“But You Don’t *Seem* American!”
Identities, Representations, and Influences of American Women in the English Aristocracy

by

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# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments .................................................................................................................. 2
Preface .................................................................................................................................. 3
   Existing Literature .............................................................................................................. 4
   This Project ....................................................................................................................... 7
   The Chapters ..................................................................................................................... 10

Chapter 1: The Cast of Characters ....................................................................................... 14
   Mastering the Vocabulary ............................................................................................... 14
   The English Aristocracy ................................................................................................. 16
   The Creation of the American New Rich ......................................................................... 22
   The Phenomenon: Logistics ............................................................................................ 25
   The Phenomenon: Numbers ............................................................................................ 26
   Edward VII ...................................................................................................................... 27

Chapter 2: The Republican Aristocrat: A Checkerboard of Identities ............................... 30
   Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 30
   Republicanism Meets Aristocracy .................................................................................... 31
   Legal Identities: Marriage and Citizenship ..................................................................... 34
   Cultural Differences ........................................................................................................ 40
   Marital Expectations ........................................................................................................ 46
   Expressions of Nationality ............................................................................................... 50
   Class Identities: In But Not Of ....................................................................................... 62
   American Solidarity (of Lack Thereof) ........................................................................... 68
   Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 73

Chapter 3: Popular Opinion and Representation ................................................................. 75
   The American Invasion .................................................................................................... 75
   Representation in America ............................................................................................... 77
   Representation in England ............................................................................................... 88
   Representation in Literature ........................................................................................... 101
   Representation on the Stage ............................................................................................ 108
   Conclusion ....................................................................................................................... 111

Chapter 4: The American Impact ......................................................................................... 112
   Introduction: A Logical Contradiction ............................................................................ 112
   Paying Attention to Contemporaries .............................................................................. 114
   The Power of the Almighty Dollar ................................................................................ 117
   The American Effect in the Big House ........................................................................... 122
   The American Effect in Society ..................................................................................... 126
   The American Effect on Politics .................................................................................... 132
   American Efforts in British Wars ................................................................................... 148
   A Concluding Thought .................................................................................................. 157

Conclusion ........................................................................................................................... 159
References ............................................................................................................................ 160
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Preface

On April 15, 1874, Jennie Jerome, daughter of Leonard Jerome of New York, married Lord Randolph Churchill, the second son of the 7th Duke of Marlborough. This union is considered the first of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Scores of young, wealthy American women followed in Jerome’s footsteps, marrying, for the most part, financially strapped titled Europeans. Several hundred of these marriages took place between 1874 and 1939. British-American marriages were the most common and most prized of these, and have been the most studied. It is these unions that I am concerned with in this inquiry.¹

This study attempts to combat three impressions of this large group of transatlantic wives as conveyed by the existing literature. First, it widens the

¹Although American women married into the Scottish and Irish upper class in large numbers, a study of the entire British nobility is beyond the scope of this project. As the center of British society was indisputably London, wives of Scottish, Irish, and Colonial nobles all have voices in this study as they participated in The Season there, but my focus is narrowed to the lives and experiences of women living in England.
traditional scope of the phenomenon by two and half decades, ending at the onset of the Second World War and not the First. Second, it readjusts the focus of such study to a discussion of the women and how they lived, not merely their marriages and dowries. Finally, it places these women firmly within the history of the English aristocracy’s changing social and political realities at the turn of the 20th century.

*Existing Literature*

Those alive during the time of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon deemed it remarkably important in terms of culture and politics, yet modern historians have not treated it as such. Contemporaries wrote novels and plays about the American wife of the European aristocrat, reporters wrote a vast amount of newspaper articles about the individuals, cultural commentators wrote ruminations on the women’s effects on society in journals and magazines, and participants and their peers wrote memoirs and diaries, yet historians have not treated the subject seriously. Books about the transatlantic marriage phenomenon have been published, but most are of a sensational, romantic nature designed for a popular audience. They include Marian Fowler’s *In a Gilded Cage* (1994), Elizabeth Eliot’s *Heiresses and Coronets* (1959), Gail MacColl and Carol Wallace’s *To Marry an English Lord* (1989), Richard Hutton’s *Crowning Glory* (2007), and, to a lesser extent, Ruth Brandon’s *The Dollar Princesses* (1980).

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Of all modern scholarship on this topic, the most valuable works are Maureen E. Montgomery’s *Gilded Prostitution*, 1989; Dana Cooper’s 2006 dissertation, “Informal Ambassadors,” and Richard Davis’s 1991 article “We Are All Americans Now!” I have drawn heavily on these works, particularly the Montgomery and the Cooper, because they are the only full-length works of an academic character about the transatlantic marriage phenomenon. Though I found them invaluable, they are not without their flaws.

In her book, Montgomery attempted to disprove the idea that these unions were a trade of social capital for monetary capital. In the participants’ own words and in the words of their contemporaries though, the majority of the transatlantic marriage unions did indeed follow such a cash-for-titles pattern. It is historically inaccurate to cite individual exceptions as proof that a paradigm covering hundreds of unions is a false one, and I have built this study on the conviction that the majority of the marriages occurred to advance the social aims of one party and for the financial gain of the other.

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Cooper’s dissertation is the first work on the subject to dedicate significant research to the political impact of the transatlantic wives, and I am grateful for her extensive research as it lead me to so many rich sources. However, she considers only three exceptional women, using them as representative for the larger group of transatlantic wives. I too have given much attention to these three, Jennie Jerome, Consuelo Vanderbilt, and Nancy Astor, but I have worked hard to include information about as many different transatlantic wives as possible in order to tell a fuller story and paint a more accurate picture. While Cooper mentions American women’s work during wartime, she does not emphasize it, not does she consider Wallis Simpson in her study; in this thesis I have attempted to do both of those things while drawing heavily from Cooper’s biographical reviews of Jerome, Vanderbilt, and Astor.

Finally, David Cannadine’s *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (1990) is the definitive book on the collapse of the traditional way of life for British nobles. The book is over 700 pages long, yet barely mentions the transatlantic marriage phenomenon. Cannadine himself conceded that “There are not many women in this book, and those few who do appear in its pages are usually either adjuncts to men or surrogate men.”

5 This is a weakness in the book and in Cannadine’s interpretation of the forces at play. I have endeavored to show that these American wives were key, not adjunct or surrogate characters in the narrative of the aristocracy’s decline, simultaneously preserving it and contributing to its deterioration.

This Project

In this thesis I combat these shortcomings in the existing literature in four chapters. Each provides a different angle for addressing my theories of scope, life experience, and significance of the women in the history of the aristocracy.

A Redefined Scope

Books about the transatlantic marriage phenomenon generally include a sentence such as this one, from Maureen Montgomery’s *Gilded Prostitution*: “The First World War is an appropriate marking-off point, because the socio-economic upheaval connected with the war substantially altered the situation of the British peerage.”\(^6\) The author’s decision to stop at 1914 is perplexing, for the transatlantic marriages resumed after the war and “by the eve of the next world war, surpassed all previous records,” as Montgomery herself conceded.\(^7\) Why, then, do studies define the phenomenon as being from 1874-1914? It was demonstrably continuing in the even more interesting and complicated time of social change that was the inter-war era in Britain. Cannadine’s study of the decline of the British aristocracy extends to the Second World War; it is inaccurate to halt a study of the corresponding marriage pattern earlier. Montgomery defended the First World War end date in that later marriages were less newsworthy at the time and therefore less valuable for historians now in exploring “cultural attitudes,” “even though there is nothing to suggest that titled marriages were declining in frequency [after the First World War.]” I disagree with this judgment. Some of the most fascinating, colorful, and influential of these

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\(^7\) Ibid.
American women – for example, Emerald Cunard, Wallis Simpson, Laura Corrigan, and Nancy Astor – made their mark during the inter-war years. Moreover, the majority of the American women were young when they married, and lived a long time; Jennie Jerome, the first of the American wives in this study, lived into the inter-war period. An 18-year-old transatlantic bride in 1890 was only sixty-seven by 1939. And considering that the height of the phenomenon was during the 1890s, almost all of the transatlantic brides lived through and past the First World War. Therefore, ignoring what happened in the inter-war period is to miss the prime of most of these women’s lives and to cut short the story of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon and missing the full impact the women had on the English aristocracy and English-American relations. Throughout this work I will include information on the women who married into the aristocracy in the inter-war years as well as the experiences of those that had arrived earlier during this later period. This thesis is the first study to broaden the parameters of this subject and pay attention to these later women as part of the original group, filling what is, I believe, a major hole in the literature. In doing so, it contributes to a more accurate and fuller understanding of not only the changing reality of the English aristocracy, but also of the transitioning world power from Great Britain to the United States.

A Redefined Focus

Besides the scope, I also redefine the focus of the study of this group of women: previous historians have focused on the number of unions, the fact that they

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8 The one exception to this is Cooper’s dissertation, which defines its scope as 1865-1945. This is due to her discussion of the career of Lady Nancy Astor who was politically active in later decades. Cooper does not challenge the 1914 cutoff point for the transatlantic marriage phenomenon.
took place at all, and the motivations for them. I argue that it is not solely the marriages, the actual weddings that constituted this phenomenon, but the women’s lives in England as upper class and aristocratic wives. It is less interesting and a misinterpretation of historical significance to just look at the number of weddings and the years in which they took place. Rather, we ought to examine the effect such marriages had on those who entered into them and the impact that the individuals involved had on Great Britain and the United States.

A Redefined Context

This is the first work that situates the story of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon within and alongside the story of the English aristocracy and upper class. As I will show, the presence of the American wives in English society had effects, both direct and indirect, on everything from the plumbing and electrification of country estate houses to Anglo-American diplomacy. During this period the composition of the English upper class and the cultural elite changed and began to include men of wealth and not just men of title; American wives mirrored this larger trend despite having no “background” to speak of, becoming the mistresses of some of the most important aristocratic households. In so doing, they paved the way for future plutocrats and foreigners entering English society. Boundaries broke during these decades and the transatlantic wives were a part of both the cause and the process. These women were in, but not of the aristocracy, and in this way, their lives provide us a fresh look at the changing class structures both in England and in the United States. I argue that these women affected the aristocracy in ways both great
and small, and that they should be included in the larger narrative of the changing English society at the turn of the century.

