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Nineteenth-century America through the Eyes of John Gennadius

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NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICA
THROUGH THE EYES OF JOHN GENNADIUS

Marianna D. Christopoulos

ABSTRACT: The aim of this article is to unfold and analyze the view of America held by John Gennadius [Ioannis Gennadios], one of the most important diplomats of nineteenth-century Greece. Having spent most of his life in England as a member of the Greek legation, which he served for more than 20 years, Gennadius was influenced by the ongoing British discussion of the “American miracle”. His perception was, however, fostered during two visits to America, a professional one (1888) and a private one (1893-1894). He was involved in American political life as the official negotiator of the Greek government, but also enjoyed the culture, witnessed the wealth and the galloping development and made many acquaintances. All of this made an impression on him. He commented on the importance of British influence on American civilization, acknowledged the material and intellectual progress of its people and foresaw the potential of its thriving economy in world politics.

“People are paying close attention and seeking to discern what will be the permanent and abiding contribution of America. Is it a building stone introduced into a side wall of the universal structure or is it the keystone of a magnificent arch that adorns and strengthens the structure?”¹ This was the rhetorical question posed by John Gennadius [Ioannis Gennadios] in 1894 during his panegyric speech for American Independence Day while sailing across the Atlantic. This question, posed by the Greek diplomat, reflects the fascination which America had exercised upon Europeans from the final third of the eighteenth century. America, distant and isolated, wealthy and progressive, democratic and so very young, multilingual and populous, produced from the start estimations as to its possibilities and capabilities.² Such evaluations, derived from journeys for

¹ Ἀτλαντικός (28 July 1894). This speech was given by John Gennadius to the crew and passengers of the ocean liner *Loukanía* during his return trip from America to England. The manuscript of this speech is found in the American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Gennadius Library, John Gennadius’ Scrapbooks [hereafter GL, JGS], scrapbook 9.1, p. 1305.

² America had captivated the imagination of Europeans ever since its discovery. It was, however, after the American Revolution that it attracted European admiration for its democratic and liberal ideals and after the American Civil War (1861-1865) that it was widely acknowledged that its destiny was not to be humble. A voluminous literature on America had been produced, either criticizing or idealizing, but in any case admitting America’s progressive gain of status and power in the world. For a comprehensive presentation of the European views

personal investigation and tourism and from literary productions containing American myths and traditions, were the first elements of an image being formulated and ever-enriched in the mind of the old world for the new.

As for the Greek experience, during the first half of the nineteenth century, the image which Greeks were formulating of America was, for the most part, a product of intermediation. Translations of literary books, of travel journals and of learned studies by Europeans with America as their theme were one basic source of information,³ which was systematically enriched by what American missionaries conveyed about their country.⁴ The great distance and the practical difficulties permitted the personal contact of Greeks with America only essentially after the second half of the nineteenth century, and especially toward its end, when the great immigration movement to “the promised land” started.⁵

and criticism on America from the eighteenth century onwards, see Aurelian Craiutu and Jeffrey C. Isaac (eds), *America through European Eyes*, University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009. For an interesting analysis of the development of American studies in European education from the eighteenth century to the twentieth, see Sigmund Skard, *The American Myth and the European Mind*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961.

³ For the literary production with America as the subject, see in particular Eri Stavropoulou, “Η εικόνα της Αμερικής στην ελληνική λογοτεχνία του 19ου αιώνα. Ανάμεσα στον εξωτισμό και την ουτοπία” [The image of America in Greek literature of the nineteenth century: Between exoticism and utopianism], *Σύγκριση/Comparison* 16 (2005), pp. 5-33. I wish to thank my colleague Constantine Diogos, who indicated to me the relative bibliography. He is presently working on a doctoral dissertation entitled *The Greek Vision of America from the Greek Enlightenment to the First World War*.

⁴ On the presence of American missionaries in Greece, see in particular Kalliopi Pantazi-Thanaïlaki, *Αμερικανοί μισσιονάριοι στον ελληνικό χώρο τον 19ο αιώνα. Εκδοτική δραστηριότητα και εκπαιδευτικό έργο* [American missionaries in the Greek lands during the nineteenth century: Publishing activities and educational work], 2 vols, unpublished dissertation, Komotini: Democritus University of Thrace, 2003. See also Antonis Smyrniaios, *Μετέωρος ζήλος. Προτεσταντική προπαιδεία και Νεοελληνική εκπαίδευση κατά το 19ο αιώνα* [Hovering zeal: Protestant propaidea and Modern Greek education in the nineteenth century], Athens: Psyfida, 2006.

⁵ For Greek immigration to America during the nineteenth century, see in particular Yannis Papadopoulos, *Η μετανάστευση από την Οθωμανική Αυτοκρατορία στην Αμερική (19ος αιώνας – 1923). Οι ελληνικές κοινότητες της Αμερικής και η αλυτρωτική πολιτική της Ελλάδας* [The emigration from the Ottoman Empire to America (nineteenth century – 1923): The Greek communities in America and the irredentist policy of Greece], unpublished dissertation, Athens: Panteion University, 2008, pp. 30-124. For the Greek policy towards migration to the USA, see Triantafyllia N. Kourtoumi-Chatzi, *Η ελληνική μετανάστευση προς τις Ηνωμένες Πολιτείες και η πολιτική της Ελλάδας (1890-1914)* [Greek migration to the USA and the Greek state policy (1890-1914)], unpublished dissertation, Thessaloniki: Aristotle University, 1999.

