French Fiction has always displayed an interest in American society, albeit more often in a negative sense. Writers as diverse as Villiers de l’Isle-Adam (L’Ève future, 1886), Georges Duhamel (Scènes de la vie future, 1930), and Simone de Beauvoir (Les mandarins, 1954), to name but three, have offered scathing critiques of Yankee arrogance, consumerism, racism and chauvinism. Yet starting approximately from the traumatic events of September 11, 2001 and continuing to the present, more French fiction has begun to concentrate on various aspects of American life and culture in ways different from past treatments. While criticisms of American society remain an aspect of the French novel’s version of the States, in recent years the personal has tended to overshadow the political. In addition, the American novel itself has become an increasing target of parody and pastiche, essentially playful approaches which reflect at least as much respect for the American model as they do a bemusement at certain perceived American literary conventions.

The United States has become a new source of fascination for French writers. Fascination is not necessarily admiration, and among the texts appearing in the last fifteen years or so, there were critiques of American racism, politics, religious enthusiasm, and the illusion industry embodied by Hollywood. Yet these assessments have not been as vehement or self-righteous as they have been in the past. American faults, social tensions and hypocrisy are certainly signaled, but they are rarely the main focus. Understanding the country, its accomplishments and failures, its aims and illusions, as well as its citizens, currently seem more interesting than simply chronicling American blunders.

In what follows I will create for the purpose of illustration three broad categories of fiction which embody aspects of this current French interest in the States, and briefly discuss selected examples from each grouping. I will not be arguing in any way that these categories are definitive; they are rather an artificial means of providing a structure to a large amount of otherwise very different texts whose main point in common is that they deal with the States. The choice of three categories is thus to a degree arbitrary; they are in no sense inclusive. Since title-dropping is as annoying as name-dropping, I will provide in endnotes a more extensive listing of French novels appropriate to my subject1. After providing examples of the variety and extent of recent French fictional treatment of the States, I will propose reasons which help explain this new attitude, and then conclude with some speculations concerning the possible influence of Donald Trump’s election on French writing dealing with l’Amérique.

The most extensive category of French novels focusing on the United States concentrates on les grandes personnalités américaines from the past and present. This includes one political luminary who preferred working in the shadows, folk heroes from the nineteenth-century, stars from the entertainment industry who lit up the stage and screen with varying degree of intensity, and one nascent literary artist.

Marc Dugain’s La malédiction d’Edgar2 is the story of the F.B.I.’s first and most infamous director, J. Edgar Hoover. Clyde Tolson, Hoover’s second in command and longtime lover, provides the narrative. The novel highlights Hoover’s closet homosexuality, his racism and obsessive need to keep extensive and compromising files on
prominent Americans whose politics or personalities were distasteful to him. Dugain also gives credence to the rumor that Hoover has a hand in the Kennedy assassination. Their is nothing new about this mixture of fact and gossip, certainly not to Americans and probably not to the French either. What makes *La malédiction* stand out is not some startling political analysis, but Dugain’s effort to make sense of his subject’s myriad contradictions. Hoover becomes in this text an individual who sought to save the United States by undercutting the nation’s essential values. Dugain flirts with explaining Hoover’s secretive, vindictive nature in terms of his sexual identity and visceral jealousy of the prominent, but finally leaves the question open. What emerges in this novel is a man as fascinating and complex as he is dangerous.

6 Eric Vuillard’s *Tristesse de la terre* is an effort at explaining the American character. Initially it deals with one of the country’s most successful *cabottins*. Buffalo Bill was an inspired con man. He invented the Wild West, destroyed herds of buffalo, exploited the Indians who worked for him, made and lost a great deal of money, and proposed a tidied-up version of the massacre at Wounded Knee. Once again, there is nothing particularly new about this. Had the novel just stopped with Buffalo Bill’s demise, it would have had little special about it. However, after disposing of Buffalo Bill, Vuillard continues with a brief addendum concerning the long forgotten Wilson Alwyn Bentley, a New Englander who quietly devoted his life to the study of snowflakes. He made important scientific contributions to the field without having the slightest clue how he might profit from his discoveries. Bentley died in poverty and obscurity. In *Tristesse de la terre* Vuillard draws no conclusions about the American character. He seems content just allowing his readers to contemplate two extremes of national behavior, each in its own way as incomprehensible as it is American.

