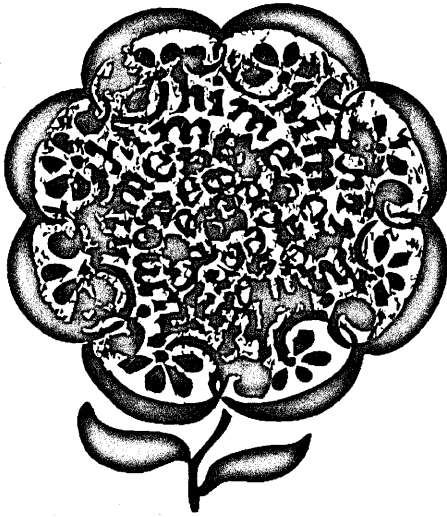


CHIMÈRES

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C o n t e n t s

Letter from the editor <i>Jeff KENDRICK</i>	V
This Issue's Contributors	VII
Carte blanche <i>Richard GOLSAN</i>	IX
The Francophone Writer at the Crossroads of Languages <i>Peter W. VAKUNTA</i>	1
The Weight of Secrets: Hidden Mirrors of Identity in Aki Shimazaki's Pentalogy <i>Peter SCHULMAN</i>	15
The Shaping of the Nation in <i>Nanon</i> and <i>93</i> <i>Alice AUDOIN</i>	29
Understanding Marcel Proust's Law of Desire <i>Brody SMITH</i>	45
Patterns of Feminine Discourse in Samuel Beckett's <i>Pas Moi</i> <i>De. Marzia CAPORALE</i>	63

From the desk of the editor

Jeff KENDRICK

This issue of *Chimères* is in many ways coupled with its chain of predecessors. Intermittently for over forty years, the graduate students at the University of Kansas have worked together to produce a quality literary journal that publishes engaging articles. This year is no exception. We delighted in a record number of submissions and enjoyed reading every one of them. I have come to believe that one of the greatest skills a young editor learns is discerning between good and best, and sometimes the distinction is extremely difficult to make. The editorial staff add invaluable insights, and their recommendations are in large part reflected in the final selections that you will enjoy in the following pages. Like so many of those who have blazed the publishing trail before us, we are astonished at the idea that a complete journal is finally coming together and that we are still alive to see it happen.

As in past issues, we are delighted to welcome a guest scholar into our discussion. Professor Richard Golsan graciously agreed to include an essay with this issue, and it dovetails nicely with the recurring theme of identity that runs through the other articles. Professor Golsan also met with the editorial staff last year, and his advice and comments are still appreciated. Special thanks, also, to Professor Van Kelly for inviting Professor Golsan and arranging our roundtable. I would be remiss if I did not extend our appreciation to the faculty of the Department of French & Italian and, especially, Professors Tom Booker, Van Kelly, Allan Pasco, and Paul Scott who shared their expertise and gave their time to help with the journal. Of course, as always, where would we be without the constructive and practical advice of our advisor, Professor Caroline Jewers? A sincere, heart-felt thanks to her seems almost inadequate.

And so, the *Chimères* chain receives another link. As young scholars ourselves, we have come to appreciate better the world of academic publishing ... its joys and pitfalls. We have learned to look forward to opening that envelope or e-mail from the editor's desk. The helpful comments and suggestions for improvement after a careful reading are worth the wait. We trust that you, our readers, will also relish in the fruits of our contributors' labors.

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Richard GOLSAN

European Identity and American Hegemony: Recent Perspectives of Pascal Bruckner and Tzvetan Todorov

It is probably a surprise to no one on either side of the Atlantic that since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the invasion and occupation of Iraq, and the horrors of Abu Graib and Guantanamo, American relations with much of Western Europe, and especially with France, have been seriously strained or, to use the phrase of the sociologist Michel Wieviorka, been placed *sous pression*. In France in the immediate aftermath of 911, expressions of sympathy and solidarity were initially forthcoming in many quarters. These expressions were perhaps best exemplified and indeed summed up in the title of Jean-Marie Colombani's 12 September editorial in *Le Monde*, "*Nous sommes tous des américains*," — "*We are all Americans*." At the same time, however, there were also those who expressed satisfaction in witnessing a disaster that, they believed, many if not most citizens of the world secretly or not-so-secretly desired. The most notable of these was Jean Baudrillard whose jubilation, expressed in an editorial in *Libération*, bordered for many on the obscene (Baudrillard).

