



HANS-JÜRGEN GRABBE
DAVID MAUK
OLE MOEN (EDS.)

***E pluribus unum
or E pluribus plura?***

Unity and Diversity
in American Culture

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The essays collected in this volume are derived from the 2008 EAAS biennial conference in Oslo. They explore the many-layered pluralism of American life by addressing questions like the following: How does the United States negotiate the inner tensions that, because of its constitutive diversity, might threaten its unity? How do traditions, modes of consensus building, the feeling of a wished-for common good counteract potential strife and the tensions of particular inter-

ests and particular groups? Could it be that there are indeed several Americas? Is being an American necessarily being in many ways double? Can the politically unifying, centripetal power of the State, hidden under the neutral "unum," accommodate the centrifugal forces that might generate a societal and cultural "plura" out of the hallowed political and territorial "pluribus"? Do diversities imply, for their survival and development, a "middle ground," a "mainstream," a "tradition"-some kind of American norm?

Contributions by

MARCEL ARBEIT, HANS BAK, GEORGE BLAUSTEIN, GERT BUELENS, SUSAN CASTILLO,
JUDE DAVIES, ELIANE ELMALEH, LAURENCE GERVAIS-LINON, WINFRIED FLUCK,
JAN NORDBY GRETLUND, BERND HERZOGENRATH, JOSEF JAŘAB, ELISABETTA MARINO,
DAVID C. MAUK, DANA MIHĂILESCU, ANNE OLLIVIER-MELLIOS, SABINE SIELKE,
SOPHIE VALLAS, and SUSAN WINNETT.

Order

fax +49 (0)6221 770269
tel. +49 (0)6221 770264
info@winter-verlag.de

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