7 In *Théorie de la vilaine petite fille* Hubert Haddad examines a group of American stars now largely forgotten. In 1848 Kate Fox claimed to be possessed of spiritual powers which would permit her to summon forth and communicate with the dead. Her sister, Margaret, soon discovered a similar talent, and the olderest sister, Léah, rapidly grasped the financial advantages of this spiritual gift. For many years the sisters profitted from their alleged abilities, with Kate more or less believing she possessed some unique power. The women attracted large crowds and made lots of money. Haddad makes no sustained effort to separate the intertwined strands of the genuine and the fraudulent in the sisters. He allows the phenomena of the Fox women to remain a fascinating, yet very American enigma.

8 Mathieu Larnaude’s *Notre désir est sans remède* recounts the life of an ill-fated Hollywood star, Frances Farmer, and her brief celebrity. While he deals with the transformations of the American cityscape by the omnipresence of movie theaters, “les nouvelles cathédrales de l’humanité” (13, emphasis in text), Farmer is the main focus. She was an outspoken Leftist, but Larnaude avoids the easy temptation to attribute her downfall to her politics. Her social activism did not help her career, but neither did her alcoholism. Farmer emerges in this novel as an idealistic, courageous and flawed woman.

9 Marilyn and Elvis are perennial American icons. So, it is with a bit of trepidation one opens Caroline de Mulder’s *Bye Bye Elvis*. When De Mulder is chronicling the King’s early success (his talent, his love for his mother, his ineptness with women, and growing addictions) few Elvis fans will discover what they did not already know. However, when she introduces the reclusive John White, holed up in Paris, the story moves to another
level. Justice Oliver Wendell famously suggested that when good Americans die, they go to Paris. De Mulder does him one better, by allowing that they might get their a bit earlier than predicted. Could the mysterious John White actually be the man who allegedly departed this life at Graceland on August 16, 1977? De Mulder makes of a great American icon an even more mysterious person than Elvis’ most rabid fans might have imagined.

Frédéric Beigbeder’s *Oona & Salinger* concerns Oona O’Neil and the future author of *Catcher in the Rye*. Oona and J.D. met when she was a beautiful, young socialite, the daughter of the famous playwright, Eugene O’Neil, while he was a young man struggling to find himself as a writer. Eventually Oona broke it off and married Charlie Chaplin. Beigbeder tells the story in a racy manner. He offers opinions on things such as Oona’s relation to her father, and then to her much older husband. What he leaves deliberately unexamined is to what extent Salinger’s clumsy affair with Oona affected him as a writer.

The second grouping of French novels dealing with the American experience contains texts where real or imagined Americans react to quotidian events that can be banal or ugly. These works do not eschew social criticism; I maintain simply that these elements are not the principal aspects of the novels. Catherine Mavrikakis’ *Les derniers jours de Smokey Nelson* certainly would appear to strain my thesis that social critique is not uppermost in the novel. The author dedicates her book to an American lawyer who has devoted his career to defending indigents accused of serious crimes. A poor, black man brutally murders a white couple and their children. The wrong man is initially arrested for the crime, essentially because he is black. Finally, the real culprit, Smokey Nelson, is arrested and condemned. He remains a long time in prison before being executed. Obviously, one has to see this novel as an indictment of American bigotry, and a reflection of national racism. Yet the most riveting sections of *Smokey Nelson* deal with the enigma of the man’s model behavior in prison, the opacity of his murderous motivations, and the collateral pain he has inflicted on three innocent people who have suffered irreparable damage from his act. Social issues are important in this novel, but the strength of *Smokey Nelson* resides in the tentative effort at psychological analyses of the culprit and the family members who will never overcome the traumatic effect of what he did.

Kitty Genovese’s story is true. She was an ordinary New Yorker, someone who worked hard during the week, and liked to party on the weekend. One evening in 1964 when she was returning home late, she was set upon by a man who stabbed her numerous times. Despite her screams, nobody in her neighborhood came to her aid. This horrible event is the subject of Didier Decoin’s *Est-ce ainsi que les femmes meurent?*. However, the author’s interest is neither in the murderer or Genovese as a person. What puzzles him is the passivity of the neighbors. Decoin avoids temptations to moralize and seize the ethical high ground. At the center of this novel is the haunting question posed by a woman living in Genovese’s building, but who was not there the night of the killing. She asked her husband who was also absent, “Es-tu sûr que tu serais descendu?” (219).