**The Chapters**

I will develop and explore these ideas of scope, focus, and context in thematic chapters. Chapter One will discuss the state of the aristocracy at the turn of the century, the rise of the American upper class, will explain the logistics of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon.

In the second chapter I will discuss the women’s conflicting national, cultural, and class identities as they changed over time. American women legally lost their American citizenship when they married foreigners. Inevitably, however, many retained their “Americaness,” for which they were both complimented and scorned by English society. They became both American and English, though never fully either, and used these identities interchangeably to their advantage in given situations both individually and as a group. Such a study is a contribution to what we know about these women’s experience as well as a glimpse at the widening receptiveness of the English upper class.

The third chapter will examine how these women were represented during their lives on both sides of the Atlantic; their public portrayal, particularly in American newspapers, shifted over time. I will explore the stereotype of the

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9 American and British laws of citizenship fluctuated dramatically across this period, and I give a history of these changes in my second chapter.
American wife and how it played out in an entire genre of novels and stage plays of the day. I will argue that the representation and reception of American women in the English upper class was a reflection of the aristocracy’s concern about their changing social significance, and that their portrayal in the United States reflected American economic and political unrest.

In the fourth chapter I will look at the influence the American wife had on England in matters aesthetic, social, and political. I will consider how the presence of Americans simultaneously sustained and diluted the English aristocracy, and emphasize the significance that both English and American contemporaries placed on the phenomenon.

I have selected the topics of my chapters because they provide three different ways to address my three ideas of broadening scope, focus on life experiences, and the context of the changing reality of the aristocracy. They provide three different lenses through which to examine the private and public realities of the people concerned in views both detailed and broad. I also chose them because they are particularly interesting to me and, to quote historian Ross McKibbin, “historians should be allowed to write on those subjects which engage them.”10 Though I touch on economic and political trends, this is primarily a social history, and should be viewed as such.

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On Terminology

When referring to the women of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon, I use the terms “transatlantic wives,” “transatlantic brides,” “transatlantic women,” and sometimes just “American women” interchangeably. When speaking about these women I have chosen to refer to them by their maiden names. This is because many of them divorced and remarried or assumed different surnames as their husbands inherited their titles, creating a confusing web of multiple last names over a single lifetime.

I have also let the terms “society,” “high society,” “upper class,” “nobility,” and “aristocracy” overlap, which is not altogether inappropriate as these once-distinct groups merged and became less defined during this period of English social history. Technically “aristocracy” has its own particular definition, but it is included the other, broader terms I have mentioned. My use of the word aristocracy then, is sometimes true to its specific qualifications but at other times is used in the more American sense of the term, meaning the highest of the cultural elite; hopefully these slightly different usages are made clear by their contexts.

As a final detail, many of the American women that I have studied did not marry directly into the technical aristocracy, but they did all marry into the highest social class. I am more interested in the presence and movements of American women in this larger “high society” than specifically within the aristocracy alone;

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11 With the exceptions of Lady Nancy Langhorne Astor, (whose marriage to Lord Astor was her second marriage and therefore was already less associated with her maiden name, and because she was a public figure who was always referred to as Lady Astor with no mention of her previous names) and Wallis Simpson, whose maiden name was actually Warfield but was universally known as “Mrs. Simpson.”
there were untitled transatlantic wives and I include them in my study. My definition of the transatlantic wife during this phenomenon is broader and more inclusive than it is in other studies. Again, this is not altogether inappropriate as the conception of who was upper class and could hold power in society broadened dramatically between the 1870s and the Second World War.
Chapter 1
The Cast of Characters

“In spite of all that has happened I am glad I married an Englishman.”
-Consuelo Vanderbilt, Duchess of Marlborough  

Before delving into the nature of these transatlantic marriages and the questions that I wish to address, it is necessary to introduce the cast of characters – the British and American upper classes – and how they reached the stage where such unions were possible. In this chapter I will show the development of the English and American cultural elites and provide necessary background information about the transatlantic marriage phenomenon.

Mastering the Vocabulary

Unless one has grown up in the British aristocracy, keeping all the terms and definitions of hierarchy and precedence can be a confusing task. American women who married into the English aristocracy had to master these conventions as hostesses, as seating arrangements at dinner precisely reflected rank; gross insults were inferred when mistakes were made about who was seated where, or in what order guests entered the room. As it is confusing and not common parlance for most Americans, it is important to define the terms right from the beginning.

When speaking of the British upper class, one is speaking of several groups of people, the top rank being the peerage, consisting of Dukes, Marquesses, Earls, Viscounts, and Barons. These titles were (and still are) hereditary, and it was these title-holders who sat in the House of Lords. Below the peers are Baronets, then Knights, and finally the more general “landed gentry.” The latter were untitled, “but that did not matter,” according to historian David Cannadine, “for it was obvious to contemporaries that the landed gentry were all for practical purposes the equivalent of continental nobles, with their hereditary estates, their leisured lifestyle, their social pre-eminence, and their armorial bearings.”13 The women of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon married into all of these groups. Matters are further complicated by the fact that the majority of these titles are addressed with the same term “Lord,” and that wives and children do not all have titles similar to the Lord’s. In the pursuit of clarity I have put together the following table of the titles of the English nobility in descending hierarchical order:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Form of Address</th>
<th>Wife’s Title</th>
<th>Wife’s Form of Address</th>
<th>Eldest Son’s Title</th>
<th>Other Children’s Titles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marquess</td>
<td>“Lord”</td>
<td>Marchioness</td>
<td>“Lady”</td>
<td>Subsidiary title of Marquess’s</td>
<td>“Lord”/“Lady” + Christian name</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Earl</td>
<td>“Lord”</td>
<td>Countess</td>
<td>“Lady”</td>
<td>Subsidiary title of Earl’s</td>
<td>Sons are “Honorable,” daughters are “Lady”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Viscount</td>
<td>“Lord”</td>
<td>Viscountess</td>
<td>“Lady”</td>
<td>Subsidiary title of Viscount’s</td>
<td>“Honorable”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baron</td>
<td>“Lord”</td>
<td>Baroness</td>
<td>“Lady”</td>
<td>“Honorable”</td>
<td>“Honorable”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baronet</td>
<td>“Sir”</td>
<td>Lady</td>
<td>“Lady”</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knight</td>
<td>“Sir”</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Untitled</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13 Cannadine, The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy: 12.
The English Aristocracy

The origins of the British aristocracy predate the Norman Invasion of England in 1066, to Anglo-Saxon councils and pre-feudal land systems. Particular titles and the rules of inheritance expanded alongside the development of government. The structure of the aristocracy as it is now became more and more layered over time, the oldest titles being those of Earl and Baron with new ranks being added by different monarchs as time passed. Dukedom was created by King Edward III in 1337 (the same year Parliament was created). The title of “Marquis” was introduced in 1385 by Richard II, and “Viscounts” were created by King Henry IV in 1440.14

Land

From the late 1530s, when the members of the aristocracy gained their large estates through the dissolution of the monasteries under Henry VIII, until the early 19th century, the British landed aristocracy presided over a quasi-feudal system: they lived in mansions on enormous estates and collected rent from their tenants. In 1880 4,736 Englishmen owned 12,825,643 English acres, or slightly more than fifty-six percent of England.15 As landlords they saw themselves as protectors and keepers of both the land and the people. Wealth alone did not define the aristocrat; it was his tie to the land that was his raison d’être.16

The landed family’s greatest foe at the turn of the twentieth century was David Lloyd George, a Liberal politician whose own raison d’être was the

15 ———, The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy: 9.
Elected to the House of Commons in 1890 (and already speaking on land tax), he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer from 1908 to 1915 and was the Prime Minister from 1916 to 1922. His 1909 “People’s Budget” created an uproar with its proposed increased taxes on land, luxury items, death duties (taxes on one’s financial estate after one’s death), income, and called for land valuation and development. The Lords, being aristocrats, naturally rejected this budget. Parliament was dissolved, and in the new election the Conservatives were badly beaten and had no choice but to swallow the ensuing 1911 Parliament Act which greatly reduced their powers.

During the land campaign, George was quoted by the New York Times calling the landlord system “mean bondage” for the farmer and the actions of the landlords “fatuous and unbusinesslike.” He spoke forcefully on shattering the land monopoly and putting wasted land (game reserves for the rich) to productive use. He posed the issue as a very clear one: it was a choice between the well-being of the worker and the power of the landlords. He fought against the privileged landlord system for his entire political career, and proved quite effective in many ways. By the time of the First World War it was obvious to all that the traditional structure of the countryside was, as Cannadine put it, “no longer acceptable, or justifiable, in Great Britain,” and

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17 Historically speaking, most of the aristocracy were Tories. The Liberals, who grew out of the Whig Party, were the Conservatives’ great enemy; they fought the Tories to protect themselves from the emerging power of Labour.