Until that point in time, however, the assessment of life in the United States of America by leading personalities of the Kingdom of Greece was limited and confined primarily to Greek Protestants who had studied in the United States, such as Michael Kalopothakis (1825-1911), the doctor, theologian and publisher of the journal *Ἀσπὴρ τῆς Ἀνατολῆς*, and to diplomats. The first Greek diplomat to the United States was the learned Alexandros Rizos Rangavis, who was appointed to Washington for a short period (1867-1868) to strengthen Greek-American relations due to the stirring up of the Cretan Question (1866-1869).⁶ After his departure, for a period of some 15 years, Greece did not appoint any other diplomat, thus confining itself to the services of the Greek consuls already there. The absence of common grounds of interest or competition with the USA hindered the development of any diplomatic relations between the two countries. It was only during the last decades of the nineteenth century that the current trade and migration to the USA propelled the Greek government to reconsider its diplomatic activity across the Atlantic. Thus, in 1888 and with the occasion provided by the proposal of President Grover Cleveland to review American tariffs, the government of Harilaos Trikoupi appointed the diplomat John Gennadius with the rank of resident minister in the United States of America.⁷

John Gennadius was one of the most distinguished personalities of the Greek diplomatic corps during the final third of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth.⁸ He was born in Athens in 1844, the son of the erudite Georgios Gennadius and Artemis Benizelou, studied at the English-language Protestant College of Malta and at the Lyceum of Christos Vaphas in Athens and then sought a commercial career in London. He became well-known throughout Greece and beyond when in 1870, on the occasion of the abduction and execution

⁶ Eri Stavropoulou, “Ἡ ἀμερικανικὴ ἐμπειρία τοῦ Α. Ρ. Ραγκαβῆ” [The American experience of A. R. Rangavis], in Eleni Maragou and Theodora Tsibuki (eds), *Ἡ δική μας Ἀμερική. Ἡ ἀμερικανικὴ κουλτούρα στὴν Ελλάδα* [Our own America: The American culture in Greece], Athens 2010, pp. 451-481; Haido Barkoula, *Ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος Ρίζος Ραγκαβῆς (1830-1880). Ἀλυτρωτισμὸς καὶ διπλωματία* [Alexander Rizos Rangavis (1830-1880): Irredentism and diplomacy], unpublished dissertation, Athens: National and Kapodistrian University, 2008, pp. 106-123; and Papadopoulos, *Ἡ μετανάστευση ἀπὸ τὴν Ὀθωμανικὴ Αυτοκρατορία*, pp. 122-123, note 443.

⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Athens, Historical and Diplomatic Archive [hereafter FMHDA], folder 1890/A5.2, no. 1071, Stefanos Dragoumis to Gennadius, Athens, 21 January 1888. See also the newspaper *Νέα Ἡμέρα* (30 March / 11 February 1888).

⁸ Specifically for the diplomatic activities of John Gennadius, see Marianna D. Christopoulos, *Ὁ Ἰωάννης Γεννάδιος καὶ ἡ διαμόρφωση τῆς ἐθνικῆς πολιτικῆς τῆς Ελλάδας (1870-1918)* [John Gennadius and the formation of the national policy of Greece (1870-1918)], unpublished doctoral dissertation, Thessaloniki: Aristotle University, 2012.

of foreign tourists in the region of Dilesi (Attica), he composed in English an apology on behalf of Greece, desiring thus to contribute to the defense of the country against the European outcry.⁹

The apology for the Dilesi incident proved to be a springboard for Gennadius' career. He became closer connected with the powerful commercial circles of the Greeks abroad and in Greece and with important Greek journalists and was eventually appointed to be a member of the Greek diplomatic corps. He served primarily and for many years in the Greek legation in London, a post he held until 1918, when he resigned at the age of 74, long after the age limit for retirement. In recognition of his many years of service, the government of Eleftherios Venizelos awarded him the title of honorary envoy extraordinary. Even after his departure from active duty, he continued to serve the Greek government from time to time, thus utilizing his established acceptance by the upper levels of British society, as well as his important connections with leading American personalities.¹⁰

In November 1921 the government of Dimitrios Gounaris assigned Gennadius to a diplomatic mission to Washington, where the Naval Council of the greater naval powers of the world was taking place. In the context of his contacts with representatives of the press, Gennadius gave a brief interview, introducing himself to the American journalistic world. Among other things, he declared that he knew America, not only from his two long trips of 1888 and 1893-1894, but also from "certain private incidents which curiously enough bound me very closely with your great country".¹¹ In this remark the Greek diplomat was being precise. Even though, as previously mentioned, America was not unknown to the educated Greeks of the second half of the nineteenth century, Gennadius could take pride in something more: his personal knowledge of the USA, even from the time of his birth.