Jocelyn Bonnerave’s *Nouveaux Indiens* is the story of a French anthropologist interested in studying a very exotic tribe: intellectuals and artists living in the Berkeley area. His America is George W.Bush’s America, a world where the ways in which alleged friends and colleagues attempt to destroy each other appears to be a metaphor for a new American pastime: the denigration or dismissal of those with whom one does not agree.
The novel is a half-hearted policier where the murderer gets off at the end, but the really striking element is the anthropologist’s conclusion about the United States. There is no single Amérique, but rather geographical groupings characterized by multilayered contradictions: “il n’y aura jamais une seule Amérique, barbare ou promise ... Les États-Unis sont parcourus de fictions. Elle sont des centaines, chargées, contradictoires ... il suffit d’en produire d’autres” (169).

A subset of this category featuring imagined Americans are novels about les Yankees that reflect Gallic idées fixes concerning the denizens of the New World while at the same time mocking the clichés about these people and their country. Eliane Salibra Garillon’s Le journal impubliable de George Pearl would assure French people who like their ideas about Americans claires et nettes. Even in retirement George is crusty, vulgar and overbearing. A self-made man, he displays little tolerance for failure, “l’unique obstacle à l’ascension humaine était la bêtise” (12). For him earning money is the major American indoor sport (90). George’s rigid adherence to a professional life of constant competition has even managed to alienate his colleagues: “Pearl était tellement insupportable qu’on le surnommait Pearl Harbor” (10). Unimpressed by culture of any sort George particularly loathes Thoreau even though he grew up in a house where the author of Walden once lived. It is only when death approaches that George reveals a cloying sentimentality he had always sought to hide. Uncouth, obsessively aggressive in business, yet with a storeroom of repressed, somewhat vulgar sentimentality, this makes George the typical American for some.

Lise Charles presents in Comme Ulysse the portrait of an attractive, artistic and intelligent young French woman who is completely closed-minded when it comes to the States. Lou feels herself to be, rather like the DuBelly alluded to in the title, something of an exile in a foreign world, although she shows no untoward haste to return home. She is relieved to discover that the locals are “pas trop stupides” (125). She suffers remarkably little culture shock because the best aspects of this new country are already familiar to her: “[Tu] vois quelque chose d’à peu près charmant aux États-Unis, tu peux être sûr qu’ils l’ont piqué aux Européens” (200). Lou is an engaging example of a person who never really needs to look, she already knows what she will see: “L’Amérique c’est comme ça qu’on me l’a décrite ou comme ça que je l’imaginais” (143).

The final category refers to French novels which offer a parody/pastiche of American fiction. One such pastiche of the American detective novel is Joël Dicker’s La vérité sur l’affaire Harry Quebert. In this version the sleuth is a young Jewish novelist suffering from writer’s block. When Marcus discovers that his mentor, Harry Quebert, has been accused of murdering his fifteen year old lover, the aspiring author rushes to his teacher’s aid. What follows is a series of aventures rocambolesques, worthy of a roman fleuve or a television series intended to run for one season. True to an American T.V. format, Marcus is seconded by a gruff, but kindly black detective. Eventually they establish more or less the truth about the affair, and in the process more or less prove that Harry was innocent. This novel demonstrates a rather thorough knowledge of New England small towns and customs, so the reader can assume an authorial clin d’œil when Marcus strolls into the local diner and orders a cognac.

Antoine Bello would appear to maintain that if the great American novel can be written, it will focus on contemporary financial practices and their numerous irregularities. Composed in epistolary style, the story of Roman américain unfolds via e-mail in a Florida gated community whose residents are making and losing impressive amounts of
money through the sale and resale of life insurance contracts. Dan Siver is in e-mail contact with his friend, Vlad Eisinger, a journalist who has written a series of exposés for a national newspaper. In graduate school Vlad wanted to be a novelist, and as Dan points out, he has already become a very American one: “Tu cherches à chroniquer ton époque à travers le négoce de policies d’assurance-vie, comme Steinbeck ou Melville se sont servis de la mécanisation de l’agriculture ou de la chasse à baleine” (95). Particularly striking is the description of the American character: “ce mélange d’optimisme et de candeur, de cupidité et de vertueuse hypocrisie” (113). Roman américain describes Americans not simply as contradictory, but as a people completely at ease with their contradictions.