19 Ibid., 1063-64.


the great estates began to be broken up and sold.\textsuperscript{22} In a 1991 speech to the Royal Historical Society about the decline of the aristocracy, F. M. L. Thompson noted that many of such sales were conducted as “defensive,” or “political” acts, and not solely “forced sales by owners unable to meet their [financial] obligations and within sight of bankruptcy.” In the same speech though he quoted Oscar Wilde’s 1895 play \textit{The Importance of Being Earnest}, wherein the character Lady Bracknell reflected that “What between the duties [taxes] expected of one during one’s lifetime, and the duties exacted from one after one’s death, land has ceased to be either a profit or a pleasure. It gives one a position, and prevents one from keeping it up. That’s all that can be said about land.”\textsuperscript{23}

\textit{Political Service}

Besides being the guardians of the land, noblemen also served the nation as representatives in the House of Lords, the upper house of Parliament. A Lord served for life, and upon his death his heir – normally his oldest son, through the strict English laws of primogeniture – inherited both the title and the seat in Parliament. Besides these Lords Temporal, Lords Spiritual (i.e. Archbishops and bishops) sat (and still sit) in the House of Lords. In descending order this hierarchy begins with royal dukes, then Archbishops, bishops, dukes, marquesses and so on. (See chart on p.15.) Historically the House of Lords could overrule and reject measures passed by the House of Commons, giving the nobility real and direct power over the laws of the land. Then again, the House of Commons was largely composed of men from the

\textsuperscript{22} Cannadine, \textit{The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy}: 71.
upper class as well; in 1865 a full “three-quarters of the MPs came from aristocratic and gentry families.”\(^{24}\) Despite serious efforts during the passage of the First Reform Bill (which will be further discussed later) of 1832 to end the Lords’ veto power, it was not until the 1911 Parliament Act that this power was effectively removed in reaction to their above-mentioned stoppage of David Lloyd George’s so-called “People’s Budget” of 1909.\(^{25}\)

19\(^{th}\) Century Political and Social Decline

The success of England’s industrial revolution did not bode well for the landed aristocracy, whose entire being was centered on the importance and work of land, not machines. The agricultural depression of the 1870s was a point of no return in terms of the power and influence that the aristocracy could wield in society and politics, and by the 1880s the traditional British aristocracy was in definite decline. The depression had sapped the income of many nobles, and they were attacked by liberal politicians for their legal and land monopolies. Many saw the need for an end to legal favors for the rich in the form of higher taxes on their lands, publicly reinforced guidelines for landlord-tenant interactions, even going as far as to demand a permanent end to the landlord system.\(^{26}\) The influx of American produce (such as wheat, corn, and cotton) and manufacturing around this time weakened the English agricultural economy even further. Faced with all these challenges as well as rising death duties and income taxes, many wealthy families began worry about being unable, or literally finding themselves unable to keep up with the enormous costs of

\(^{25}\) “Origins of the House of Lords and the Peerage.”
\(^{26}\) Cannadine, The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy: 61.
running traditional country estates, providing for the standard of living that English nobility traditionally upheld, and participating in the London Season – when the Lords went to sit in the House during the summer months and aristocratic families hosted and attended extravagant dinners and balls until the wee hours of the morning for weeks at a time.

It was not just “the masses” and the Liberal Party who were pushing the aristocracy from their long-held places, but also a new plutocracy; British *nouveaux riches* and a whole cohort of American millionaires who had come back to the Old World to prove their social worth vied for social and political power. Unlike entrenched, blue-blooded families, the plutocrats *bought* their prestige by paying for extravagant wardrobes, fashionable addresses, introductions, and, for the first time, titles. A title no longer necessarily meant that one was a landowner from an old family; now such honors were granted to successful businessmen. Of the new peerages created between 1874 and 1885, 12% of them went to successful industrialists. For those created between 1905 and 1911, this figure had reached 40%. The social and political capital of an aristocratic last name was becoming less and less valuable.

This value change was spurred on significantly by political reform beginning in the early 19th century. The First Reform Act, 1832, reorganized representation in the House of Lords to make it more proportional to the population of the area being represented. (Before it was passed, all of London had only four representatives while

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27 Ibid., 28.
sparsely inhabited Cornwall had a whopping forty-four.) The Second Reform Act, 1867, enfranchised much of the working class in urban areas. It is the Third Reform Act of 1884, however which is the first legal strike against the British nobility that directly affects the scope of this project: it brought the vote to farmers.\textsuperscript{29} Empowering the people of the countryside, where the aristocrats traditionally had all the power, stripped landlords of influence both symbolically and politically. It also doubled the electorate from three million voters to almost six million, giving a larger voice to the masses than ever before.\textsuperscript{30} The next and most serious political blow was when the Lords lost their veto power in the previously described Parliament Act of 1911. The Fourth Reform Act, 1918, or the “Representation of the People Act” enfranchised all men over 21 and all women over 30, and eliminated almost all of the property qualifications for the vote.\textsuperscript{31} Historically the Lords held all of the political power and voted in place of the people; now the people could vote for themselves. The world in which the transatlantic women’s parents-in-law grew up was vastly different from that of their sons and daughters-in-law.

It was in the wake of these changes – taxes, death duties, agricultural insecurity, decreasing political power and changing social values – which intensified in the 1880s and only grew in magnitude as time went on, that titled Englishmen began looking abroad for an easy infusion of capital with which to continue their standards of living, pay off their debts, and/or keep hold of their ancestral estates. The bank accounts of American manufacturers, bankers, railroad and coal magnates

\textsuperscript{29} “Reform Bill,” in Encyclopaedia Britannica Online.
\textsuperscript{30} Cannadine, The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy: 39.
and other plutocrats, bursting with the successes of the post-Civil War boom of industrial capitalism, could supply large dowries for their daughters, and this caught the attention of the cash-poor nobleman. “There are few Americans of a certain standing,” wrote American writer and social commentator Price Collier in 1909, “who cannot tell extraordinary tales of the humiliating proceedings of needy aristocrats from England; from the men who are out and out blacklegs to the women who exploit their American hosts for the purpose of gambling in the stock market.”

This brings us, then, to the new American elite.

**The Creation of the American New Rich**

The high society from which the American brides came was rather different both in history and practice from English society. Some of the women came from America’s “old” families – Old Dutch most likely if from New York – and were from a group referred to as the Knickerbockers, or “Nobs.” More, however, were “new money,” or “Swells,” and came from recent fortunes based on coal, iron and steel, railroads, and the stock market. With captains of industry fathers bankrolling them, these families spent lavishly on New York and Newport mansions, decorations, clothing, and entertaining in attempt to impress their way into exclusive New York society.

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33 Although other major American cities, notably Boston and Chicago, had their own high class rituals and systems and important families, we shall here focus on New York, the social capital of the country, as a full half of the transatlantic brides came from that city. Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870-1914*: 43.
The money had come quickly to the American *nouveaux riches* – “We have amassed in a few years great wealth with no traditions behind it and no weight of responsibility upon it to keep it steady,” Price Collier observed in 1909. He described the consequences of this: “It cannot be said of us by our worst enemy that we Americans are misers. Palaces, and steam yachts, and motor cars, and equipages, clothes and pocket money are…piled upon, the women of these opulent ones. Many of the women in consequence are forced into being idle spendthrifts.”\(^{34}\) It is true that glamour and opulence ruled the day: at one New York soiree, the cigarettes provided by the host were rolled in gold-monogrammed hundred dollar bills.\(^{35}\)

An illustration of how this new wealth infiltrated and ultimately superseded old money in New York is the history of the Metropolitan Opera. *Nouveaux riches* like the Vanderbilts, Rockefellers, and Goulds were denied boxes in the early 1880s at the established Academy of Music where Old Money families like the Stuyvesants and Astors had boxes. Not to be ignored, the *nouveaux riches* combined to finance a new opera house, the Metropolitan Opera House Company. By the spring of 1885, the Academy closed, unable to compete with the new theater, and the Nobs began attending the Met with the Swells.\(^{36}\)

It was infamously difficult to get accepted into the upper echelons of New York society, to become one of “The Four Hundred,” four hundred being the number of guests that could fit into Mrs. Caroline Astor’s ballroom. The Astor matriarch was

\(^{34}\) Collier, *England and the English from an American Point of View*: 374 - 76.


the most powerful leader of New York Society, and went by the title “The Mrs. Astor.” Entry into the exclusive set was rigidly controlled by her second-in-command Mr. Ward McAllister. Along with a group of twenty-five elites put together by McAllister, called The Patriarchs, this pair determined and defined New York Society; if they did not know and approve of a young lady and her family, she could not participate.37

If they had failed to gain admission to the elite in New York Society, many families set out for Europe where they could escape their social reputations, live more cheaply, and try to “make it” overseas in order to return triumphantly to New York. American Vanity Fair reported “It has happened that members of that exclusive body, the ‘Four Hundred,’ have been dreadfully shocked to find some compatriot who is taboo on the other side of the water received with open arms in Mayfair and Belgravia.”38 Paris drew most families from the beginning. With the Prussian invasion of France in 1870 however, families like Jennie Jerome’s, the first transatlantic bride of the phenomenon, fled to London and worked their charm on the English aristocracy instead. If a woman came back home to America engaged to a titled aristocrat, she had clearly “made it” beyond reproach; even The Mrs. Astor could not deny a Duchess entry to one of her costume balls. For example, when Prince Edward visited American wife Consuelo Yznaga’s house in England, one English article ran that “for the fashionable classes of America who had never considered the Duchess of Manchester as being quite as important as the other

37 MacColl, To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started: 12-14.
38 Quoted in ibid., 286.
conspicuous heiresses, this event will show them that they have made a mistake.”39 
For many of the American women therefore, marrying financially-stricken aristocrats 
provided them with the social capital they desired, while they provided their new 
husbands with the monetary capital that they needed.

The Phenomenon: Logistics

Before any such transactions took place the needy English aristocrat and 
willing American heiress had to find one another. If the bride and groom did not meet 
while the young lady was travelling in Europe (Jennie Jerome met Randolph 
Churchill on a yacht off of the Isle of Wight during the famous Cowes regatta), they 
often met when the aristocrat came to the United States with such a purpose 
specifically in mind. English noblemen came to the United States to travel, to hunt 
big game in the West, and to find an heiress, typically in New York or another major 
Eastern city. Amid a flurry of receptions and balls and other events, American girls 
and their mothers would compete for the attention of the Englishman, who would 
likely be just as interested in the girl’s father’s finances as in her appearance, wit, or 
charm. Indeed, the finances were key. One extreme example of this is Minnie 
Stevens. Although she married the British Colonel (later Sir) Arthur Paget in 1878, 
her first engagement was to the French Duc de Guiche. Before marrying Miss 
Stevens, however, the Duc secretly made enquiries into her fortune in New York.