With the build-up to and invasion of Iraq, what support and sympathy there was for America in Europe and, conversely, whatever solidarity at least the Bush administration and its supporters felt for "Old Europe" rapidly eroded. Jacques Chirac and Dominique de Villepin, with the backing of Gerhard Schroeder, opposed the war in the UN and elsewhere, and Robert Gates, current Secretary of Defense and former president of Texas A&M University, announced in a lecture at the Bush School at Texas A&M that the fabric of Franco-American friendship had been permanently and irreparably torn. As the horrors of Abu Graib and then Guantanamo came to light, erstwhile French supporters of the invasion of Iraq, including most notably Pascal Bruckner, publicly denounced American excesses which, they believed, violated the very democratic and humanitarian principles that justified the invasion in the first place. Other intellectuals, with Em-

manuel Todd and Ignazio Ramonet of *Le Monde diplomatique* in the lead, voiced cries of alarm at what they viewed as a newly-emergent American Empire taking shape around the globe. More reasonable voices like those of Tzvetan Todorov and Henry Rousso expressed grave concerns that too many in the West, and especially in Bush's America, were buying into Samuel Huntington's dubious notion of a "Clash of Civilizations" that necessarily entailed a war with Islam. Only André Glucksmann, who viewed the War on Terror and the struggle in Iraq as a Manichean and cosmic struggle between Good and Evil, continued to support America unconditionally. In his 2003 essay *Ouest contre Ouest*, Glucksmann went so far as to characterize Bush as a kind of metaphysical cowboy, a Gary Cooper in *High Noon* who, like a Shakespearean or Greek tragic figure, must go it heroically alone in fighting and vanquishing the villains.

Happily, things are changing, and despite the economic "crash" European attitudes toward and understanding of America are to all appearances undergoing a generally positive transformation with the election of Barack Obama. But this does not mean that the troubling rifts and events of the recent past have been forgotten. In fact, quite the reverse. In the works of most intellectuals in Europe and especially France, these differences continue to have a profound impact in shaping both conceptions of European identity and American hegemony. These conceptions vary, of course, from one intellectual to the next, and, where European identity is concerned, they are also deeply affected by other considerations — immigration, Europe's recent past and especially the terrible legacies of Nazism and Communism, and so on. But, as I hope to show here, the global events since 911 do provide the frame, or at least a broad backdrop for many, if not most recent, meditations on European identity and American hegemony.

By way of examples — and as the subtitle of my essay suggests — I would like to discuss recent writings dealing with European identity and American hegemony by two of France's and Europe's leading public intellectuals, Pascal Bruckner and Tzvetan Todorov. In works like Bruckner's 2006 essay *La Tyrannie de la pénitence* and Todorov's 2003 essay *Le nouveau désordre mondial* and his more recent work, *La peur des barbares. Au-delà du choc des civilisations*, published in September 2008, the two *philosophes* focus primarily on these issues — and their inevitable interconnectness — while at the same time delineating and identifying a cluster of themes around which these conceptions are articulated. In the case of Europe, these include national and cultural identity and ethnocentrism, as well as the tragic legacies of Europe's recent past mentioned

above. Where American hegemony is concerned, they include Empire of course, and the so-called “Clash of Civilizations.” But they also include the principles and definition of democracy itself.

Although Bruckner and Todorov have shared the Parisian, and frequently the European and global spotlight for years, much separates them in background and outlook, and this certainly influences their respective conceptions of European identity and American hegemony. As one example of where these divergences have manifested themselves, consider May 1968, which the two men experienced from very different places, generational as well as geographical and intellectual. Todorov, some ten years Bruckner’s senior, was teaching in the US during the student revolts and strikes. And, as he writes in the 2002 autobiographical work *Devoirs et délices*, at the time, largely as a result of having spent his adolescence in Communist Bulgaria, he was suspicious of political activism of any sort, other than in the defense of the individual and his or her dignity. As he phrases it, “The global effect of living under Communism, at bottom,” was not to make a “virulent anti-Communist” of him, but rather to make him “virulently anti-political” (*Devoirs* 47). When he arrived in France, moreover, the stylish activism of the young western Europeans around him struck Todorov as artificial and insincere. Finally, the experience of Communism taught him to be suspicious of any collective actions undertaken in the name of “Humanity,” as these actions most frequently prove more destructive than constructive. In fact, they often accomplish quite the opposite of what was intended.

