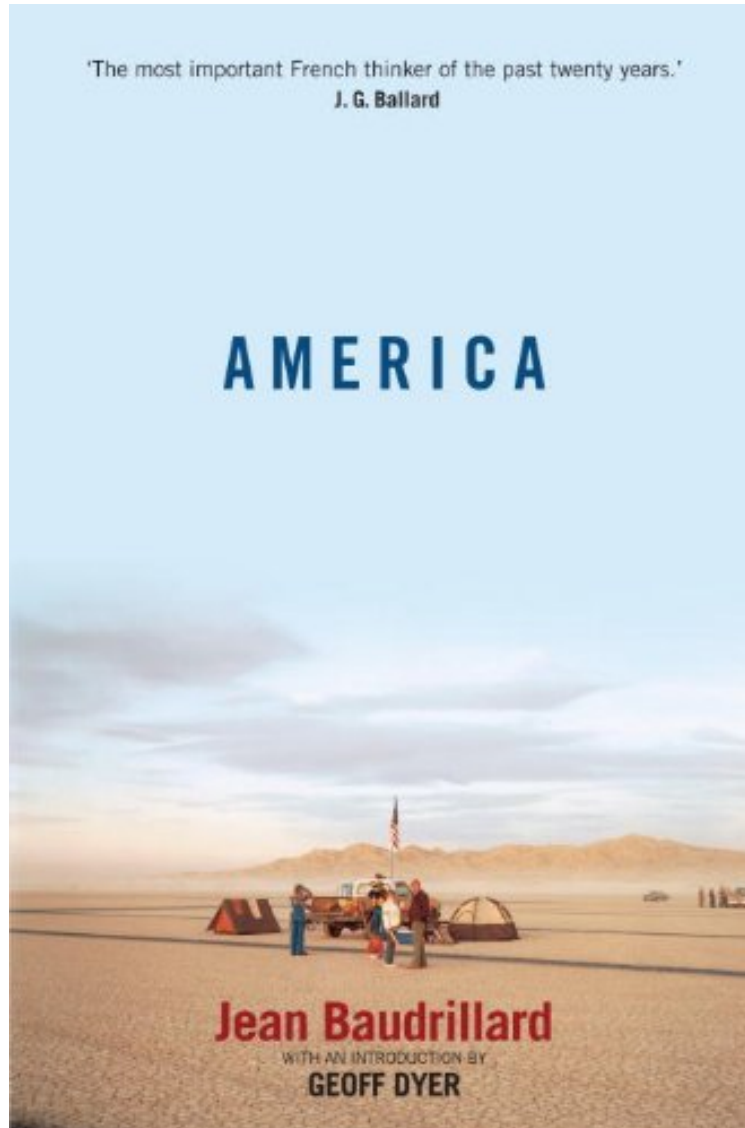


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Jean Baudrillard

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#35686 in Books Jean Baudrillard 2010-09-20 2010-09-20 Original language: English PDF # 1 7.80 x .50 x 5.10l, .41 #File Name: 184467682X160 pages America | File size: 19.Mb

Jean Baudrillard : America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By Customer An interesting critique of the United States. This book should be read with an open mind. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A TRAVELERS TALE OF AMERICA FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE FRENCH PHILOSOPHER By Steven H Propp Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007) was a French philosopher, cultural theorist, political commentator, and photographer most associated with the Postmodern movement. He wrote in the first chapter of this 1986 book, I went in search of ASTRAL America,