39 Quoted in ibid., 287.
When he discovered that she was worth less than she had originally claimed, he broke off the engagement and married a Rothschild instead.⁴⁰

Permission from both sets of parents was sought – and it should be said that many English parents were less than thrilled at the prospect of an American entering their family and being responsible for the continuation of the bloodline, suggesting a generation change in openness, or at least in flexibility. The majority of the weddings were held in the United States after which the newlyweds moved to England. Often the American bride met her husband’s family for the first time only after the marriage: the groom’s parents usually were not present at the wedding ceremony.

**The Phenomenon: Numbers**

It is not clear exactly how many transatlantic brides there were. Some authors have counted only women who married into the peerage (Dukes through Barons). Some did not count marriages to younger sons of titled fathers, as they would not inherit the title. Others, such as historian Marian Fowler, counted all European unions, tallying 454 American marriages to Europeans of title and their offspring between 1870 and 1914.⁴¹ Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace profiled 117 American brides of British upper class men and mention more in their book *To Marry an English Lord*. Richard W. Davis listed 153 Anglo-American marriages in his 1991

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article “We Are All American Now!”⁴² In *Gilded Prostitution*, Maureen Montgomery counted 60 American marriages to English peers between 1870 and 1914 and 44 between 1915 and 1939, 14 American marriages to non-peers who were subsequently granted peer status between 1870 and 1914, and 40 American marriages to younger sons during the same period.⁴³ In reviewing these calculations, we can only for certain determine that well over one hundred American women married into the English upper class between the 1870s and the 1930s. I have not attempted a headcount of my own and draw from all of the above-mentioned authors’ tallying and statistical analyses.

*Edward VII*

A review of the cast of characters and a preliminary explanation of the American woman’s success in English society would be remiss not to include Prince Edward, the eventual King Edward VII and known familiarly as “Bertie.” His 1860 visit to New York as a young man caused enormous excitement: three hundred thousand people lined Broadway to watch him go by, and four thousand people were invited to a welcome ball in his honor. (Right before His Royal Highness walked in, the ballroom’s floor collapsed.)⁴⁴

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⁴² Davis, "'We Are All Americans Now!': Anglo-American Marriages in the Later Nineteenth Century," 144.
His mother, Queen Victoria, gave her son little State responsibility, giving him the time and freedom to focus purely on amusements and frivolity until he finally came to the throne in 1901 at the age of sixty. His years of repeated indulgence in rich foods and drink shortened his life, and he died in 1910. Edward enjoyed the brash and uninhibited company of the American women in London, finding favor with them “because they are original and bring a little fresh air into Society. They are livelier, better educated and less hampered by etiquette. They are not as squeamish as their English sisters and they are better able to take care of themselves,” he said.45 A famed philanderer, he is known to have had an affair with American Lady Randolph Churchill (our Ms. Jerome from the beginning of the chapter), and was rumored to have had affairs with the Americans Jeannie Chamberlain (Lady Naylor-Leyland, called “Miss Chamberpots” by Edward’s wife, Princess Alexandra after her maiden name),46 Consuelo Yznaga (the Duchess of Manchester,) and Flora Sharon (Lady Fermor-Hesketh) among dozens of other women.

Always craving entertainment, Edward became the center of the so-called Marlborough House Set, a close group of noble socialites dedicated to providing the Prince with amusement, at the center of which were the above-mentioned American women such as Consuelo Yznaga, Jennie Jerome, and Minnie Paget (née Stevens). Akin to Mrs. Astor’s power back in New York, acceptance by Edward meant de-facto acceptance by the rest of high society, and it also meant publicity. While a visit from the Prince (or later, King) was an enormous honor, it was also an enormous expense. Hosts often undertook significant construction projects on their homes, local railway

45 Quoted in Fowler, In A Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess: 39.
46 MacColl, To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started: 72, 327.
stations, and gardens and spent thousands on clothes, flowers, decorations, and specialty food and drink to suit His Majesty’s luxurious tastes.  

![Royal Visit to Blenheim Palace](image)

As London got crowded with them, Edward began to lose his original enthusiasm for Americans. He remained close friends with the American women he had met in his youth until his death however, and one could indeed argue that if not for the personality and insatiable boredom of Edward VII, always seeking the new and exciting, the noble American wife in England would not have been as accepted or as successful as she was.

Having established these basic facts, histories, and methods, I now turn to my larger concerns of situating the transatlantic marriage phenomenon in its proper place in terms of scope, focus, and context.

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48 The text reads “Royal Visit to Blenheim Palace. The Prince of Wales is seated in the center, to the right; next to him is Mary Curzon; and Jennie and Consuelo are seated at the far left. Unidentified photographer. Photograph, November 1896 (Photograph courtesy the Duke of Marlborough).” Scanned from Richard Kenin, Return to Albion: Americans in England 1760-1940 (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1979), 152.
Chapter 2
The Republican Aristocrat: A Checkerboard of Identities

“For our aristocracy they have an ardent admiration; they adore titles and are a permanent blow to Republican principles.”
- Oscar Wilde

“It is a very curious fact that, with all our boasted ‘free and equal’ superiority over the communities of the Old World, our people have the most enormous appetite for Old World titles of the distinction.”
- Oliver Wendell Holmes

Introduction

I have stated that it was the lives, and not just the marriages/weddings, of the transatlantic lives that were historically important and interesting about this group of women. I have described their background and other basic information in the previous chapter, but to understand such an idea, we need to understand their national identities. Did they see themselves as Americans or Britons? Which did their in-laws see them as? I have also stated that these women provide us with a unique view of the English aristocracy as it was in rapid flux. How then, did the traditions of democracy and aristocracy clash with or complement each other within this group of people? In an attempt to answer these specific queries and larger questions, this chapter examines the conflicting identities – legal, cultural, and class – of the transatlantic wives, and how they manifested themselves in English high society.

**Republicanism Meets Aristocracy**

Why were Americans, people boastingly proud of their nation’s intellectual heritage of equality and earning one’s dues, so swept away by aristocratic titles? The distinct and competing value systems of democracy and aristocracy are side by side in this story, and there are many examples of individuals attempting to merge the two worlds. One illuminating episode was recorded by a long-time American correspondent in England, Mr. George Smalley, in 1911. The American ambassador became overwhelmed every year, wrote Smalley, by the “hundreds… literally hundreds,” of applications from “American ladies who thought themselves, and were, worthy to appear before the King and Queen,” as he could only present four at a time at each of the three Courts in a season. On learning of this rule, each applicant complained and made her case as to why she ought to be an exception, as she was “used to the easy ways prevailing at the White House, [and supposed] that they must be equally easy at Buckingham Palace; or that, upon a word from the American Ambassador…all doors [would] fly open.” This mixture of democratic assumption alongside keenness for aristocratic treatment was an administrative nightmare and a social annoyance. “The perplexities arising out of this American eagerness to witness these royal splendors are innumerable,” sighed Smalley. At one American girl’s court presentation in the early 1890s the young lady would not curtsey to a pair of Dukes, whose backs were turned. An onlooker was furious upon witnessing this and

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demanded that the American girl bow, scolding her sharply and accusing her actions as born from her thinking herself of “the most favored race on Earth.”

At other moments in Smalley’s remembrances however, he attributed the American women’s success in London to their republican convictions. “The one thing which first gave the American girl her firm foothold in English society was, perhaps, the one thing about her which is most distinctively American – her sense of equality,” he recalled. By acting as the social equal of those around her, he says, she was accepted as such. Smalley pronounced that “the secret of American popularity in royal circles lay in this American freedom from the purely conventional notion about royalty which prevails in England. A girl from New York talked to the Prince of Wales as if royalty had no more rights than republicanism.” Sometimes, then, being American was a tool and sometimes it was a barrier.

To return to the original question as to why a republican people would be so title-hungry, in her book on the transatlantic marriage phenomenon, Marian Fowler explained Americans’ love of titles as a “way to recover what their raw republic lacked…distinctions” more “subtle” than being solely based on money. “In short, the

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54 Quoted in Fowler, In A Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess: 39.

55 Although there was a marked increase in obsession with titles and nobility with the rise of the American new rich in the Gilded Age and Progressive Era, such interest has existed from the very beginning of American history. Since colonial times there have been isolated transatlantic marriages to foreigners of title; the American interest in and fondness for British royalty and aristocracy was not entirely new. However, we see a definite concentrated social trend in transatlantic marriages beginning in the late nineteenth century.
New Rich longed, lusted for the *poetry* of class.” Going even further, she cited American historian Richard L. Bushman’s claim that this lust was a “desire for refinement, respectability and gentility [and] has always been as powerful a force in American life as the belief in work and equality.  

Though not the focus of this project, it is worth mentioning that the beginning of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon coincided with a period of great class unrest in the United States; all classes were seeking to define themselves and the upper class was under great criticism from a growing labor movement. Perhaps looking abroad for traditions to emulate served as both a distraction and a way to prove that such lifestyles were indeed acceptable in an organized and prosperous society.

Besides holding a fascination for, and sometimes seeking, titles, we see other manifestations of an American attempt at European refinery during this period. Starting in the 1870s, Tiffany & Co. had a heraldry department, and those who spent time on such things often tried to prove a noble English lineage. Rich families also emulated English traditions such as joining gentlemen’s clubs and enrolling their children in boarding schools. (In fact, “snob” might be from “s.nob,” which was short for *sine nobilitate* – “without nobility” – a note made by registrars at English public schools beside the names of boys from “bourgeois families.”) Doing such things, suggested American historian Paul Fussell, showed “a search for the

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56 Fowler, *In A Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess*: XX.
58 Dino Ejercito Buenviaje, “Community and Correspondence: Elite Friendships and the Anglo-American Rapprochement, 1895-1910” (California State University, Fullerton, 2003), 94.
distinctive signs of class differences within an imagined classless society;” a conflation of democratic and aristocratic principles.\(^6^0\)

Newly rich but untutored in how to use their money and class status, the American plutocrats of the Gilded Age looked to systems of entrenched wealth abroad as models; the other aristocratic system they could have imitated, the southern plantation owners, had already fallen. This new American upper class inherited few traditions, and was therefore creating high society as it went. Thus, the plutocrats enabled themselves to select various traditions and values as they appealed to them.\(^6^1\) Particularly interesting in this case is that these American *nouveaux riches* were drawing inspiration from an aristocratic system that was in actuality already in decline.