By contrast, while not an activist in May 1968 — in fact he considered himself to be primarily an onlooker — Bruckner, a native French person and Parisian, was politically energized by the event. He adopted what he describes as a “libertarian extreme left position” during the student revolts. For him, May 68 produced an enormous “anthropological transformation” in France and Europe, whose repercussions are still not fully grasped today. It also generated as well a “great tide of liberty,” with positive as well as very negative results, especially for the societies and cultures of Western Europe. To a significant extent, Bruckner’s novels have focused on what he would consider to be the positive aspects of the legacy of May 1968, that is, women’s liberation and especially the sexual revolution, whereas his essays focus on some of the negative legacies, for example, revolutionary *tiermondisme*, to be discussed shortly (*Interview*, 12-4).

Finally, by way of understanding the divergent takes of Bruckner and Todorov on European identity and American hegemony, it is important to consider divergences in their views on the intellectual’s role in contem-

porary society. These views may, in fact, seem somewhat contradictory, given the two men's respective attitudes toward May 68.

Todorov's aim as an intellectual is, as he has written in a recent preface to Raymond Aron's *Mémoires* and in essays on the Resistance hero Germaine Tillion — both figures he greatly admires — is to fulfill the role of what he labels the "Responsible Intellectual." The "Responsible intellectual" does not embrace partisan causes, or national, or European, or ideological interests, but remains committed to a higher cause — and perhaps the highest cause — which is serving truth and justice. Along these lines, Todorov is fond of quoting Germaine Tillion's statement: "I believe with all my heart that justice and truth count more than any political cause" (*avant-propos* 9).

By contrast — as André Glucksmann has written recently — Bruckner is less a committed or "responsible" intellectual in his primary orientation than he is a *moraliste* (26). While Bruckner does not eschew political involvements — he was very active in denouncing Serb aggression in the 1990s, and earlier, American and Chinese complicity with the Pol Pot regime in Cambodia, the primary aim of his essays is to dissect the ills of contemporary Europe and, more broadly, to expose the hypocrisies and failings of Western democratic societies. As Todorov himself acknowledges, at this Bruckner is a master.

Let me turn directly now to the two writers' conceptions of European Identity and American Hegemony. I will begin with Pascal Bruckner. In a perceptive recent essay written about Bruckner's work by Paul Berman, Berman argues that the central and unifying theme of all of Bruckner's major essays is European self-hatred (47-9). For Bruckner, this self-hatred is not an intermittent or superficial sentiment experienced only in relation to specific events or circumstances, it is a complex, profound and often paradoxical and "subterranean" cultural and psychological current that has characterized European modernity over the last century, and especially since World War II. It manifests itself in a variety of ways and circumstances, and often hides its true motivations and outlooks. When examined closely, it is based in its essence on arrogance parading itself as modesty and generosity, ethnocentrism disguised as cultural openness, and political and cultural resentment presenting themselves as reasoned critique.

Bruckner's first book-length foray into European self-hatred appeared in 1983, in an essay denouncing revolutionary *tiermondisme*, or "Third-Worldism" entitled *Le Sanglot de l'homme blanc*. In that work Bruckner's

ire was directed in the first instance at left-wing intellectuals, most notably Jean-Paul Sartre who, in Bruckner's view, blindly and uncritically celebrated liberation movements and governments in formerly colonized countries in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. According to Bruckner, *tiermondistes* like Sartre and Frantz Fanon, author of *The Wretched of the Earth*, either ignored or, conversely, deliberately celebrated the violence and inhumanity of many of these movements and regimes on the grounds that these excesses was liberating, purifying, and justified. The fact that this violence and inhumanity went precisely against principles upon which anti-colonialism was supposedly based — equality, human dignity, and self-determination — mattered little or not at all.