In the first sentence of an essay on Tanguy Viel’s, La disparition de Jim Sullivan, Warren Motte wryly remarks that: “These days it takes a Frenchman to write a great American novel” (TV, 66). The Frenchman in question is not Tanguy Viel; rather his narrator who understands that American fiction is pushing its Gallic counterpart off center stage. The narrator begins with the rueful observation that Francophone readers, including himself, seem to prefer American fiction to the French equivalent, a fact demonstrated by his personal library which contains “plus de roman américains que de romans français” (9). While American novels are not the only ones read beyond their borders, the problem for the narrator is that French fiction is far from having comparable success. French equivalents strike him as inspiring little interest outside the Hexagon. He seriously doubts whether a work where “le personage principal ... habitait au pied de la cathédrale de Chartres” (10) would have much appeal to an international audience.

Motte points out that “the narrator tends to look toward the principle of event, because if there is one solid and non-negotiable principle in the American novel, it is that something must happen” (TV, 73, emphasis in text). While this is undoubtedly true, the narrator of Jim Sullivan also displays a slightly addled sense of the importance of what he believes to be American literary conventions: “[J]’insiste sur certains détails, non pas qu’ils soient importants en eux-même, mais parce que j’ai remarqué qu’on n’écrit pas un roman américain sans un sens aiguisé du détail, que la saleté de la douche ou le ressort grinçant du matelas” (23). He also notes the American willingness to engage with current events which are “une chose dont on ne peut pas passer en Amérique” (25). As well as flashbacks, at times for their own sake: “il est impossible de ne pas avoir des flashbacks, y compris les flashbacks qui ne servent à rien” (35). Finally, if the narrator of Jim Sullivan has problems with multiple story lines, he has never doubted that it is with these elements that “on écrivait un vrai roman américain” (59). Both La vérité sur l’affaire Harry Quebert and Roman américain illustrate this latter point. La disparition de Jim Sullivan manages to parody aspects of American fiction at the same time as it caricatures French concerns about the growing predominance of this same literature in their country.

While 9/11 was a catalyst for the French rethinking of the United States, it is not the only explanation for this change in attitudes which has its origins in the latter portion of the twentieth-century. This was the period when the French began to realize that while l’Amérique remained a giant and arguably the most powerful nation on the planet, it had become a crippled one, and hence somewhat more human. The French witnessed the Americans replicating their own failure in Vietnam. They noted the U.S.’s inability to resolve issues in the Middle East, and then, along with the rest of the world, they
experienced the end of American invulnerability to attack on September 11, 2001\textsuperscript{18}.

The weakening image of \textit{l'Amérique} also paralleled shifts in the ways the French began to see themselves. Long prone to excoriate Yankee racism, the influx of North Africans, both legal and illegal, into the Hexagon, the expansion of Moslem communities and the tensions this at times provoked with the general populace, the difficulties and occasional unwillingness of minority groups to integrate French life and culture, as well as the expansion of anti-Semitic and anti-Arab sentiments, forced the French to confront the widespread reality of bigotry in their own country. It became increasingly apparent that if there were somewhere a moral high ground from which one country could judge the racial failings of the other, France, no more than the United States, had any business standing on it.

Associated with racism was the rise of the Extreme Right in France. Although the country has always had flamboyant right wing politicians, they were on the fringe of the electoral process and had little staying power. In 1953 Pierre Poujade created a movement initially intended to protect small businesses against encroachments on their markets by \textit{les grandes surfaces}. Eventually, it expanded to support a variety of reactionary causes, and briefly achieved some political success, only to fade away after 1958. The \textit{Organisation de l'armée secrète} came about toward the end of the Algerian War (1952-1964). For a while it spread panic in France through a series of assassinations and rumors of a coup d’état. Eventually it was suppressed with little lasting effect on the political system.

The Front National is another matter. Founded in 1972 by Jean-Marie LePen, it features an inflammatory mixture of xenophobia, anti-immigration policies and racism. In 2002 Jean-Marie LePen was one of the two run-off candidates in the presidential elections, and with each subsequent election, the Front National’s political importance increases. Its popularity has grown, particularly after LePen was succeeded by his much smoother and politically astute daughter, Marine, as the head of the party. The Front National lost the presidential election in 2016, but gained over thirty percent of the vote. In the 2002 contest, Jean-Marie LePen was only able to muster about eighteen percent of the vote. While it has been a commonplace for many French to see the United States as a conservative country, these same people have been compelled to contemplate their own nation drifting to the Right\textsuperscript{19}.