⁹ The pamphlet of Gennadius was published anonymously with the title *Notes on the Recent Murders by Brigands in Greece*, London 1870. See also Christopoulos, *Ο Ιωάννης Γεννάδιος*, pp. 38-51, and Rodanthi Tzanelli, "Haunted by the 'Enemy' Within: Brigandage, Vlachian/Albanian Greekness, Turkish 'Ontamination', and Narratives of Greek Nationhood in the Dilessi/Marathon Murders", *Journal of Modern Greek Studies* 20/1 (2002), pp. 47-74. For the events, see Romilly Jenkins, *The Dilesi Murders: Greek Brigands and English Hostages*, London: Longmans, 1961.

¹⁰ For his activities after his departure from the diplomatic corps, see GL, JGS, scrapbook 24.2, *Autobiographical Notes*, pp. 37-38.

¹¹ American School of Classical Studies at Athens, Gennadius Library, Archives of John Gennadius [henceforth GL, AJG], box 11, Statement of Minister Gennadius of Greece, 6 December 1921.

After the untimely death of his father, Gennadius had John Henry Hill (1791-1882), the American missionary, as his sponsor and protector.¹² The Hill couple had established the Hill School in Athens and played a leading role in the education of young women in the Greek capital. Thanks to their connections, Gennadius received an excellent education by studying at the Protestant College of Malta. Later, he came in contact with other Americans, as indicated at least by Hill's suggestion that Gennadius send his pamphlet on the Dilesi incident to some of his acquaintances in New York.¹³

Besides Hill, two other Americans with whom Gennadius became connected from his youth with the bonds of deep friendship were John K. Tuckerman (1827-1896), the *chargé d'affaires* of the USA to Greece, and his successor, John M. Francis (1823-1897). After the circulation of the apology on the Dilesi incident, Tuckerman, impressed by the obvious talents of Gennadius, persuaded both King George and the Prime Minister of Greece, Epameinondas Deliyorgis, to employ him in the diplomatic service.¹⁴ The bond between these two men became even stronger two years later, when Gennadius was responsible for the publication of Tuckerman's official report on the subject of brigandage in Greece,¹⁵ a leaflet which he promoted in England.

Gennadius developed a similarly admirable cooperation with John Francis, who succeeded Tuckerman in the American legation in Athens in 1871. He undertook to compose a speech for Francis on the material and spiritual progress in Greece, which was published by the American Geographical Society in 1874.¹⁶ Their friendship, it seems, lasted for a long time, since during Gennadius' first professional visit to America aiming to abolish the American tariff on Greek currants, Francis provided him with valuable assistance.¹⁷

The "certain private incidents" which connected Gennadius to America were not restricted, however, only to his acquaintances with American philhellenes.

¹² John Hill and his wife, Frances, arrived in Greece in 1830 and worked in Athens to promote education by establishing a girls' school under their name, as well as other schools. See, for example, Theodoros Saloutos, "American Missionaries in Greece, 1820-1869", *Church History* 24 (2005), pp. 165-167.

¹³ GL, JGS, scrapbook 4.1, p. 58.

¹⁴ GL, JGS, scrapbook 24.1, *Autobiographical Notes*, p. 10.

¹⁵ Charles Tuckerman, *Brigandage in Greece: A Paper Addressed by Mr. Charles K. Tuckerman, United States Minister at Athens, to Mr. Fish* [reprinted from papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States], London 1871.

¹⁶ John Francis, "Greece as It Is", *The Bulletin and Journal of the American Geographical Society* 6 (1874), pp. 138-168.

¹⁷ FMHDA, folder 1890/A5.2, no. 4533, Gennadius to Dragoumis, New York, 28/29 April 1888.

Gennadius' initial appointment to the diplomatic corps in November 1871, which he rejected in favor of a more expeditious professional advancement, was as secretary without pay in the Greek legation in Washington. In addition, the agricultural studies of his younger brother Panagiotis (1848-1917) at the University of Illinois¹⁸ intensified that sense of his personal familiarity with the American continent.

Gennadius' understanding of America may have started on Greek soil, but his knowledge was broadened and deepened essentially after settling in London, where the mass of information about the New World was greater and more extensively available to him. Being by nature eager to learn, Gennadius started to inform himself about America even from the very first years of his residency in Great Britain. In his apology for the Dilesi murders, wanting to defend the fact that criminal activity is often innate to fallen human nature and that it can appear even in developed societies, he mentioned, among other things, that, "In remoter regions of the United States, as for instance in Texas, the law is far more powerless than in Pikermes, Greece."¹⁹ Even in 1880, in his speech to the London stock exchange, he did not neglect to compare the attempts of the first Greek governments to be consistent in repaying their revolutionary debts with the inconsistency, in his opinion, of America to settle the debts of the loans it had incurred during the American Revolution.²⁰

This "intermediary" relationship of Gennadius with America acquired the character of personal experience when he himself visited. His first visit was for professional reasons. Trikoupis' government commissioned him to negotiate a tariff reduction or even the placing of currants on the free list about to be imposed by Cleveland's Democratic government. In January of 1888 Gennadius was promoted to be resident minister in the USA and he immediately undertook his transatlantic journey with the ocean liner *Etruria* of the Cunard Lines. Even though he remained in America for six months, in his professional correspondence Gennadius did not

¹⁸ Panagiotis Gennadius had a brilliant career in his later years as director of agriculture in the Greek ministry of internal affairs, but also in Cyprus under British rule. He also taught natural history in various high schools in Athens and served as inspector of agriculture from 1896 to 1904. He was also a prolific author. During the period from 1885 to 1896, he was editor of the journal *Ελληνική Γεωργία*, while his monumental work was the *Λεξικόν φυτολογικόν, περιλαμβάνον τα ονόματα, την ιθαγένειαν και τον βίον υπερδεκακισχιλίων φυτών* [Botanical lexicon, containing the names, the origin and the life of over 10,000 plants], Athens 1914.