*Legal Identities: Marriage and Citizenship*

Blind to the English aristocracy’s decay, mainstream American newspapers of the day trumpeted the arrivals of titled foreigners to American cities and followed their every move at the beginning of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon, especially their interactions with American young ladies. As I will explore in Chapter 3, this fascination with titles and enthusiasm towards titled matches soon turned to scorn: what had begun as a sign of American success and a source of pride became a strongly politicized act that was read as a direct insult to the country and its values.


We can see this negative opinion not only in popular newspapers and memoirs from the time but also in citizenship laws of the era, which changed dramatically over the timeline of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon. In light of the later harsh public representation of foreign marriages, it is not altogether surprising that, in marrying a foreign man, American women were stripped of their American citizenship. A look at the laws of women’s citizenship across this period shows us what these women’s legal identities were and how they fluctuated over the course of the period.

In her essay on the history of American expatriation, Nancy L. Green pointed out that until the turn of the twentieth century (the height of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon,) expatriation was something that people engaged in as they left their countries to come to America, and was only just becoming something that Americans did; the concept of the American expat was just being born. The original American conceptualization of expatriation was obviously more flattering to the country. Americans choosing to leave, especially prominent ones, however, was a new and troubling idea, and was discouraged through the law. Citizenship laws changed frequently, and American women were particularly targeted by many of them.

In Shanks vs. Dupont, 1830, the Supreme Court ruled that by marrying Englishman Joseph Shanks, Ann Scott had not lost her American citizenship and become English, “because marriage with an alien, whether friend or enemy, produces

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63 Rich American women who left the country were not the only expats who received scorn: men who went abroad after 1913, when income tax came into existence, were accused of leaving the country to skip out on paying their taxes. All were seen as taking American-earned money out of America, and received strong negative attention because of it. Ibid., 322.
no dissolution of the native allegiance of the wife.” Rather, it was her leaving the United States and moving with him to England that “operate[d] as a virtual dissolution of her allegiance, and fixed her future allegiance to the British Crown by the treaty of peace in 1783.” Therefore it was not marriage to a foreigner alone that stripped women of their citizenship, but physically moving to another country.64 This decision was still in effect when, in 1844, Great Britain ruled that a foreign wife of a British man automatically became British. American women who married Englishmen were thereafter considered legally English in England, but still legally American in the U.S. if they remained in the United States.

Just over a decade later, Shanks v. Dupont was contradicted by The Nationality Law of 1855, which ruled that American women marrying foreigners, and their children, took on the man’s citizenship – it made no provision for where the couple lived. (If a man married a foreign woman however, his children were automatically American, and his wife could get American citizenship, but only if she was white.) New York Congressman Francis Cutting elucidated that “by the act of marriage itself the political character [meaning national citizenship] of the wife shall at once conform to the political character of her husband.”65 On both sides of the Atlantic now, women legally lost their American nationality in the act of marriage. It would be another eight decades until this was overturned by the Cable Act in 1934, and in my research I found no mention of any of the women attempting to secure dual citizenship.

Between 1855 and 1934 more Congressional legislation and court rulings affirmed the one-sided discrimination against American women marrying foreign men. Britain’s 1870 Naturalization Act reiterated that foreign wives became British upon marriage. The United States’ Expatriation Act of 1907 made it even clearer than in the 1855 statute that American women marrying non-citizens become non-citizens themselves. It provided for a resumption of this lost citizenship by the wife and the children only in the events of divorce or widowhood.⁶⁶

In 1908, Chicago Congressman A. J. Sabath attempted to impose a tax on all property that was transferred overseas during international marriage settlements. (It was ruled unconstitutional and never passed.) His fellow Representative, Charles McGavin of Illinois, supported the bill and accused the American brides in the name of “the early pioneers who battled with the Indians, challenged the forest, and braved the Winter’s winds and snows to establish a Government where manhood might be recognized for its true value, instead of for accident of birth,” of “sacrificing their souls and honor upon the alter of snobbery and vice.”⁶⁷ In May of the same year, President Roosevelt said before Congress that, although he knew he did not have the power to do so, he wished he could make all transatlantic marriages to titled foreigners illegal.⁶⁸ Two years earlier he had written to the American ambassador in England that “I thoroly [sic] dislike…these international marriages…which are not…even matches of esteem and liking, but which are based upon the sale of the girl

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⁶⁶ Ibid., 1462.
for her money and the purchase of the man for his title.” Thus, the phenomenon attracted enough negative attention that politicians sought to discourage it legally.

All this is not to say that American women accepted these laws happily or complacently. Ethel Mackenzie, an American wife in an English-American marriage was denied the right to vote in California because of her marriage to a foreigner. She fought this as unconstitutional and took the issue to court, and in 1915 the Supreme Court upheld the California High Court’s action in Mackenzie v. Hare and Mackenzie ultimately lost. In so ruling, the Court contradicted its very clear 1830 decision regarding Ann Scott’s citizenship in Shanks v. Dupont.

Five years later Ethel Mackenzie, with all other American women won the right to vote through the passage of the 19th Amendment in 1920. It was a priority for many feminists to overturn the discriminatory 1855 and 1907 rulings regarding marriage and citizenship – female lawyers had been arguing in Congress on behalf of American wives’ citizenship since 1910. The 1922 Cable Act, also known as the “Married Women’s Independent Nationality Act,” quickly came into law after women were enfranchised. With its passing, an international marriage no longer renounced the woman’s American citizenship (unless her husband was Asian). However, residence in the husband’s country for two years, (or any country in the world for five years) automatically imposed upon the wife that country’s citizenship. The Cable Act was periodically revised, and the racial aspects were

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finally fully removed by 1934. As it stands today, according to the U.S. State Department,

A U.S. citizen may acquire foreign citizenship by marriage…U.S. law does not mention dual nationality or require a person to choose one citizenship or another. Also, a person who is automatically granted another citizenship does not risk losing U.S. citizenship… In order to lose U.S. citizenship, the law requires that the person must apply for the foreign citizenship voluntarily, by free choice, and with the intention to give up U.S. citizenship.71

American women no longer have to sacrifice their citizenship if they choose to marry foreigners, and we have the wives of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon to thank for blazing the trail that led to this legal recognition of a basic right.

It is necessary to contextualize all of these discriminatory laws, policies, and court rulings in the larger story of immigration and racism in the United States during these decades. A full discussion of this topic is beyond the scope of this study, but it is important to note that many of these laws were not primarily aimed at rich American heiresses leaving the country with all their American money to marry foreign nobles. Rather, they were designed to discourage American women from marrying immigrants within the United States. Regardless of their inspiration and intended target(s), such policies directly affected the women in this study by labeling them as non-American when they were wed foreigners. Though their nationality changed in the eyes of the governments of their old and new country, they were practically never deemed English by their new countrymen.

Cultural Differences
Assumptions and Adjustments

Although American women were legally English once they arrived in England with their husbands, most English citizens gave them plenty of reminders that they were by no means culturally English. Etiquette books of the era such as Florence Hall’s The Correct Thing in Good Society (1888) told Americans to “keep the American eagle very quiet when…travelling in foreign countries.”\(^\text{72}\) The book European Travel for Women (1900) told women that “unless travelers are willing to leave national prejudices behind them, and ready to see whatever is characteristic and excellent in a foreign country, without finding fault because it is unfamiliar, they had better remain at home.”\(^\text{73}\)

The most important thing that these American women had to adjust to was the strictness of the social structure in England. American society allowed a freedom of class movement that was institutionally impossible in England at the beginning of our period (but this became much more fluid over the course of the phenomenon). Consuelo Vanderbilt, the American Duchess of Marlborough, married in 1895, wrote a memoir (or rather, one was ghostwritten for her) in which she devoted many pages to the cultural differences she faced and the confusing senses of nationality they created within her, and therefore serves as a good case study for this topic. She quickly realized that, “One must learn to take one’s place in the social hierarchy,” and


that “the differences in rank were outstandingly important.” She and other transatlantic wives soon learned that the structure was continued down past dukes and viscounts and barons all the way through the servants: strict protocol existed even in the servants’ quarters, separating a butler from a valet from a footman and a housekeeper from a cook from a maid.

Once the women entered such a world they ceased to be carefree society girls until they found their footing and began to snub tradition in pursuit of their own amusements. “I found that being a Duchess at nineteen would put me into a much older set and that a measure of decorum beyond my years would be expected of me,” Vanderbilt reflected.74 High expectations were placed on the American bride’s shoulders, expectations of another culture that the bride had little choice but to assume. Vanderbilt listened to her husband, the Duke of Marlborough, expound on the importance of being a “link” in a great “chain” of tradition, and understood that “it was not for me, with my more democratic ideals, to upset the precarious balance.”75

Although she begrudgingly accepted the notion that if she was to be successful in English society she would have to learn to accept its class structure, Vanderbilt did not take so kindly to other, even more direct, reminders of her difference. When she first stepped off the train on the way to her new home, Blenheim Palace, she was greeted with “Your Grace will no doubt be interested to know that Woodstock had a Mayor and Corporation before America was discovered,”

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75 Ibid., 88-89.
at which Vanderbilt “bit [her] tongue” and felt “put in [her] place.”76 And at her first dinner with the extended Marlborough family, “the conversation veered to America, and Lady Blandford [Vanderbilt’s mother-in-law] made a number of startling remarks, revealing that she thought we all lived on plantations with Negro slaves and that there were red Indians ready to scalp us just around the corner.”77 Such uneducated remarks were not uncommon: another American bride told Vanderbilt that she had been asked about the American war in the 1860s against South America,78 and several transatlantic wives wrote in frustration that the English assumed that all Americans knew each other. After she was presented at Court, Vanderbilt was complimented by her mother-in-law with the comment “I must tell you that no one would take you for an American,” to which Vanderbilt, seething, replied “I suppose you mean that as a compliment, Lady Blandford, but what would you think if I said you were not at all like an Englishwoman?” Lady Blandford responded “Oh, that is quite different.” She said it with a smile, but Vanderbilt firmly replied “Different to you, but not to me,” in order to make clear “that there were certain reflections concerning Americans I would not tolerate.”79 It was through such conversations, parsing through stereotypes and assumptions based on national characteristics, that Americans and Britons navigated the cultural effects of “The American Invasion.” The transatlantic wife was the physical embodiment of the “Americanization” of Great Britain, and the older English generation had a difficult time getting used to both.