In recent years the national political situations in France and the United States have become somewhat similar, a loose, somewhat disorganized Center-Left trying to confront Conservative and Extreme Right elements. This, along with the recognition of the diminished reputation of the States on the international stage, coupled with France’s growing awareness of its own flaws have nuanced the traditional French Leftist \textit{méfiance} toward \textit{l'Amérique}. Likewise, Islamic terrorism along with both nations’ penchant for simplistic solutions to complex issues (the Patriot Act, \textit{l'état d'urgence}), have broken down or at least eased tensions dating from the Cold War. France and the United States have been forced by circumstances to accept what they have always known, namely that their similarities far outweigh their differences. With regard to literature, these factors have contributed in France to a new openness toward the United States. This phenomenon which has been slowly developing since the eve of the twentieth-century received a renewed impetus with the election of the forty-fourth president of the United States.
The Barack Obama presidency increased France’s fascination with the States. His victory seemed not like an example of un esprit de contradiction, but rather contradiction itself. After eight years of a conservative, white man with few intellectual interests and no international travel before his election, Americans chose a liberal, Harvard-educated black with extensive experience abroad. The electing of an African-American to the highest office in a country often justifiably derided for its racism was stunning enough, but even more inspiring for many was Obama’s professed desire to move the country beyond its racial divide, to change the way Americans saw themselves and others. Whatever the frustrations and disappointments which would eventually mark the Obama years, they began on a note of optimism and hope for a new era, and this enthusiasm was at first shared in France as in most nations in the world. Coupled with renewed efforts to ameliorate American relations with erstwhile enemies in the Middle East, it appeared for a time that the United States had set out in a new direction. Long perceived as a nation of contradictions, with the Obama election the putative contradictory nature of American society began to be seen in a more positive light.

There is nothing new about the French considering the United States to be a contradictory society, but traditionally this has taken the form of a negative judgment, with implicit or explicit accusations of racism. During the Cold War period a common assumption of the French Left was that the Marshall Plan was primarily a propaganda device, a means of infiltrating American power and authority into French life in the guise of humanitarian aid. The coupling of American religiosity with astonishing violence has always been a source of scorn, as have American proclamations of social equality in a country ravaged by racism.

There has been since the Obama election, however, a slight but significant change. American contradictoriness has begun to be perceived as a potential source of strength for the nation, and as an object of considerable curiosity for French artists. It has made the American character less one-dimensional, and hence of more interest to writers less inclined to jump to facile conclusions about les Yankees. In several novels surveyed in the essay, French authors have chosen to focus on the apparent contradictions in their American subjects without attempting to resolve them or use them as podiums from which to decry American shortcomings. They have taken note of a situation, underscored its paradoxical nature, but left the possibility of any final resolution to the reader’s mind and imagination.

Donald Trump’s election to the American presidency will certainly affect French views of the United States, and mute the enthusiasm the country at times enjoyed when Obama was in charge. Trump’s flamboyant personality, his ease with racist and sexist comments, his apparent indifference to truth, along with his hyper-sensitivity to perceived slights, and seeming willingness to utter the first thing that pops into his mind, might provide a goldmine of inspiration to French artists. Yet if so, it must be mined carefully. Caricature would seem to be the most obvious approach when writing about Trump, but it may not be as easy as it appears, since the finest caricaturist of the forty-fifth president of the United States is the president himself. A harder, yet potentially more rewarding perspective would be fiction dealing with Trump’s supporters, extreme right-wing Christians and secularists, as well as the legions of working class whites who lost their jobs and dignity to technology and more efficient fuel sources. In addition to being displaced by modernity, these people view themselves
with some justification as being scorned by the liberal intelligentsia (these deplorable people) whose efforts to appeal to sexual and racial minorities have given the impression they no longer care about poor whites. A third theme might be the fear engendered by Trump’s violent and ill-considered rhetoric in reaction to possible threats to the American nation (Fire and Fury). Such language might be little more than bluster and verbal sabre rattling, but given the man’s unpredictability and power, one can never be sure, and a war provoked by a mistake, a lapse in judgment, remains a war. Trump will certainly alter the image of the United States in the French novel; that he will inspire the French literary imagination is probably also the case, yet creating enduring fiction out of a populist phenomenon will be a more complex undertaking than it might first appear.