The reality that *tiermondisme* was misguided and hypocritical, and indeed often criminally so in both cases was, however, only part of the problem. *Tiermondisme* in Bruckner's view was also at heart a hidden expression of disdain and indifference directed precisely toward the formerly colonized peoples it claimed to support. This disdain and indifference, moreover, expressed itself in a false and condescending sympathy for *masses* and *peoples* that in fact ignored the harsh realities of the daily lives of individual human beings. Rather than fostering a true openness toward the formerly-colonized Other, *tiermondisme* sealed off any real contact by substituting a false and distancing sympathy for genuine empathy and understanding.

But if *tiermondisme* paradoxically revealed a secret and distancing disdain toward the Other, it also ultimately exposed a profound self-loathing on the part of the *tiermondiste* and indeed the European himself. For Bruckner, to idolize or idealize North African or Latin American indigenous peoples, and to seek out and partake superficially in their cultures is in the final analysis to seek to escape from one's own being and identity as well as one's own culture. Moreover — and here Bruckner's aim was explicitly political — the uncritical adulation of the Third World and especially its revolutionary politics of the 1970s and early 1980s also allowed the *tiermondiste* to express his solidarity with the formerly colonized in their hatred of the great enemy of the Third World: America.

Before leaving the discussion of *Le sanglot de l'homme blanc* it is important to stress a few points made in the book that still characterize Bruckner's attitudes today. First, the self-hatred as well as the secret ethnocentrism — or solipsism — of the *tier-mondiste* does not belong exclusively to him or of his successors, but in fact to all modern and contemporary Europeans. Textually, this is evident in Bruckner's deliberate

slippage from a distancing third-person to an uncomfortable first-person “nous” in his analyses and accusations. Second, European attitudes, even towards their own formerly colonized peoples, are influenced by and ultimately inseparable from their animosity toward America. This animosity, moreover, hides a secret envy. America is more powerful, and it is not haunted by self-doubt or hypocrisy in the same way that Europe is. Bruckner’s view of America in *Le Sanglot* may be overly rosy — and he will revise this view in very recent writings, as we shall see — but it is clear that for him, already in 1983, European identity and American hegemony are intimately connected and in fact inextricably intertwined.

In many ways, Bruckner’s 2006 essay, *La tyrannie de la pénitence*, written more than twenty years after *Le Sanglot de l’homme blanc* picks up precisely where the latter work left off, in that its central focus remains European self-hatred. Except that in *La tyrannie de la pénitence*, the most recent manifestation or symptom of European self-hatred that Bruckner identifies and dissects is not *tiermondisme* or its recent avatars, but Europe’s unhealthy obsession with the horrors of its recent past. Second, while Europe’s self-conception is infected by its secret envy of America, America itself is by no means above reproach, and Bruckner delivers a blistering indictment of the US in these pages. This indictment, coupled with Bruckner’s continuing focus on European self-hatred, sets the stage for the writer’s somewhat surprising conclusion in this work, and also in subsequent essays, and that is the need for and in fact necessity of a European-American reconciliation and collaboration in order to forward democracy worldwide.

In denouncing contemporary Europe’s — and France’s — obsession with the horrors of its recent past in *La tyrannie de la pénitence*, Bruckner is by no means attempting to downplay the horrific crimes of Nazism and Vichy, or of Western Europe in its former colonies, or of Communism in Eastern Europe and worldwide. What he *is* attacking is a fixation on fulfilling a so-called “duty to memory” that is reminiscent of *tiermondisme* in the hypocrisies and bad faith that it disguises or attempts to hide. First, like *tiermondisme*, the “duty to memory” betrays a secret self-satisfaction and even arrogance: Europeans can claim to have experienced the worst of the worst of History, and they therefore consider themselves in a position to give definitive lessons about History with a capital “H” to others. The process allows them, moreover, to diminish the horrors others have experienced and at the same time ignore contemporary crimes, traumas, and genocides elsewhere in the world. These include not only the wars and genocides in the former Yugoslavia — where America, and not Europe,

led the charge to intervene — but also in Rwanda, Chechnya, Darfur, and other trouble spots.

The duty to memory also allows Europeans to revise History for their own liking by putting it at the service of the politics of memory. Thus the crimes of colonialism become comparable to the worst horrors perpetrated by the Nazis — Israelis become Nazis in their suppression of Palestinians, and so-on.