¹⁹ *Notes on the Recent Murders*, pp. 137-138.

²⁰ The information on the content of the Gennadius speech to the London stock exchange was recorded by a journalist of *Ακρόπολις* (perhaps the editor himself, Vlasios Gavrielides) in an article published in this newspaper on 25 June 1892.

express so much his personal impressions as he did his exceptional diplomatic activity.

Desiring to promote in the best possible manner his Greek diplomatic goal, Gennadius did not come into contact only with the members of the governing Democratic Party, but also with Republican senators and congressmen, as well as powerful industrial and agricultural leaders. For reasons pertaining primarily to his official duties, he visited New York, Washington, Philadelphia, the region of New England and most likely even Chicago. He traveled a great deal and, taking advantage of the Easter break, he also visited the American countryside. He traveled, for example, to the summer resort of Bar Harbor in Maine, as well as to Long Island.

Gennadius associated with people of wealth and authority. His official reports confirmed his excellent knowledge of the American political and electoral systems, as well as his ability to utilize effectively “the herein familiar method of lobbying”, as he himself indicated.²¹ He became a member of many political and reading clubs, and even athletic clubs and racetracks, and was a dinner-table companion of powerful political and economic personalities, such as the politician and then Secretary of War William Endicott (1826-1900), the Secretary of State Thomas Bayard (1828-1898), the Mayor of Brooklyn Alfred C. Chapin (1848-1936), the president of the Long Island railroads and many others. Undoubtedly, during this first trip, Gennadius immersed himself in the way of thinking among the American politicians and the élite leaders of the economy, listening to their ambitions and discerning their dynamic potential.

Gennadius' second trip to the United States took place in 1893-1894 at the invitation of the Francis family, with whom Gennadius had close ties ever since 1871, to visit together the great World Columbian Exposition in Chicago.²² After being recalled from his position at the Greek legation in London and being out of official service, Gennadius traveled to New York privately and remained there for about seven months. This time he had the leisure to enjoy the culture of America, to visit the country and to “discover” its rich, steadily progressive and enchanting world. It seems that the interests of Gennadius were not essentially different from those of other travelers from Great Britain, such as politicians, journalists and other men of letters and the arts, who were seeking the innovative, the new phenomena and whatever it was that differentiated the culture of America from

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² GL, JGS, Scrapbook 24.1, *Autobiographical Notes*, p. 39. It was reported in the newspaper *Troy Daily Times* (6 November 1893) that Gennadius had visited America at the invitation of Charles Francis, whose father was John Francis, who had served as the envoy of the USA to Greece and who knew Gennadius. The newspaper report is found in GL, JGS, scrapbook 9.1, p. 1302.

that of Britain and of Europe more generally.²³ The various clippings which he chose to collect in his scrapbook were not concerned with the rather superficial interest of a tourist, but were related, above all, to those elements which indicated the dynamism of the American economy, such as advertisements and maps of railroads and transatlantic lines, pictures showing the World Exposition buildings and articles dedicated to electricity, mining, metallurgy, fishing and agriculture.²⁴

Once again Gennadius mingled with people of wealth, especially in New York, the city which had become famous for its commercialism and “the supremacy of the dollar”.²⁵ He walked on Fifth Avenue and dined at central restaurants, such as those in Park Avenue and Murray Hill. He was often a guest of the family of Theodore Rallis, the enterprising great merchant, while also knowing and dining with the millionaire William Douglas-Sloane (1844-1925), the industrialist T. A. Havemeyer (1834-1897) and the American general Daniel Butterfield (1831-1901).²⁶

Following his beloved routine, Gennadius became a member of several clubs in New York. Distinct among them was the New York State Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, seeking to perpetuate the ideas and the ideals of the American Revolution.²⁷ He did not neglect to taste also the culture of the theatrical and musical “capital” of the United States. He attended theatrical and opera presentations at the Metropolitan Opera House²⁸ and was a regular attendee at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel, where the famous “Mr. Bagby’s Musical Mornings” were held.²⁹ He even had a palpable experience of the innovative work of Fowler and Wells, which was then a popular center claiming to be able to sketch the personality of their clients by primarily measuring the size of their

²³ Richard L. Rapson, *Britons View America: Travel Commentary, 1860-1935*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1971, p. 25.

²⁴ GL, JGS, scrapbook 14.1, pp. 15-16.

²⁵ Rapson, *Britons View America*, p. 25.