76 Ibid., 75.
77 Ibid., 71.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid., 96-97.
Despite all the reminders of her otherness, the extended family made it clear to Vanderbilt, and indeed to most young American brides, that they were expecting an heir almost immediately.80 The family might have been less than thrilled that the mother of the next heir was to be an American, but regardless of her nationality, her role was now to ensure the continuation of the line. Though nationality was important in England, it was superseded by position and did not relieve the foreign wife of the duties that came with her new status.

Even Wallis Simpson, the American woman for whom King Edward VIII would abdicate the throne in 1936, arriving in London as a married woman in the 1930s, decades after the other women mentioned thus far, felt tensions and uncertainties as an American in England. She wrote in her autobiography:

I knew scarcely a soul in London, and I approached the business of making a new life for myself with trepidation… I had the feeling, at times, of being a somewhat awkward American relation who had turned up unexpectedly, and to whom the English connections were expected to be considerate. Moreover, it was difficult for me to adjust myself to British ways.81

She had not married into the aristocracy (yet) and was living in a London very different from the London of the 1870s, but the transition was not easy for her either, specifically because of her nationality and the cultural differences that that entailed.

Society for Men Instead of for Women

Multiple sources, both from the period and later analyses, discuss how at the turn of the century, high society was run by women and for women in the United

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80 Consuelo Vanderbilt is credited with the phrase “the heir and the spare,” both of which she dutifully produced. Stuart, Consuelo and Alva Vanderbilt: The Story of A Daughter And A Mother in The Gilded Age.

States. Charles Dana Gibson made a series of drawings on this theme for *Life* magazine.

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It was precisely the opposite in England, where everything was done for the pleasure of men. This was a major life change for the American women who moved from across the Atlantic; they came from a relative position of power to one where their own tastes and opinions were given much less importance. Used to being fawned over their whole lives, they were now expected to do the fawning. Perhaps this sounds trivial, but it constituted a major identity and power structure change for these women navigating new cultural systems. They were required to follow long-established societal patterns, often including extended periods of residence in isolated country houses, sitting inside for days as the men were out shooting.

In his 1909 study *England and the English from the American Point of View*, American writer Price Collier insisted on this point more than once. Rather than taking the side of his countrywomen, he suggested that the English way was more natural; “Dame Nature by an iron law ordained that the male bird should wear the brave and conspicuous plumage,” he wrote. When a woman does, she “fails,” and, if French, “becomes a cocette [sic]” or if American, a “divorcée.” For women to be the center of attention, he wrote, is “not right or wise,” and it “somehow takes away from the fairest bloom of womanhood when she struts the stage of the world.” He also suggested that “to shift the burden of…social preeminence to the shoulders of women” would not be good for their health or happiness. He explained that perhaps “Americans make the better husbands, and the English the better wives,” and that in

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83 Gibson, Charles Dana. “The Vanishing Sex,” *Life*. The text reads “Interesting Survival of an Old Social Custom of Asking Husbands to Dinner Parties.” Image from: http://s3.amazonaws.com/data.tumblr.com/tumblr_1fo48pMqUL1qb1laioI_1280.jpg?AWSAccessKeyId=AKIAI6WLSGT7Y3ET7ADQ&Expires=1334105852&Signature=06Ntue9UmDIRKiZzt%2BkKjiWnn2M%3D

84 Collier, *England and the English from an American Point of View*: 374-76.
America the wife “has come to look upon…as her privilege, and sometimes, alas, as her right,” to have Society catered to her own pleasures. He suggested that this was a factor for “the general average of home life [being] more comfortable in England than in America.” More comfortable for the men, that is.

Marital Expectations

Fidelity

Though loveless marriages, marriages of convenience, and extra-marital affairs absolutely existed in the United States, as they always have everywhere, American women were unprepared for the laxity with which Englishmen held the bonds of marriage. In the English aristocracy into which American women began marrying, once the wife had produced at least one son, cultural practice fully condoned extramarital affairs for not only the husband but the wife as well. These relationships were never publicly acknowledged, but were something that everyone knew about. Many American women were at first shocked, but eventually took lovers of their own; this was not an aspect of the aristocracy that they fought or changed in any significant way. Indeed, many became a part of the practice. Jennie Jerome had several known affairs (including one with an Austrian Count, Charles Kinsky). Wallis Simpson famously had her affair with Prince Edward while she was still married; Edward’s previous mistress had also been a married American, Lady Thelma Furness.

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85 Ibid., 137.
Extramarital affairs were an accepted part of upper-class social life, and were surrounded by a particular protocol: be discreet, no unmarried women (excepting servants), wait until the marriage has produced at least one son, do not make things difficult for your philandering spouse, and never speculate on a new baby’s real parentage.\textsuperscript{86} The fact that it was married women and not single girls who were fair game is an interesting cultural difference. One American wife affirmed “With us in America, as you know, the girl gets all the attention from the men; in London society the girl is nowhere and the young wives are the attraction. Men will not be bored to talk to girls.”\textsuperscript{87} Discretion was of course difficult, what with houses full of servants, distinctive carriages parked on the street or in the drive, and layers of complicated clothing. When entertaining parties overnight at country houses, thoughtful hostesses put name cards on bedroom doors and assigned lovers as near to each other as was acceptable. (Mistakes, of course, were made, a particularly alarming one consisting of a lover jumping into the presumed bed of his beloved in the middle of the night, shouting “Cock-a-doodle-do!” and then recoiling in horror to find his bedmate to be the Bishop of Bath and Wells.)\textsuperscript{88} Such indiscretions would never have occurred with such regularity back in New York.\textsuperscript{88}

\textit{Divorce}

There were few options for the American bride who refused to condone such practices. Divorces were difficult to procure – one had to prove adultery, insanity, or

\textsuperscript{86} MacColl, \textit{To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started}: 253-54.

\textsuperscript{87} Quoted in Smalley, \textit{London Letters and Some Others}, II: 123.

\textsuperscript{88} MacColl, \textit{To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started}: 251-58.
a pre-existing marriage.\textsuperscript{89} Fake affairs were arranged and “discovered” as grounds for divorce up until the 1937 Matrimonial Causes Act, which added drunkenness and cruelty to acceptable causes.\textsuperscript{90} Importantly, divorce was social suicide. Indeed, when Consuelo Vanderbilt and the Duke of Marlborough separated in 1906, Edward VII shunned them socially for years; they could not attend any function at which the Prince was present.\textsuperscript{91} Thirty years later, the reason Edward VIII could not take Wallis Simpson as his wife and queen was because she was a (twice-) divorced woman.

Despite these social barriers and risks, many transatlantic marriages were unhappy enough that they did end in divorce. A sampling of some of these failed marriages paints a gloomy picture: Frances Work divorced Baron Fermoy, James Burke-Roche in 1891, who was so outraged to find that the divorce had been published in the aristocratic directory \textit{Burke’s Peerage} that he sued the publication. An 1894 annulment ended the marriage of Caroline Fitzgerald and Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice (later 1\textsuperscript{st} Baron Fitzmaurice), wed in 1889. Sarah Stokes married Baron Halkett of Hanover (but a Briton) in 1890 and divorced him 1903; she renounced her title and became a writer and illustrator of children’s books. The 1893 marriage of May Campell Cuyler to Sir Philip Grey-Egerton, 12\textsuperscript{th} Baronet, ended in divorce in 1906. Anna Robinson and the 5\textsuperscript{th} Earl of Rosslyn, married in 1905, were divorced in 1907. After Lord Churchill died in 1895, Jennie Jerome remarried in 1900 to George Cornwallis-West, but divorced him 13 years later for Montagu Porch (who was younger than her son Winston). In an interesting case, Ethel Tucker and the

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid., 311.
\textsuperscript{90} McKibbin, \textit{Classes And Cultures: England 1918-1951}: 303.
\textsuperscript{91} They divorced in 1920 and had the marriage annulled (as Vanderbilt was marrying a Catholic man and Marlborough wanted to convert to Catholicism) in 1926 on the grounds that Consuelo had been forced into the marriage against her will by her mother.
Honorable Archibald Lindesay-Bethune (later 13th Earl of Lindsay) married in 1900, divorced in 1906, and remarried each other in 1921 and moved to Boston. Mildred Carter obtained a divorce from her husband, the Earl of Gosford, on the grounds of adultery and desertion in 1928: he had left for China for four months and, three years later, had still not returned. Helena Zimmerman and the 9th Duke of Manchester married in 1900 and divorced in 1931.92 All of these examples come from high-profile marriages that took place between 1889 and 1900; for such a short time span this is a remarkable amount of divorces.93

A 1909 article, “How Titled Foreigners Catch American Heiresses” warned American women against the scheming and cruelty of heiress-hunting Europeans. It included a table of “Forty Conspicuous Examples of International Marriages,” in which were included the above-mentioned May Cuyler and Sir Phillip Grey-Egerton (“Left her to shoot tigers in India; deceived her; divorced”), Caroline Fitzgerald and Lord Fitzmaurice (“Shut her up in gloomy house, divorced”), Anna Robinson and the Earl of Rosslyn (“Gambled away her money at racetracks; divorced”), and Sarah Stokes and Baron Balkett (“Kicked her repeatedly; deceived her; divorced”). Also mentioned are Lillian May and Lord Bagot (“Stopped her from taking her child to church; separated), Consuelo Yznaga and the Duke of Manchester (“Deserted her for a music-hall performer”), May Travers and Lord Wentworth (“Brought prize fighters home to dinner; divorced”), and Justine Dixon and Sir Spencer Headley (“Drank

93 A worthwhile topic for further study would be to analyze the divorce rate during different periods or decades of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon. Perhaps the marriages between 1890 and 1900 were more likely to end in divorce than earlier or later marriages – why would that have been the case? A statistical analysis of transatlantic marriage divorces compared with divorce laws and general rates of divorce in the two countries would shed interesting new light on the nature of these unions.
himself into insanity; divorced”) among others. In light of such lists as these it is not surprising that one of the direct impacts American women were accused of having on the English upper class was popularizing divorce (which was much more frowned upon than extramarital affairs).