Finally, in obsessively fulfilling their “duty to memory,” in becoming in recent years what Bruckner derisively refers to as “athlètes de la pénitence,” Europeans ignore the obligation to act in the present, while focusing exclusively on the past. For all intents and purposes they are attempting to escape from History at precisely the point where History cannot be ignored. For Bruckner, the “History” of the present is essentially the wars in Iraq and Afganistan, the dangers of Islamic fundamentalism, Abu Graib, Guantanamo — in short, the world since 911. And this brings us to America.

If, in *La Tyrannie de la pénitence* Europe is, as Bruckner describes it elsewhere a “regret,” a refugee from History, America, and certainly post-911 America is very much the opposite. Living fully in the present and characterized by a reckless dynamism, America continues to inspire envy, along with a deep animosity, among Europeans now paralyzed by their past. But if America can be lauded for its energy, its will to look toward the future, it is also subject to Bruckner’s withering criticisms on many crucial points. In a section of *La tyrannie* entitled “The Blustering Colossus” Bruckner chastises America, first, as a country obsessed with its sense of “election” and its own superiority. It is this sense of superiority, moreover, that allows Americans to believe that they can “se soustraire aux devoirs qui incombent à l’humanité ordinaire” (*Tyrannie* 234). Americans can — and they do — ignore what Bruckner describes as *les lois communes*, which would dictate to all on the planet the necessity to, for example, work in concert and in good faith with the UN and the International Court of Justice in the Hague. In enthusiastically endorsing the war in Iraq and at least tacitly accepting and thus condoning the horrors of Abu Grahیب and Guantanamo and the continued use of torture by the American military and intelligence, they allow the very principles on which American democracy has been built to be tarnished and undermined. Moreover, the same is true when they allow themselves to be spied on by their own government. And if this were not enough, in their large majority they cheered on the Bush administration’s “crazy dream, in the Second Gulf War, to reshape the face of the Middle East” (*La Tyrannie* 235).

If *la tyrannie de la pénitence* paints a very bleak picture of European passivity and navel contemplation and American arrogance and recklessness, what if anything can be done to cure the ills besetting Europe and European self-understanding on the one hand, and the excesses of American sovereignty, of American Empire, on the other? Bruckner's answer is to propose a new Trans-Atlantic Alliance of sorts, but with somewhat different aims and with a greater wisdom and self-understanding than manifested in previous efforts along these lines. First, Bruckner argues that the spread of democracy and the struggle against fanaticism, religious and otherwise, is not a choice but a necessity and a *duty* that America and Europe must undertake together. But they must recognize at the outset that, in Bruckner's words, democracy is a "process" and not something to be imposed at the point of the gun. Second, Europe and America must learn from each other in order to cure each other's ills. America's tendency toward a reckless military and political adventurism, certainly in the Bush years, can and must be tempered by a European caution learned from the terrible consequences of its own tendencies along these lines in the 20th Century. Europe, on the other hand, can learn to get over its paralyzing "duty to memory" and therefore its own pessimism and solipsism by embracing — within reason — America's optimism and forward-looking can-do spirit. Finally, as Bruckner has argued most pointedly in a recent lecture entitled "The Provincialization of the West,"¹ America, weakened especially by the endless war in Iraq, must learn to accept a more "modest" assessment of its own strength, a lesson well-learned by a chastened Europe. Conversely, Europe must overcome its own tendency to underestimate its own strength and accept a leadership role on the world-stage. This is a lesson it can learn from America.

In turning from Pascal Bruckner's perhaps surprisingly optimistic and grand vision of a Euro-American alliance for self-improvement and the spread of democracy to Tzvetan Todorov's very different notions of Europe and America and the implications of what Todorov labels *le nouveau désordre mondial*, it is important at the outset to underscore two similarities in outlook that shape both men's perceptions, especially of Europe's past and European identity.