²⁶ All of this information is gathered from the GL, JGS, scrapbook 14.1. There one may find invitations, *cartes de visite* and other related material. See specifically pp. 22, 23, 24, 26.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

²⁹ These concerts, which were often accompanied with related lectures, had been transformed into an institution for the lovers of music in New York. Gennadius had friendly relations with the famous musician Albert Bagby, who was the soul of the “institution” and who provided him with tickets; GL, JGS, scrapbook 14.1, p. 20. On Albert Bagby, see Lorene Martin, “The Unique Career of an Illinois Musician”, *Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society* 35/2 (June 1942), pp. 1401-1407.

cranium. Their evaluation of Gennadius' personality was kept by him among his most significant recollections in his scrapbooks.³⁰

Gennadius also had conversations with the American intelligentsia about matters concerning Greece. A consequence of these contacts was the articles written after his return to London and sent to the famous American journal *The Forum* of New York.³¹ One series of his articles published between 1896 and 1898 resembles a travelogue of the excavation sites of the American School of Classical Studies in Greece.³² Another article, the one that provoked a strong reaction (both positive and negative) among the American classicists, was published in 1894 and dealt with Gennadius' opinions on the teaching of Ancient Greek in the English-speaking world.³³

The final fruit of his contacts with the journalistic world of New York was to be invited by the progressive newspaper the *New York Evening Post* to the role of a correspondent from Europe. Their cooperation began immediately after his return to England and lasted for about five years.³⁴ This journalistic work was

³⁰ The description of Gennadius' personality made by the Center of Fowler and Wells for mental studies is deposited in GL, JGS, scrapbook 8.2, p. 1299.

³¹ The editor of the *The Forum* during the years 1891-1895 was Walter Hines Page, who served as an ambassador in London during World War I; R. Gregory, *Walter Hines Page: Ambassador to the Court of St. James's*, Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 2014.

³² All published in *The Forum* (New York): J. Gennadius, "Modern Archaeology: Recent Excavations in Greece – I" (May 1896), pp. 361-375; "Modern Archaeology: Recent Excavations in Greece – II" (August 1896), pp. 735-746; "Recent Excavations in Greece: The Sanctuary of Apollo" (November 1896), pp. 327-338; "American Archaeological Work in Greece" (January 1897), pp. 607-623; "American Excavations in Greece: Ikaria, Anthedon, Thisbe" (March 1897), pp. 50-64; "American Excavations in Greece: Plataia and Eretria" (June 1897), pp. 432-447; "American Excavations at Sparta and Corinth" (January 1898), pp. 619-629; compiled in the volume *Recent American Excavations in Greece, mainly those of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*, New York: Forum Pub. Co. 1896-1898.

³³ Decrying the value of the Erasmian pronunciation, Gennadius supported that the learning of Ancient Greek presupposed the knowledge of Modern Greek; J. Gennadius, "Teaching Greek as a Living Language", *The Forum* (October 1894), pp. 228-237. The response was direct. See the articles of the well-known American classicist Paul Shorey at the University of Chicago, "To Ancient Greek through Modern? No!", *The Forum* (January 1895), pp. 602-608. More generally on the opinions of Gennadius regarding the language issue, see Christopoulos, *Ο Ιωάννης Γεννάδιος*, pp. 267-268.

³⁴ Fofo N. Maurikiou, "Ιωάννης Γεννάδιος ο Δημοσιογράφος" [John Gennadius the journalist], in *Ημέρα μνήμης Ιωάννου Γ. Γενναδίου. Τέσσερις ομιλίες, 1996-2000* [A day of remembrance of John G. Gennadius: Four speeches, 1996-2000], Athens 2001, pp. 17-53. See also GL, JGS, scrapbook 9.2, where the related correspondence with the editor, as well as his responses, may be found.

destined to preserve alive Gennadius' interest not simply in the area of world developments, but also in the concerns of the American reading public, which he was called upon to keep informed.³⁵

Gennadius' experiences of these two trips and his continuous and ever-broadening accumulation of information regarding American developments created in him an "impression" of the United States, which, unfortunately, he did not write up into a concrete and assiduous text. His two speeches before an American public in 1894 and his scattered official reports, as well as his journalistic dispatches, allow for only a partial restatement of his views.

As with most European commentators, Gennadius noted the primary place of the gift of freedom in American history and tradition. Freedom was certainly the "cornerstone" of their country, but it was also a basic element of convergence with the Greek nation. As he declared in his speech at the inauguration of the Gennadius Library in Athens in 1926, the Greeks in revolt and the American philhellenes met with a common passion for freedom in 1821 and began a cloudless journey of brotherly cooperation.³⁶

Even though Gennadius did not attempt a deep analysis of the abiding values of the political and social life of the Americans, he did recognize its progressiveness, its love of freedom and its democratic foundation. He described these fundamental characteristics, commenting in 1898 on the humiliation of Spain by the USA during the Spanish–American War.³⁷ He indicated "a feeling akin to disgust and exasperation" that had been aroused in Vienna, St. Petersburg, Berlin and Rome over the fact that "an upstart" country, while wealthy, but without dynasty, court,

³⁵ In these articles he covered all the basic developments during this five-year period, from the reemergence of British–German competition to the Spanish–American War, the crisis in the Philippine Islands and the war in South Africa.

