Adelheid von Saldern, *Amerikanismus: Kulturelle Abgrenzung von Europa und US-Nationalismus im frühen 20. Jahrhundert* (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2013).

Adelheid von Saldern's study assesses "quality magazines" such as The Atlantic Monthly, The Nation, The American Mercury, Scribner's Magazine, Harper's Magazine, and The Forum, in the early twentieth century. She is particularly interested to show how these magazines, and the circles of intellectuals that formed around them, contributed to the formulation of what she calls American "cultural nationalism". These magazines, she argues, were the primary outlets of a growing sense of, and call for, cultural independence of the United States from Europe. In these calls for a an American cultural emancipation from Europe she sees similarities to other postcolonial discourses in emerging nation-states. The book is divided into seven major chapters that deal with a wide and varied range of topics, starting with the magazines themselves, their readers and contributors, leading to central debates about American "character" and culture. These chapters, each including its own summary, are framed by a detailed introduction and conclusion. The most important, and interesting part of von Saldern's study deals with American reactions to European debates about the "Americanization of the World" (W.T. Stead), which reached a peak in the late 1920s and mirrored the growing influence of the United States in the "Old World" after the First World War. The American "intelligentsia" followed European debates about "Americanism" and "Americanization" closely, and many American authors shared the general European stereotypes about American society. To many American intellectuals, the American "character" had been formed by the experience of the "frontier" and by peculiar religious traditions; the machine age had "standardized" not only mass-produced products, but also norms and values of the people; Americans showed a "youthful" character; Americans excelled in business, management and technology and had advanced the development of capitalism, but showed a lack of cuture and refinement: such a catalogue of American character traits could be found in publications on both sides of the Atlantic, but were employed for different reasons and purposes. Whereas many European authors used "America" as a scapegoat and implored the spectre of the "Americanization of Europe", American authors called on their countrymen to change and improve their own character, and thus their own culture and society. Critics like Herbert L. Mencken – who was well respected by

European authors – could be equally harsh in their assessment of American culture as some notorious French, German or English "anti-Americans". On the whole, however, European authors were little interested in "constructive criticism" of American society and culture, quite in contrast to their American colleagues. Beyond the common theme of American "cultural" nationalism and its relation to Europe, the themes covered by von Saldern are almost as varied as those that can be found in the magazines she has studied. This makes for interesting reading, but leaves a sense of arbitrariness. We learn, for instance, about the origins of the concept of "Western Civilization", the importance of Fredrick J. Turner's "frontier"-thesis for the "Americanization" of United States history, about the interplay between eugenics, racism and nationalism, as well as about the role of women and African Americans within American culture. Von Saldern has produced an interesting study that shows how much the debates about American society during the "Jazz Age" were a transatlantic affair. For this reason alone, von Saldern's work deserves attention; some further editing of the text could have easily improved its readability, without losing any substance.

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