arrogance, unfettered ambition, and a sense of entitlement" (p. 92) as they occupy attractive sectors of the French capital.

This pattern pertains less obviously to Hemingway's *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), the next novel in Cloonan's lineup. As in Wharton's novel, Hemingway's expatriates manifest detachment, and their gathering places are the American bars of Montparnasse. And it is true that French people figure here mostly as functionaries—waiters, bar tenders, taxi drivers, concierges, prostitutes. But Hemingway's "lost generation" types neither ignore nor condescend to them—nor do they flaunt the cultural arrogance Wharton portrays. In fact, for Jake Barnes, knowing the local rules and following the customs of the country, whether in France or in Spain, form a code, a disciplined way of life. Jake pays his bills and understands local expectations. That's what makes his betrayal of Montoya so excruciating in Pamplona. Cloonan pays little attention to Jake's Spanish dilemma, however, insisting on the escapism and meaninglessness of the novel's main action, associated with "prolonged adolescence" (p. 109) and "rather childish" behavior (p. 262). While it's true that Hemingway's expatriates imbibe heavily, the novel dramatizes the fact that everyone in Paris is physically or emotionally damaged by the late war. Cloonan thinks the expats should have "moved on" long ago, because "when the novel begins, the war has been over for about eight years" (p. 106). In fact the novel begins in early 1925 (when the Select opened), barely six years since the Great War ended. Jake and his friends go to Spain precisely in search of renewal—through fishing and watching bullfights—following a pilgrimage route that takes them through Roncevaux (where Roland blew his horn). Cloonan faults Hemingway for failing to embellish this connection, forgetting the author's method of omission and understatement. The geographical route nevertheless signals Jake's quest for meaning in a world of shattered beliefs and values. Cloonan's contrarian reading trivializes the bullfight—he seems unfamiliar with *Death in the Afternoon* (1932)—and he implausibly cites the editor of *Doodab*, squeamish Robert Cohn, as the real hero because he represents "the persistence of literature" (p. 103).

The discussion of Paul Auster's *The Book of Illusions* (2002) forces Cloonan to drop his focus on representations of the Franco-American other. He admits that Auster's novel is neither set in France nor concerned with French characters. But he explores an interesting question: why is Auster, among all contemporary American novelists, so hugely popular in France? Cloonan's plausible answer is that Auster's Francophile sensibility, formed at Columbia during the heyday of French theory, deeply informs his fiction and thus resonates with French readers. After citing earlier critical studies of Auster's French connections, Cloonan characterizes *The Book of Illusions* as informed by literary values cherished in France. Its theme of chance in everyday life mirrors a preoccupation of French avant-garde writing from the Surrealists to the Oulipo group. But more importantly, Cloonan says, Auster structures his novel around the life of the mind, around ideas rather than action, suggesting at one point that David Zimmer's fascination with Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* drives his own effort to present *The Book of Illusion* as a work that insinuates David's own death. Cloonan sums up the novel's "French" aspect this way: "The very cerebral treatment of the role of illusion in the novel as an end in itself, a means of both controlling and escaping from a meaningless world,...seems more Gallic than American" (pp. 199-200). Cloonan's oblique argument rightly draws attention to an American writer appreciated earlier and more ardently in France than in his own country (Poe started this trend), but he misses an opportunity to associate Auster's privileging of thought and reflection with the later style of Henry James, on display in *The Ambassadors* (1901).

Calling Diane Johnson's *Le Divorce* (1997) "a contemporary rewrite of *The American*" (p. 266), Cloonan brings full circle his investigation of Franco-American interactions in fiction. He makes no mention of *Le Mariage* (2000) or *L'Affaire* (2003), later Johnson novels that depict different

Franco-American couples in complicated romances. In *Le Divorce*, the name of Johnson's heroine, Isabel Walker, recalls James's Isabel Archer, but the character's resilience and pragmatism in the face of French resistance more nearly resemble the doggedness of Christopher Newman. Isabel's affair with a much older man, Oncle Edgar, reflects her freedom and openness to foreign experience, but it also finally uncovers persisting French prejudices about Americans. Cloonan connects Johnson's novel to Wharton's by developing the idea of American colonization; he suggests twice (pp. 252, 254) that rich Americans are turning the St. Germain *quartier* into a theme park catering to fantasy-seeking expatriates. He links *Le Divorce* to de Beauvoir's *Les Mandarins* by noting that this theme park now occupies key sites (the Café Flore, Deux Magots) associated with Sartre, de Beauvoir, and their circle. Johnson's novel "attempts to offer a more nuanced approach to Franco-American conceptions of each other" but finally reveals "just how fragile is the progress toward the development of mutual understanding" (p. 249).

Frères Ennemis displays a deft command of modern French fiction and enough familiarity with the American novels under discussion to deliver (with one exception) solid readings. Cloonan's knowledge of France and the French language lets him explore the Franco-American divide—as well as the attraction and apprehensions on both sides—with sensitivity and understanding.

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