³⁶ *Ιωάννου Γενναδίου λόγος πανηγυρικός εκφωνηθείς εν τω Γενναδείω εις μνήμην αείδιον του μεγάλου διδασκάλου του γένους Γεωργίου του Γενναδίου ανιδρυθέντι και εγκαινιασθέντι εν Αθήναις τη 23η Απριλίου 1926* [The panegyric speech of John Gennadius delivered in eternal memory of Georgios Gennadius, the great teacher, at the reestablishment and inauguration of the Gennadius Library in Athens on 23 April 1926], Paris 1926, p. 14.

³⁷ This war started when the American warship *Maine* was sunk in the harbor of Havana, causing the death of most of its crew. In spite of the possibility that this happened accidentally, the USA considered the incident a sufficient reason to declare war on Spain, which was occupying Cuba at the time. While the hegemony of Spain in Cuba was systematically presented as being oppressive and contrary to American ideals, the declaration of war was based upon deeper motives that were primarily of an economic nature. The victory of the USA over Spain, sealed with the signing of peace, according to which the latter gave up its rights over Guam, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, allowed these territories to come under the control of the USA. See briefly Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA*, London: Penguin, 2001, pp. 436–442.

nobility and military aristocracy, was able to prevail over an old and completely medieval – according to Gennadius – monarchy such as Spain.³⁸ With this brief, indirect manner, he defined the basic elements of the image of America in Europe.

Gennadius' comments on the American political system were also particularly sparing. As a negotiator for the tax-free import of Greek currants, Gennadius had the opportunity to enter extensively into the structure and the rationale of the American political system through personal experience. He also had a theoretical knowledge of it, if one were to judge from the presence in his personal library of the monumental work of the academic and liberal politician James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*.³⁹ Commenting on his activities during the negotiations for Greek currants, Gennadius referred laconically to the significance of “lobbying” as a basic leverage for the promotion of ideas and causes in the executive authorities, as well as in the general influence of the commercial and industrial circles in the political system. Especially regarding the latter, the Greek diplomat observed that, in the final analysis, they often demoted politicians to “being recipients and executors of the orders they receive from powerful persons and corporate associations...”.⁴⁰ Finally, he did not leave without comment American public opinion, which “matures quickly”⁴¹ and possessed its own particular weight in formulating the internal political affairs of the USA. Overall, it seems that Gennadius had grasped the two main developments that would “mold” American democracy during the Progressive Era, namely the rising influence of lobbies and powerful interest groups and the growing participation of the American masses in the political process.

Gennadius' positive disposition toward the USA was not based only upon the contribution of American philhellenes during the Greek Revolution, nor upon his own liberal creed. It was also based upon America's “by blood” relation with Great Britain. The fact that the USA had started its national existence as “a child”

³⁸ S. K. D., “Europe and America”, *New York Evening Post* (14 May 1898). The initials S. K. D. were one of the pseudonyms used by Gennadius to sign his articles.

³⁹ James Bryce, *The American Commonwealth*, 2 vols, London 1893-1895. This work of Bryce was characterized by his critical view on the political system of the USA. See particularly Robert Frankel, *Observing America: The Commentary of British Visitors to the United States, 1890-1950*, Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007, pp. 13-16, and Russell L. Hanson, “Tyranny of the Majority or Fatalism of the Multitude?”, in Craiutu and Isaac (eds), *America through European Eyes*, pp. 213-236.

⁴⁰ FMHDA, folder 1890/A5.2, no. 5307, Gennadius to Dragoumis, New York, 19 April / 1 May 1888.

⁴¹ FMHDA, folder 1890/A5.2, no. 2511, Gennadius to Dragoumis, Washington, 10/22 February 1888.

of England was considered by him as the main initial advantage in relation to other newer nations. The USA had been imbued, well before it had started its journey to become an independent nation, with the values it had already received, in the final analysis, as a rich legacy from Britain: Christianity and the basic principles of the British political system. “Truly envious is this advantage you enjoy, having acquired it from another older nation, from which your history has commenced, from which your national character has been formulated, and from which your founding fathers have set out toward that marvelous journey, which is justifiably to your honor...”⁴² These were the words expressed by Gennadius in a speech about American Independence in July 1894. What is impressive here is that Gennadius was speaking with certainty more about the supremacy of the British prototype, rather than the grandeur of American civilization. It is indicative of his positive and superlative tone that distinguished his sentiments for the two countries. He acknowledged, for example, that he was observing the surprising American progress exactly as he had studied “the immortal achievements of your mother country [Great Britain], with full enthusiasm” that is, “similar to a love for her”.

The fact that in a speech about American Independence the focal point was Great Britain did not express only Gennadius’ love for that country. It reflected the tendency of a large segment of the British élite, with which Gennadius was well-acquainted, to demonstrate persistently its pride and satisfaction, despite the gradual onset of the signs of decline, for the historical journey of Britain and all the progress that had been achieved during the Victorian age.⁴³

Many European statesmen and thinkers acknowledged that, in relation to Great Britain, the United States of America was creating a different political tradition. Gennadius, however, seems to have preferred, as far as ideology was concerned, to envisage the Americans and the Britons as a single totality, sharing as a common denominator their Anglo-Saxon background. Commenting, for example, in 1904 on the development and establishment of international arbitration, he noted that the world owed much to these two large branches of the Anglo-Saxon race, whose “political genius and their aptitude in devising and working free institutions” had rendered them continuators of the principles that had been granted long ago by the Greeks to humanity.⁴⁴

⁴² *Ἀτλαντίς* (28 July 1894).