Though she spoke the same language as her new countrymen and typically came from an upper class background, the transatlantic wife faced major cultural differences when she moved to England. She changed some of these practices, but others changed her. Her personal struggles aside, the transatlantic wife was the foot soldier of the Americanization of England and one of the first to experience the early effects of “globalization” in trying to live in one country with another culture’s heritage. Sometimes the two complemented each other and sometimes they clashed until one way ultimately triumphed.

**Expressions of Nationality**

For those women who were able to weather the transition to England, what did they have to say about their national identities? Who had they become? One historian has argued that “the possibility of influence might be conditioned by the success of such marriages, yet success often depended upon the abnegation of

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American ways.\textsuperscript{95} An anonymous observer wrote in 1905 that “The American may become French, Italian, and even German, but she seldom, if ever, becomes English. Hence she is in society, but not of it.”\textsuperscript{96}

But what did the women themselves think about their national identity/identities? Most of the transatlantic brides lived their entire lives in England, and many chose to be buried there, though as we have seen significant cultural differences affected their lives and they were rarely allowed to forget whence they had come. Where did they stand? Did they adopt their new culture and grow to identify with it?

A Proposed Pattern

It is this author’s opinion that, although there are exceptions, the earlier transatlantic wives were more unhappy and held on to their American identities more strongly, or simply did not acquire an English cultural identity with ease; and that later transatlantic wives were more eager to blend in to English society.

To illustrate this hypothesis let us look at some transatlantic wives from the first half of the phenomenon and how they experienced their national identities. When Jennie Jerome, the first transatlantic bride, first laid eyes on Blenheim, the magnificent Churchill family estate, in May of 1874, she was bowled over, but “my American pride forbade the admission, and I tried to conceal my feelings.”\textsuperscript{97} She once

\textsuperscript{97} Mrs. George Cornwallis-West, \textit{The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill} (London: Edward Arnold, Publisher to the India Office, 1908), 57.
wrote that “A girl, born and bred in the backwoods of some Western State, will adopt the manners and customs of her husband’s country to such an extent that, after a few years, she might pass as of his nationality.”\textsuperscript{98} “Pass,” not “begin to feel.” Though a historian described her, “like so many of her American compatriots” as caring about “preserv[ing] the Best of British cultural history” more than most English,\textsuperscript{99} her American pride must have been very strongly expressed in her home, because her son Winston Churchill declared “I am a child of both worlds” in one letter home to his family while visiting America.\textsuperscript{100} She always considered herself an American woman.

Consuelo Vanderbilt, also an early bride, resolutely held onto her American identity. Upon her first visit back to the United States in 1902, the New York Times reported that “her seven years as one of the leaders of the British aristocracy has in no way changed her American spirit.”\textsuperscript{101} (However, “Her week-end parties, which [were] never wholly American and never wholly English, but a blending of the two, rank[ed]…among the best attractions of the London season,” wrote one anonymous observer.\textsuperscript{102}) Vanderbilt criticized Mary Leiter, American wife of Viceroy of India George Curzon, as having “shed her American characteristics more completely than I was to find myself able to do. Wholly absorbed in her husband’s career she had subordinated her personality to his to a degree I would have considered beyond an

\textsuperscript{98} MacColl, \textit{To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started}: 201.
American woman’s powers of self-abnegation.”

She thought the same of May Goelet, 8th Duchess of Roxburghe, one of the few happily married transatlantic brides.

As has been shown previously, throughout her memoir Vanderbilt made it clear that she never lost her Yankee spirit, and disapproved of such a system that privileged some members of society and punished others based strictly on birth. And yet, remembering the 1902 coronation of King Edward VII (in which she had the privilege of being one of four women to carry Queen Alexandra’s canopy) and of watching the great majesty of the royal procession, she wrote “I felt a lump in my throat and realized that I was more British than I knew.” Yet as she described the reaction to the King being crowned and how significant a moment it was, she conceded “but then I was not English and could not feel the same pride in the tradition of unbroken lineage the act of crowning symbolized.”

Though she became very involved in English social reform, as shall be shown in detail later, Consuelo Vanderbilt remained self-consciously American her entire life.

The suffering of some of the poorly-transitioned early American wives is obvious by their strange behaviors. Ethel Field, an American divorcée and wife of Lord Beatty (married 1901), was subject to periods of deep depression during which she would go without eating or sleeping. (Their eldest son would later follow in his father’s footsteps and marry an American woman. Actually he would marry three

different American women.) In the first decade of the 20th century both Florence Breckinridge – wife of the eventual 1st Baron Hesketh – and Alberta Sturges – wife of the 9th Earl of Sandwich – retired to their respective beds rather than attempt to integrate into English society, for fourteen years in Sturges’s case. She had a nurse stand outside her door and sit at her seat at the table during family meals.107 Florence Garner, married in 1891 and unhappy with her husband William Gordon-Cumming’s affairs, became religious and very fat and withdrew from society.108 Mildred Sherman similarly withdrew from the world and stayed in her home, Stonor, seat of the 5th Baron Comoys (whom she married in 1911), where she complained that the trains five miles away at Henley kept her from sleeping. Never formally presented at the English court, she stayed in even though she hated the cold of the English country house. Indeed she was not a hardy woman to begin with: she had grown up so pampered that during her honeymoon, leaning over to undo her shoes on her own caused her to faint.109 The trope of the unhappy American wife in England became familiar enough that the Tatler, commenting on Elena Grace, (Lady Donoughmore, married in 1901) wrote that “unlike most smart Americans, [she possesses] fine health and high spirits.”110

At the end of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon, by contrast, no known examples of bedridden homesickness or other total rejections of English life appear, but instead the historical record is filled with such characters as Emerald Cunard, Laura Corrigan, Mrs. Ronnie Greville, and Chips Channon who adored English

108 Ibid., 243.
109 Ibid., 349.
110 Quoted in ibid., 245.
society and appear to have successfully enmeshed themselves in its workings. In his book about the history of Americans in England, Richard Kenin profiled several of these individuals in a chapter that he fittingly titled “The Assimilated.”

Maud Burke married Sir Bache Cunard in 1895. She hated her name (and the fact that there was no “e” at the end of it) and changed it herself “Emerald,” much more appropriate for her personality. She lived with Cunard in the countryside and gave birth to a daughter, Nancy Cunard, famous in her own right for being an avant-garde social and political activist of the 1920s and 1930s. Emerald went to live in London (sans husband) where she became a successful and unusual hostess: she loved to be shocking, and would present some new outrageous comment whenever she thought conversation had become dull around her dinner table, and watch it rebound off of her guests. In his book on London hostesses, historian Brian Masters profiled Emerald Cunard with obvious admiration, and in terms of her national leanings wrote “She was quite happy to forget [her Americanness] herself, as she tended to bemoan the lack of culture among Americans and to regret their want of humor.” She did not often speak of her life before England, and was once embarrassed and irritated when a friend had to explain to a confused group that by “faucet,” Emerald had meant “tap.” She was not one to expound on her American origins and instead identified deeply with the cultural elite of England.

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112 From her marriage date then, she was an “early bridge,” but she came into her own in the later period of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon and was most active in later years; she belongs in this second group.
Henry “Chips” Channon was an American socialite, diarist, and as of 1935 a Member of Parliament. Although he does not fit the same pattern as most of the other spouses in that he was not a woman sought out for a dowry, we can consider him an addition to the group as a transatlantic husband; he was an American who married into a prestigious English family and was active in London during the transatlantic marriage phenomenon – indeed he knew and was friendly with many of the transatlantic wives. His wife was Honor Guinness, the daughter of the 2nd Earl of Iveagh. England became Chips’s “spiritual home,” and he has been described as “the male Emerald Cunard,”¹¹⁴ with whom he was great friends. He was born in Chicago in 1897 and moved to England at the close of 1918. (“Chips” was his European nickname – he only went by “Henry” in the States.¹¹⁵) He was educated at Oxford, after which he moved to London. He married Guinness in 1933 and was knighted in 1968 (and therefore made, delightfully, “Sir Chips”), a year before his death. A snob and a busybody, Chips left many charming impressions and vignettes from London society from the 1920s through to the early 1950s in his diaries. He adored England and associated himself with it completely. He once derided the art historian Kenneth Clark as being less than high society, to which Emerald Cunard scolded “You are as much an upstart as Kenneth Clark, and so am I. We are both from across the Atlantic.”¹¹⁶ His reaction to this remark is unrecorded, but it was not likely a pleased one.

¹¹⁴ Kenin, Return to Albion: Americans in England 1760-1940: 215, 05.
¹¹⁶ Quoted in Masters, Great Hostesses: 111-12.
Wallis Simpson (wed in 1937) and Laura Corrigan, (married to an American husband but arrived in London in 1921 and lived there mostly without him) remained very American but perhaps not in as deliberate a way as those mentioned above. They fit into my proposed pattern however because they both were active in London society in the second half of the period, were thrilled to be living in London and rubbing elbows with the rich and famous, and worked hard to fit into the workings of high society. Corrigan was an eager hostess during the same era as Emerald Cunard, but in descriptions of the two of them (who did not get along), Corrigan comes off as naïve and unaware of her own lack of finesse. When staying at an aristocratic country estate, she would pipe up and ask the hosts what to do next.\(^{117}\) Though highly inappropriate in English culture, Corrigan would slip children money, merely trying to be generous and kind, oblivious to the cultural belief that for a child to appear rich was tawdry, even if he was the heir to a dukedom. A famous mishap showcasing her misunderstanding of this principle of “the relative difference between American wealth and European impoverishment” occurred when Corrigan sent a Hesse princess hundreds of pink filmy undergarments as a wedding gift. She never found out, but the princess and her sisters snipped and sewed the garments into the wedding gown.\(^{118}\) She stuck out like a sore thumb, but she \textit{wanted} to fit seamlessly into English high society and felt like she belonged there.