First, like Bruckner, Todorov has been sceptical of *tiermondisme* and the European intellectual left's embrace of it. In *The Morals of History*, Todorov denounces the dangers of what he calls "post-colonial nationalism" and its European champions, Sartre for instance. In its more extreme forms "post-colonial nationalism" does not embrace in Todorov's view a

truly liberational politics. Rather in its calls for a purifying revolutionary violence, it espouses the “darker side” of the European tradition in the figures of Nietzsche, Barrès, and Sorel. In this, ironically, colonialism and its ideology win an ironic and “dark victory” over those that seek to defeat them (*Morals* 58-9).

Also like Bruckner, Todorov is extremely skeptical of Europe’s ongoing and troubling obsession with its past. In the 1995 essay *Les Abus de la mémoire*, Todorov insists that the so-called “duty to memory” does not and cannot eradicate the horrors of the past. In fact, it only distorts the past and turns those who emphasize it into perpetual backward-looking victims who ignore the crimes of the present in the process. For Todorov, the solution to the problem is to make memory not “literal” — that is, narrowly focused on one’s own victimage, but “exemplary” where the memory of past injustices becomes a kind of categorical imperative to prevent comparable crimes in the present and future.

If Bruckner and Todorov agree, more or less, on these aspects of Europe and especially its recent past, they strongly diverge on a number of more recent issues affecting European identity today, Europe’s role in facing internal and global crises, and, finally, the role of America in the world of the present. Let me begin with the second and third of these concerns, and address two recent moments of crises in particular where the differences in outlook between Bruckner and Todorov are readily apparent: the break-up of the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s and the American-lead invasion of Iraq.

Despite the fact that, as already noted, Bruckner is primarily a *moraliste* and an ambivalent *intellectuel engagé*, he has been prominently involved and very outspoken in two recent instances. First, he argued vehemently in favor of intervention in the Balkans to stop Serb aggression and genocide in Bosnia, and then, in the late 1990s, he took the same position on Kosovo. Second, he was a strong early supporter of the invasion of Iraq, co-signing a petition with André Glucksmann, Bernard Kouchner, and Romain Goupil which appeared in *Le monde* on 3 March 2003 entitled “Saddam doit partir de gré ou de force.” Although, as noted as well, Bruckner has since renounced his support of the invasion and denounced Bush and American adventurism, his support of the war, based on the *droit d’ingérence* or ‘right to intervene’ when national leaders are oppressing and brutalizing their own people, has earned him the label of a French “neo-conservative” in some quarters. Moreover, as the discussions here have shown, Bruckner’s recent critique of American adventurism by no means implies that America should withdraw from the world stage and adopt an isolationist stance.

In order to understand Todorov's views both on the war in the Balkans and the invasion of Iraq, it is important to return to two points made already concerning Todorov's background and his views on contemporary Europe. The first point is that, as a native Bulgarian who experienced Communist totalitarianism directly, Todorov's view is obviously not entirely that of a "Western European" as is Bruckner's. Rather, his perspective, as he colorfully describes it in the title of a the recent book, is that of an *homme dépaycé*, divided between Eastern and Western Europe. And because of his background in a totalitarian state, he is more skeptical of massive "collective actions" in the name of higher ideals like "democracy" or "humanitarian intervention." In his reservations concerning America's current role on the global stage, moreover, there are also, perhaps, echoes if not memories of a Cold War mind set.

The second point is that, very much in keeping with his take on Europe's obsession with its recent past, the political actions of the West today, as he writes in *Le nouveau désordre mondial*, are dangerously skewed by the memory of Nazism. That memory, according to Todorov, allows for only two courses of action: a Munich-like passivity and a Dresden-like destructiveness, where technological superiority results in the devastation of a defenseless and mostly civilian enemy. In the 2000 essay *Mémoire du mal, Tentation du bien*, Todorov denounces NATO and the West's following of the latter course of action in Kosovo in dropping so-called "humanitarian bombs" on Serbian civilian populations ostensibly in defense of a victimized Albanian Kosovar population.

Todorov's criticisms of NATO's bombing of Kosovo and the American-led invasion of Iraq — which he denounces on several scores in *Le nouveau désordre mondial*, including the terrible injustice of killing thousands of civilians in supposedly fighting a "war on terror" and the hypocrisy of spreading democracy through naked aggression — have earned Todorov the label of Anti-American in some quarters. He has rejected this label in arguing in a recent interview that his criticisms of the Iraq and of Bush administration policies there are views shared by more than half the American population. Moreover, his criticism of American actions are motivated by a deep affection for this country which he feels, has been damaged economically, morally, and diplomatically by the entire tragic misadventure.