not social and cultural America, but the America of the empty, absolute freedom of the freeways, not the deep America of mores and mentalities, but the American of desert speed, of motels and mineral surfaces. I looked for it in the speed of the screenplay, in the indifferent reflex of television, in the film of days and nights projected across an empty space, in the marvelously affectless succession of signs, images, faces, and ritual acts on the road; looked for what was nearest to the nuclear and enucleated universe, a universe which is virtually our own, right down to its European cottages. (Pg. 5) He observes, The slogan of a new form of advertising activity, of autistic performance, a pure and empty form, a challenge to ones own self that has replaced the Promethean ecstasy of competition, effort, and success. The New York Marathon has become a sort of international symbol of such fetishistic performance, of the mania for an empty victory, the joy engendered by a feat that is of no consequence The moon landing is the same kind of thing: We did it! The event was ultimately not really so surprising; it was an event pre-programmed into the course of science and progress. We did it. But it has not revived the millenarian dream of conquering space. In a sense, it has exhausted it. (Pg. 20-21) He suggests, America is neither dream nor reality. It is a hyperreality. It is a hyperreality because it is a utopia which has behaved from the very beginning as though it were already achieved. Everything here is real and pragmatic, and yet it is all the stuff of dreams too. It may be that the truth of America can only be seen by a European, since he alone will discover here the perfect simulacrum---that of the immanence and material transcription of all values. The Americans, for their part, have no sense of simulation. They are themselves simulation in its most developed state, but they have no language in which to describe it, since they themselves are the model. (Pg. 28-29) He asserts, they certainly do smile at you here, though neither from courtesy, nor from an effort to charm. This smile signifies only the need to smile The smile of immunity, the smile of advertising: This country is good. I am good. We are the best. It is also Reagans smile---the culmination of the self-satisfaction of the entire American nation---which is on the way to becoming the sole principle of government Give your emptiness and indifference to others, light up your face with the zero degree of joy and pleasure, smile, smile, smile Americans may have no identity, but they do have wonderful teeth. (Pg. 33-34) He notes, The point is not to write the sociology or psychology of the car, the point is to drive. That way you learn more about this society than all academia could ever tell you Drive ten thousand miles across America and you will know more about the country than all the institutes of sociology and political science put together. (Pg. 54-55) He points out, The very possibility of the Eternal Return is becoming precarious; that marvelous perspective presupposes that things unfold in a necessary, predestined order, the sense of which lies beyond them. There is nothing like that today; things merely follow on in a flabby order that leads nowhere. Todays Eternal Return is that of the infinitely small, the fractal, the obsessive repetition of things on a microscopic and inhuman scale. It is not the exaltation of a will, nor the sovereign affirmation of an event, nor its consecration by an immutable sign, such as Nietzsche sought, but the viral recurrence of microprocesses. (Pg. 72) He says, freedom and equality, like ease and grace, only exist where they are present from the outset. This is the surprise democracy had in store for us: equality is at the beginning, not at the end. That is the difference between egalitarianism and democracy: democracy presupposes equality at the outset, egalitarianism presupposes it at the end. Democracy demands that all of its citizens BEGIN the race even. Egalitarianism insists that they all FINISH even. (Pg. 94) He states, What is new in America is the clash of the first level (primitive and wild) and the third kind (the absolute simulacrum). There is no second level But no vision of America makes sense without this reversal of our values: it is Disneyland that is authentic here! The cinema and TV are Americas reality! The freeways, the Safeways, the skylines, speed, and deserts---these are America, not the galleries, churches, and culture To see and feel America, you have to have had for at least one moment in some downtown jungle, in the Painted Desert, or on some bend in a freeway, the feeling the Europe had disappeared. You have to have wondered, How can anyone be European? (Pg. 104-105) He argues, Human rights have been won everywhere. The world is almost entirely liberated; there is nothing left to fight for. And yet at the same time entire social groups are being laid waste from the inside Society has forgotten them and now they are forgetting themselves This is the Fourth World But whereas the Third World still had a political meaning the Fourth World has none. It is transpolitical. This is a result of our societies withdrawing political interest, of our advanced societies withdrawing social interest, of that excommunication which affects precisely the communications-based societies. And it is true on a world scale. (Pg. 112-113) In the final chapter, he says, the only tissue of the city is that of the freeways headlights full on in broad daylight, on the Ventura Freeway, coming from nowhere, going nowhere: an immense collective act, rolling along, ceaselessly unrolling, without aggression, without objectives---transferential sociality, doubtless the only kind in a hyperreal, technological, soft-mobile era, exhausting itself in surfaces, networks, and soft technologies. A fantastic space, a spectral and discontinuous succession of all the various functions, of all signs with no hierarchical ordering the power of pure open space, the kind you find in the deserts. The power of the desert form: it is the erasure of traces in the desert, of the signified of signs in the cities, or any psychology of bodies. An animal and metaphysical fascination---the direct fascination of space, the immanent fascination of dryness and sterility. (Pg. 125) This is a stimulating, enlightening collection of observations about our country from a very perceptive outsider. This book will interest not only those studying Baudrillard and Postmodernism, but for anyone interested in a Europeans take on America.

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Insightful, Poetic, and Sharp By Nate T. I once heard a psychologist say, "If you went underwater and asked a fish to describe its environment, the last thing it would list

would be water." Baudrillard does the same thing with America: pointing out what is so obvious as to be hidden, secretive, over-transparent. As with all Baudrillard's books, the message is brilliantly insightful, poetic, and sharp as a razor. You'll never look at the USA in the same way. (And I'm American.)

From the sierras of New Mexico to the streets of New York and LA by night a sort of luminous, geometric, incandescent immensity Baudrillard mixes aperus and observations with a wicked sense of fun to provide a unique insight into the country that dominates our world. In this new edition, leading cultural critic and novelist Geoff Dyer offers a thoughtful and perceptive take on the continued resonance of Baudrillard's America.

From Library Journal Like de Tocqueville before him, Baudrillard, a French social scientist, is in search of the American ethos. His little essay, however, lacks the substance, perspicacity, and originality of a Democracy in America. Rather, Baudrillard's analysis tends to be grandiloquent and sometimes hackneyed, as when he observes "Americans believe in facts, but not in facticity," and "The cinema and TV are America's reality!" In addition, the book is overpriced. Not recommended. Kenneth F. Kister, Poynter Inst. for Media Studies, St. Petersburg, Fla. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. Occasionally provocative and almost always infuriating ... America is filled with perceptive, almost poetic observations. Rolling Stone Since de Tocqueville, French thinkers have been fascinated with America. But when it comes to mysterious paradoxes and lyrical complexity no French intellectual matches Jean Baudrillard in contemplating the New World. The New York Times A mixture of crazy notions and dead-on insights, America is a valuable (and voluble) picture of what Mr. Baudrillard calls the only remaining primitive society ... ours. The New York Times Book Language Notes Text: English, French (translation)