

INTRODUCTION

Ungrateful offspring on one hand, unnatural and tyrannical parent on the other - the United States and Great Britain retain in their relationship something of the love/hate quality characteristic of family ties. In choosing as the topic of its 1985 colloquium (held at the Château de la Source on the 27th and 28th of September) "US and GB: How Far? How Close?" the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches sur la Culture Anglo-Américaine de l'Université d'Orléans was inviting the participants to analyze the nature of the "double bind" that has linked the two nations over the past two hundred years. The present publication, edited by the Groupe de Recherches Anglo-Américaines de Tours, contains a number of papers given on that occasion - marking in this manner the continuation of a policy of cooperation between (to extend the family metaphor) the two sister universities, a policy inaugurated by the establishment in 1985 of a doctoral program run jointly by Tours, Orléans and Le Mans.

How far? How close? But with what sort of a yardstick does one go about measuring the distance between two cultures? It would seem that three sorts of measuring are at work. The first is the very act of registering similarities and differences; before any explanatory schema comes into play the process of comparing and contrasting exercises its fascination, each culture acquiring its distinctiveness by what it seems to have left out as well as by what it contains. This approach appeals to the eye (the cut of a figure, the lay of the land) and to the ear; its privileged locus is the voyage abroad. The second measuring attempts to weigh influence, to assign origins, to assess the degree of domination that one country exercises over another. The issues in this case are those of relative strength, of precedence in chronological terms, of model and

imitation. The tone is more combative; imperialism and resistance are the opposing poles of the debate. The third aspect is more complex since it introduces the dimension of the collective imagination: the *idea* that one culture forms of another and the ways in which this image functions within the given society to reinforce the sense of its own identity. Here we deal with expectations, projections, and (inevitably) with misinterpretations - in short, with the ways in which differences are managed and lived. The papers in this volume, wide-ranging in terms of focus, touch on all three of these modes of taking stock of distance.

The first three contributions trace the relationship an individual figure (British in each case) and a culture (American). Richard Martin chronicles Matthew Arnold's aversion for the United States, the "immense Victorian condescension" with which he approached a nation mired (already) in a midriff culture. If Arnold's voyage to America did little to change his mind it is because of his prior assumption that democracy and culture were (in Martin's words) "antithetical elements in an unwilling dialogue." Not even Emerson escaped Arnold's strictures; yet in the very terms that the Englishman used to criticize the American thinker Martin detects a reluctant admission of likeness that belies the initial distaste. Jean-Paul Pichardie evokes quite a different America, D.H. Lawrence's "continent of the soul" that served as grounds for the projection of his many-sided desires. We are struck by the constantly shifting richness of these imaginary explorations in which intense internal struggle, utopian social currents, and religious imagery vie for ascendancy. The promise of the New World is incorporated into a highly complex mythology, at once cosmic and personal, a mythology of excess and hyperbole, a mythology to which Lawrence committed his whole being but which ended by terrifying him. Françoise Marquerlot's concerns are of another order; convinced of the underservedness of Herbert Spencer's reputation in the United States, she first challenges the very notion of "social darwinism" which cannot be considered as referring to a coherent body of doctrine since from the start it has been used in exclusively polemical terms; and she then invites us to set

aside caricatural images of Spencer as the father of a philosophy of unbridled capitalism and to read his works with a new eye.

Jean-Claude Sergeant's paper, tracing the evolution of the Anglo-American dialogue in the domain of politics and defense serves as an excellent introduction to the contemporary problems that the major portion of this volume will deal with. His analysis lays bare the fragility of the concept of a "special relationship" between the United States and Great Britain, concept that is repeatedly sacrificed once the political and military chips are down. Yet his reading of the Anglo-American dialogue also reveals the strategic uses to which this "convenient myth" is put, and its central role in the history of understanding - and misunderstanding - between the two nations. The two papers that follow deal with business and economic policy. Françoise Pavlopoulos ("Le Monde des Affaires au Royaume Uni et aux USA") finds that despite the apparent contrasts between American dynamism and British laggardness (contrasts, which, she points out, require considerable qualification) there exists an underlying "economic complicity" within which both systems operate, herald perhaps of a new world economic order. Christopher Leeds focuses on governmental policies, on those economic doctrines made up of right-wing belief in the virtues of market forces and the rationality of monetary theory personalized by political leaders in the two countries as Reaganomics and Thatcherism. Although more than aware of the differences in the political and social contexts in which these two doctrines evolved, he nonetheless argues their essential similarity, one proof of which he notes - with what an American would characterize as a British sense of irony - is that neither produced the expected results! The statistics that Robert Tatham brings to bear on the question of American influence on British broadcasting are all the more welcome in that he has first taken pains to distinguish three separate areas - broadcasting policy, financial investment, and programming. If his conclusions are guardedly optimistic (American interests have not swamped British broadcasting) it is not only because there exists in England a healthy preference for financial and cultural autonomy, but because, as his analysis brings out, safeguards against takeover were early on built into the system. The lesson is a timely one.