⁴³ Rapson, *Britons View America*, pp. 15, 17.

⁴⁴ J. Gennadius, *A Record of International Arbitration: Four Articles Reprinted from Broad Views (January, February, April and May 1904)*, London 1904, p. 59. For an analysis of his record, see more specifically Michael Brown *et al.*, “Transnational Dimensions”, in

This specific reference was not unrelated to the current of Anglo-Saxonism that was particularly popular on both sides of the Atlantic at that time.⁴⁵ It is probable that Gennadius knew and was perhaps even influenced to a degree by the views of a significant British intellectual, William Stead (1849-1912).⁴⁶ Stead was the editor of the *Pall Mall Gazette*, a powerful conservative newspaper, which Gennadius read regularly and considered to be dangerously “anti-Greek”, but also of the periodical *Review of Reviews*, of which a considerable number of copies have been found in Gennadius’ scrapbooks. Stead was propagating the unity of the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race, underscoring its superiority and acknowledging that America had proved to be not only a worthy son, but also one who had successfully surpassed Britain.⁴⁷

Gennadius’ comments on the ideals and modern manifestations of American democracy were lacking an important parameter: the “New Migration” of the 1880s and 1890s, which transformed fundamentally the culture, religion and ethnic makeup of the United States.⁴⁸ Presumably Gennadius was inclined to emphasize the “British” roots of America, since its multicultural present seemed to “threaten” America’s Anglo-Saxon kinship. Apparently he was attuned to other British intellectuals of his time who differentiated the “earlier”, mostly of Anglo-Saxon stock, immigrants of America from the new ones, who were “in every way more alien to the American habits and standards”.⁴⁹

The preference of Gennadius to hold the two countries as a unified whole, as far as primarily ideological matters were concerned, does not entail a willful blindness to their latent competition, first of all in the area of economics. Gennadius came to know America in the golden age of its economy. Its development in leaps and bounds and its galloping material progress had provoked world-wide admiration, which was expressed by the majority of visitors and commentators. Thus, in this Gennadius was not an exception. He too had been impressed by the material

Saul Martinez Bermejo, Darina Martykanova and Momir Samardzic (eds), *Layers of Powers: Societies and Institutions in Europe*, Pisa 2010, pp. 247-253.

⁴⁵ Frankel, *Observing America*, pp. 53-54; Edward Parliament Kohn, *The Kindred People: Canadian–American Relations and North American Anglo-Saxonism during the Anglo–American Rapprochement*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, Montreal: McGill University, 2000, especially pp.1-24.

⁴⁶ James Ernest Mennell, *William T. Stead: Social Politics and the New Journalism*, doctoral dissertation, Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1967.

⁴⁷ Frankel, *Observing America*, pp. 52-75.

⁴⁸ Susan-Mary Grant, *A Concise History of the United States of America*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 223 ff.

⁴⁹ This view was expressed by the British academic and politician James Bryce in his *American Commonwealth*. See Grant, *A Concise History of the United States of America*, p. 224.

achievements of the USA, and these he praised in all of his reports and these, again, he primarily expressed in the various clippings of his scrapbook compiled during his visits there. He felt that, as far as the economy was concerned, the relations of the USA with Great Britain were indeed mutually competitive. He commented on the perplexity and the “envy” which had been provoked in Britain by the economic power of the Americans, but also by their establishment, especially after the Spanish–American War of 1898, as a growing and potentially competitive naval power.⁵⁰

Gennadius understood, however, that for the USA, British commerce constituted a point of reference and a goal to exceed. It is indicative that during his negotiations with the American officials for the inclusion of Greek currants in the tariff-free list, or at least for a reduction, one of his basic arguments was that the Greek currant producers, deterred by the high American tariffs, preferred to sell their production to the British market rather than ship it straight to the USA. The ultimate ones to gain the profits were not the Greeks, nor the American consumers, but the English intermediators, who supplied the American market with the Greek currants. With this argument, as Gennadius explained to the Greek minister of foreign affairs, he aimed to motivate the sense of honor and the advantage of the Americans by indicating “their subordinate and dependent position in the commerce of England”.⁵¹

Up to the time of Gennadius’ return to Great Britain, after his second visit to America, the USA, as he himself had commented in an 1894 speech to the St. David’s Society, constituted the unique example of a large and wealthy nation, with a huge population and extensive land areas, a nation that had gained, in spite of its non-aggressive and non-militaristic nature, the respect and friendship of the entire world.⁵²

Gennadius had no illusions over the direction toward which wealth and power were leading America’s foreign policy. Based on the expected American victory in the Spanish–American War, Gennadius, in his journalism, questioned whether or not this powerful nation could withstand the temptation to follow the same policy in other areas of the American continent still under European

⁵⁰ S. K. D., “Europe and America”.

⁵¹ FMHDA, folder, 1890/A5.2, no. 2678, Gennadius to Dragoumis, New York, 17/29 February 1888.