So, finally, if in their most recent writings Todorov and Bruckner share a rejection of recent American militarily adventurism and arrogance, how are their respective views different where American hegemony is concerned? Moreover, how do their respective views on the topic affect

their views of Europe in relation to America? Finally, how is European identity itself conceived? On the first score, it is perhaps fair to say that Todorov remains more deeply skeptical than Bruckner of American hegemony and America's role in the world. After all, Todorov's most recent book, *La peur des barbares* focuses on and denounces the so-called clash of civilizations, defined by an American intellectual and pursued, in effect, in recent American foreign policy. It also underscores the cost in moral and human terms of carrying out practices such as torture that dehumanize the torturer as much as the tortured, and are inimical to democracy itself.

It is also safe to say that, as opposed to Pascal Bruckner, Tzvetan Todorov does not envisage or call for a new trans-Atlantic alliance on the order described by Bruckner, although for him America remains a *partenaire privilégié*. Moreover, the aim of spreading democracy globally is a more dangerous and ultimately more dubious process for Todorov than it is for Bruckner. Todorov also argues in *Le nouveau désordre mondial* Europe needs to be more militarily self-sufficient, not only in policing itself and protecting its borders, but in projecting its power to global crises and hot spots. While Bruckner also believes Europe needs to strengthen itself militarily, it seems clear that for him European intervention abroad needs to be undertaken more in concert with America, which itself needs to respect, like other nations, the authority of the United Nations.

Finally, what of European identity itself? Simply by virtue of his background Pascal Bruckner is seemingly more directly "rooted" in a Western European and specifically French context. Some of his recent work points in fact in that direction in that, in essays like "The Crises of Patriotism" Bruckner addresses and at least implicitly praises the sacrifices made for the survival of European nations and national cultures and expresses a genuine concern for the loss of national sentiment in Europe today. Moreover, despite his *moraliste's* condemnations of the modern European in works like *Le sanglot de l'homme blanc* and *La tyrannie de la pénitence*, in these works neither Bruckner's calls for a true openness toward the Other nor his demand for a healing forgetfulness of the crimes of the past require a renunciation of one's European identity or Europe's rich heritage. Quite the reverse. In fact, in a brief essay on the idea of cosmopolitanism published in 2000 entitled *Le Vertige de Babel* Bruckner calls both for a deep and authentic appreciation of the language and culture of the Other and a pride in and understanding of one's own roots and heritage. For Bruckner, the former is not possible without the latter.

In a very recent essay entitled, appropriately, "European Identity," Tzvetan Todorov argues for what he describes a "Plurality as the Basis

of Unity” in the European context. Todorov’s “Plurality” resembles Bruckner’s cosmopolitanism in that both advocate a conception of European identity that embraces other national cultures besides one’s own. But Todorov’s “plurality” is more explicitly expansive in that for him European identity could not have been forged without the contributions of non-European cultures, and Todorov mentions Muslim cultures as well as Chinese and Indian culture. Moreover, Todorov is less sanguine in embracing the benefits of Europe’s own cultural heritage, since this is at best a mixed blessing. As he states, “The idea of equality among all human beings comes from Europe’s history, but that of slavery is by no means foreign” (“European Identity” 6).

The last section of Todorov’s essay on European Identity is entitled “Europe and the Western World” and this brings us full circle, in that for Todorov as for Bruckner, European Identity is ultimately inconceivable today in isolation from the United States. Moreover, Europe’s tendency toward what Todorov labels *angélisme*, or taking an “angelic posture” towards one’s enemies must be tempered by American realism if the European ideal of true plurality is to be realized.

But — and to conclude here — for Todorov as for Bruckner, it is also incumbent on Americans to learn from Europe’s more peaceful approach in renouncing what he describes as our “hegemonic temptation” and our will to “demonize” our enemies. If both these objectives are realized, if America and Europe can truly learn from each other, then, as Todorov writes, this will be a “true contribution to the consolidation of peace on earth” (“European Identity” 15). Bruckner could not agree more.

Note

1. The lecture was delivered at Texas A&M University on 19 October 2008.

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