In today’s French fiction the United States and its citizens are being examined from multiple perspectives. The purpose of this essay has not been to exhaust the list of possible approaches, but to describe some of them. This process has led to two conclusions. One is positive about the French and less so about the Americans. Recent French fiction has shown a new interest in the American experience, and by doing so it has called into question earlier French assumptions about l’Amérique. This represents an openness on the part of French artists toward the States, a willingness to reimagine the meanings of being American. The obvious question is whether there is a reciprocal effect on the part of American writers to look at the French differently. The response to this question is not particularly encouraging. While there are many prominent American novelists quick to proclaim their admiration for France and all things French, American authors, along with the bulk of their compatriots essentially continue to consider France either as a country whose moments of glory were in the past, or a setting for an elaborate culinary adventure. France might well be éternelle, but seen through American eyes, the present and the future belongs to Uncle Sam.

William Cloonan
Florida State University

NOTES

1 Here is a list of novels which express this new interest in the States. The list is not exhaustive. When the title does not make sufficiently clear the relevance of a particular work to this grouping, I provide a brief explanation.

Dany LaFerrière. Cette grenade dans la main du jeune nègre est-elle une arme ou un fruit? (Serpent à plume, 2002).
Franz-Olivier Giesbert. L’Américain (Gallimard, 2004).
Laure Limongi. Fonction Elvis (Léo Scheer, 2005).
Michel Schneider. Marilyn, dernière séance (Gallimard, 2005).
Frédérique Roux. L’hiver indien (Grasset, 2008). Enterprising Indians on a twentieth-century reservation find imaginative ways to make money for their tribe and themselves.
Catherine Mavrikakis. Le ciel de Bay City (Sabine Wespieger, 2009). A girl living in Michigan has an ordinary life until she discovers her grandparents were Holocaust victims. This provokes her to commit a terrible crime on July 4th.
Claro. Cosmos Z (Actes Sud, 2010). What happened to Dorothy and her friends after leaving Oz.


Joël Dicker. *Le livre de Baltimore* (Fallois, 2015). At once a prequel and a sequel to another American-based novel by the same author, *La vérité sur l'affaire Harry Quebert* (Fallois, 2012)


Simon Liberati. *California Girls* (2016). The Charles Manson Gang,

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17 In terms of deep involvement with individual American literary luminaries, two recent works stand out. Julie Wolkenstein published in 2008 *L'exuxse* (Paris: P.O.L.) which is a contemporary version of Henry James' *Portrait of a Lady* (1881) where an impressionable young American girl encounters a Frenchman whom she marries. However, unlike James’ Isabel Archer, she does not surrender her fortune and identity to this fellow. In Pierre Senges’ *Achab* (Paris: Verticales, 2015), the captain of the *Pequod* was not destroyed by Moby Dick. In fact he had a full life before and after that unfortunate incident. The novel provides both a prequel and a sequel to Achab’s adventures before and after his battle with the Great White Whale.
18 The mutual concern about growing Islamic terrorism also brought the two countries closer together. Never non-allies, a common foe constrained France and the United States to take their alliance more seriously, and to forget subjects of tension between them, such as Jacques Chirac’s refusal to engage French forces in the war against Iraq. It will be recalled that the French President’s decision evoked a political brouhaha in the States, prompting a Republican congressman, Bob Ney, to propose substituting *Freedom Fries for French Fries*. Initially popular with a segment of the American public, the enthusiasm began to wane in proportion to the progressive disillusionment with the Iraq War.
19 The turmoil created in France by the *Mariage pour tous* controversy also suggests that the French may not be any more sexually liberated than the Americans whose alleged Puritanism has long been the butt of Gallic jibes.
20 The fact that the Obama presidency failed to live up to all the hopes placed in it does not negate that this election seriously challenged many stereotypes of American society.
21 Jim Harrison’s *New Yorker* essay, “A Really Big Lunch”, (September 6, 2004) provides a fine example of the author’s Francophilia, but it also seems to turn France into a national culinary museum.