⁵² The St. David’s Society in New York was an American club of citizens with a Welsh background; GL, JGS, scrapbook 9.1, p. 1303. Included here are also the invitation to Gennadius to be the speaker on the occasion [Ellis N. Roberts to Gennadius, 6 February 1894] and the press cutting, without a date, from the newspaper *Troy Daily Times*, containing the text of his speech.

control.⁵³ Moreover, the expectation that the Spanish–American War would complicate the relations of America with Europe was confirmed with the extension of the war from Cuba and Puerto Rico to the Philippines,⁵⁴ while Gennadius’ reference “to the overshadowing of Europe by America”⁵⁵ was destined to be justified in the following “American” century.

While writing articles on the Spanish–American War in 1898, Gennadius unavoidably was observing the evolution of the United States itself. The term “metamorphosis”,⁵⁶ which he used in his article in December of 1898, encompassed all those indications pointing to the USA as a nation destined to assume a dynamic new role in world developments, very much in contrast to the policy of isolationism that had prevailed up to that point. Indeed, this war constituted a critical turning point in the history of the USA on many levels.⁵⁷ As far as foreign policy was concerned, it created popular, but not always universally acceptable in American society, imperialistic aspirations – a mixture of American messianism, of economic needs and commerce and, finally, of American nationalism.⁵⁸ The vitality pulsating under American economic progress was destined to be expressed also with a concern for the rest of world, and Gennadius, in his journalistic reports, had foreseen this very thing: namely, that the status quo in international affairs was to be redetermined and redefined.⁵⁹

Indeed, the isolated and relatively non-aggressive USA of the nineteenth century was being transformed in the twentieth century into one of the great world powers, with all of the passions and virtues that such power brings with it. Commenting on the proposal of the American president William Howard Taft for a customs union between the USA and Canada, Gennadius supported that this proposal was just the preamble of activities that would lead to the absorption of Canada by the USA. He also noted that in spite of the great abundance of its own wealth, the USA was coveting the wealth of Canada as well: “Nations that

⁵³ S. K. D., “Spain and America”, *New York Evening Post* (15 April 1898).

⁵⁴ *Id.*, “Europe and America”.

⁵⁵ *Id.*, “England and the United States”, *New York Evening Post* (29 April 1898).

⁵⁶ *Id.*, “America and England”, *New York Evening Post* (17 December 1898). In this article, among other things, he referred to the need of the USA to strengthen its military powers for the stabilization of its influence in the regions which it had acquired during the Spanish–American War.

⁵⁷ Grant, *A Concise History of the United States of America*, pp. 250–252.

⁵⁸ For the international implications of the Spanish–American War, see more specifically Thomas Schoonover, *Uncle Sam’s War of 1898 and the Origins of Globalization*, Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2005.

⁵⁹ S. K. D., “Spain’s Dilemmas”, *New York Evening Post* (23 July 1898), and *id.*, “America and England”.

become powerful also become voracious; they are never content with what they have, no matter how wealthy or boundless.”⁶⁰

The biological cycle of Gennadius coincided with the historical phase when the USA “came of age” and became established as a basic element in international affairs. The Greek diplomat’s relationship with America started with his birth, matured with his visits there, and was sealed in 1922 with his cooperation with the American School of Classical Studies at Athens and the Carnegie Committee to create the Gennadius Library, and thus, perhaps, to leave an indelible mark on the passage of time.⁶¹ After all, as Gennadius himself commented in his festive speech at the inauguration of the Library in April of 1926, the visitors of the Library will be reminded that: “Their memory [of the Americans] abides fresh in Greece and that their wish, that the sacrifices they had made in her cause should ever bind the two peoples together, is here realized.”⁶²

Writing for America in the age of its galloping economic growth and the gradual abandonment of the Monroe Doctrine, John Gennadius, an experienced diplomat and meticulous journalist, offered realistic accounts of America’s internal politics and its economy, as well as reasonable evaluations of its potential, namely its involvement in European politics. However, what makes Gennadius’ touch upon the “image” of America distinctive was its British perspective. America was associated with and simultaneously contrasted to its British roots, as Great Britain was the point of reference either for the economic development or the ideological underpinnings of the United States. A profound admirer of the Britons, Gennadius viewed, maybe quite simplistically, American ideals as the “modern” sequel of the British ones. He acknowledged, however, the powerful spirit of innovation and the material progress of the United States, silently admitting that the – until then – dominant British Empire had found in America a dangerous rival. Gennadius was one of the first Greek diplomats to witness the “metamorphosis” of the United States into a vibrant and powerful state, which, as he predicted, would soon bid for world power and dominance. Ever after and especially during the dreadful years of World War I and the Greek defeat on the Asia Minor front in 1922, Gennadius would occasionally add the American factor into his proposals for the formation of Greek foreign policy.

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⁶⁰ FMHDA, folder 1912/1, no. 1, Gennadius to I. Gryparis, London, 25 April / 2 May 1912.

⁶¹ For the decision and the actual building of the Gennadius Library, see the brief but comprehensive report of Donald M. Nicol, *Joannes Gennadios – The Man: A Biographical Sketch*, Athens 1990, pp. 24-28.

⁶² *Ιωάννου Γενναδίου λόγος πανηγυρικός*, p. 15.