Wallis Simpson, source of the Constitutional Crisis of 1936, regardless of her own personal affiliations and loyalties, was branded so strongly as an American by her contemporaries and the press that it is very difficult to consider her as feeling

\(^{117}\) Ibid., 231.
\(^{118}\) Ibid., 231-32.
English, but she still fits into my proposed theory. During the crisis, Emerald and Chips and a number of other Americans in London were firmly on Wallis’s side, though American wife and Member of Parliament Nancy Astor notably was not.\(^\text{119}\)

Wallis’s American identity played a huge role in her relationship with the Prince: at her first ever meeting with the Prince and his brother Albert, who would succeed David as King once he abdicated, “they talked to us [Wallis and Mr. Simpson] about life [in America], and the Prince of Wales in particular expressed his admiration for Americans and the American outlook.”\(^\text{120}\) In her account of their courtship in her memoir, she pondered that perhaps it was her “American independence of spirit, my directness, what I would like to think is a sense of humor and of fun, and, well, my breezy curiosity about him and everything concerning him…that had first astonished, then amazed, and finally amused him.”\(^\text{121}\) As her sway over the Prince became more publicly known, she found herself (and her husband, Ernest) being invited out more, as hosts hoped to be able to welcome the Prince into their homes by extension, and she did not refrain from mentioning the peculiarity of the fact that she was an American and in this position of power between the English Prince and his subjects in her memoir.\(^\text{122}\) It reads very tongue-in-cheek however, and it is a safe assumption that she reveled in this position of influence and superiority. In 1935 Chips wrote in his diary that “she has already the air of a personage who walks into a room as though

\(^{119}\) In the House of Commons in December of 1936, Nancy Astor shouted out to Chips that “People who have been licking Mrs Simpson’s boots ought to be shot.” Channon, Chips: The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon: 99.

\(^{120}\) Windsor, The Heart Has Its Reasons: 158.

\(^{121}\) Like Price Collier, who theorized that the women’s “Americanness” helped them charm society. Ibid., 191-92.

\(^{122}\) Ibid., 205.
she almost expected to be curtsied to. At least, she wouldn’t be too surprised.”¹²³ A month later he commented that the Prince’s voice was sounding more and more American (but that overall this was an improvement over the German-tinge of the rest of the Royal Family.¹²⁴) Indeed, most if not all descriptions of the Prince described him as “Americanized.” At an elegant dinner (while her divorce with Ernest was proceeding) Wallis met Viscount Temple-Wood, who afterwards wrote in his diary – and then published in a memoir – that he had found her “very attractive and intelligent, very American and with little or no knowledge of English life.” In reaction to this in her own memoir, Wallis admitted “the compliment aside, it was an acute observation.”¹²⁵ Although she comes off as fulfilling every American stereotype, Chips recorded a conversation that they had at a dinner party in which they discussed “how much we both disliked Americans. She has never liked them, and has always felt herself alien to them. ‘They have no air’, she said, and she likes air. I asked her if the Americans ran after her now, and she smiled a little.”¹²⁶ We can, then, fit her into the pattern of later brides being far less miserable, and more willing to fit themselves into the workings of English society.

Nancy Astor, great foe of Wallis, is an interesting case in the consideration of national identity in that she was resolutely Virginian as opposed to simply “American,” but was also fiercely proud of her connection to Plymouth, the area she represented in the House of Commons, and was involved with the politics of English social reform to such an extent that it seems unfair to label her as not English. She

¹²⁴ Ibid., 34-35.
¹²⁶ Channon, Chips: The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon: 85-86.
made remarks conflating the principles of the English and Virginian aristocracies. For example, she explained that she and her English peer husband entertained – a sacred tradition and practically a requirement in the English aristocracy – because of her own heritage, not because of English custom. “Of course we entertain a great deal. Remember, I am a Virginian. My father entertained, and his father before him. We carry out Saint Paul’s instructions. We Virginians show hospitality no matter where we be.”\textsuperscript{127} She once wrote that England “always gave me a peculiar feeling of having come home, rather than of visiting a strange land.”\textsuperscript{128} Was she one of them? Yes. But did she feel like an Englishwoman? Well – nothing could override her Virginian pride. A fascinating woman, Nancy Astor will be further discussed in ensuing chapters.

From these biographical samplings we can observe a change over the course of the period of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon; earlier wives were more likely to suffer through a difficult cultural transition and reject the idea of taking on an English nationality, while more of the later wives relished English high society and worked to be a part of it.

\textit{Accents}

Looking past historical patterns, perhaps the clearest and most basic way to identify an American, even today, is by his/her accent. One anonymous writer chose

\textsuperscript{128} Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1 As885:1, 66; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor’s Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.) Quoted by Cooper, "Informal Ambassadors: American Women, Transatlantic Marriages, and Anglo-American Relations, 1865-1945," 178.
these words to describe Jennie Jerome (as Lady Cornwallis-West): “She speaks decisively – with an American intonation – and seems always to see her way clear ahead…Warmth and force seem to be about equally mingled in the temperament of this talented daughter of the Empire State.”

Oscar Wilde wrote in 1887 that the voices of American women were “harsh and strident” when they first arrived in England, but that they quickly realized this and tried to change it.

Some of them have been known to acquire a fashionable drawl in two seasons; and after they have been presented to Royalty they all roll their R’s as vigorously as a young equerry or an old lady-in-waiting. Still, they never really lose their accent; it keeps peeping out here and there, and when they chatter together they are like a bevy of peacocks. Nothing is more amusing than to watch two American girls greeting each other in a drawing room or in the Row. They are like children with their shrill staccato cries of wonder, their odd little exclamations. Their conversation sounds like a series of exploding crackers; they are exquisitely incoherent and use a sort of primitive, emotional language. After five minutes they are left beautifully breathless and look at each other half in amusement and half in affection.

The preservation or loss of her accent was one important way that American women could navigate their combined American-English identities. When Consuelo Vanderbilt stepped off the train and saw all of the Duke of Marlborough’s family, she immediately noticed that “They all talked at once in soft voices and strange accents which I knew I should have to imitate, and I felt thankful that I had no nasal twang.”

On the other side of this coin, another American in the Marlborough family, the transatlantic wife pioneer Jennie Jerome, consciously preserved her American accent her whole life.

130 Wilde, "The American Invasion."
From all the information here presented, it should be clear that, as a group, the women of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon were not resolutely American or English. Individuals had different experiences and reacted to their new country and surroundings in different ways, from refusing to get out of bed to becoming an intimate of the ruling monarch. They used their American identities and accents alternately to propel themselves upwards in the hierarchy of society and to consciously keep themselves separate from it. A loose pattern emerges suggesting that later American wives had easier transitions and were more invested in blending in with English society than their earlier compatriots, which in turn suggests a changing attitude within the English aristocracy over the course of the period progressing from more closed to more open to outsiders and newcomers.

**Class Identities: In But Not Of**

“[American women] hold perhaps the cheapest social idea of any great people of whom we have any record, for it aims at nothing higher than 'having a good time.' Moved by it, women strive only to outdo one another in dress, inventiveness and display, and in the race the true spirit of hospitality is lost.”
- “Colonial”¹³³

Feeling English was not necessarily the same thing as feeling entitled to aristocratic treatment. Different transatlantic brides possessed different combinations of these sentiments. In this section I shall address the class identities of these women, which appear to have superseded their national identities, and how they merged or clashed with the English nobility.

While these American women were not born into *noble* families, almost all of them came from a privileged background. Although not nearly to the extent of the same traditions in the English service system, they would have been used to having help around the house, being driven about in carriages, and being surrounded by luxury. What changed, as has been shown, were the responsibilities, expectations, and social rules associated with their new English positions. We can see from diaries and memoirs that often these American women felt both part of the aristocratic system yet apart *from* it.

A glance at American wives’ reactions to the English servants gives a snapshot of those feelings. Mary Leiter, who married Englishman George Curzon in 1895, soon-to-be Viceroy of India, wrote to her mother shortly after moving to England that “English servants are *fiends*. They seem to plot among themselves. They are malignant and stupid and make life barely worth living, and I should like to hang a few and burn the rest at the stake.”\(^{134}\) At the other end of the spectrum, the American wife and hostess Emerald Cunard “offended her husband by her rejection of stuffy formality, by her habit, for example, of giving orders to the footmen herself, instead of transmitting them through the butler.”\(^{135}\) Similarly, the American 8\(^{th}\) Duchess of Marlborough, Lily Hammersley, was appalled when her husband “ignored servants in a room as if they were merely furniture,” and pitied them their hard work and uncomfortable living conditions.\(^{136}\) Some felt completely entitled to being waited on hand and foot and it made others distinctly uncomfortable.

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\(^{135}\) Masters, *Great Hostesses*: 115.
\(^{136}\) Fowler, *In A Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess*: 103.
In 1939, Viscountess Nancy Astor (the proud Virginian; also the first female Member of Parliament) wrote a piece for the *Saturday Evening Post* that showed an interesting mix of being aristocratic and yet not an aristocrat. Making clear her high social position, she breezily wrote “Of course, I don’t mind anybody knowing about my home life. Heaven knows, it’s public enough. That’s one of the penalties of public life. Your private life is also public. But mine is a mixture. My public life is really very homelike and my private life is really very publiclike.”

Lady Astor’s lifetime was in itself a meditation on this notion of being in, but not of, the aristocracy. Lady Astor first gained her seat in the House of Commons by taking her husband’s place once his father died. By law, Lord Astor was required to take up his father’s seat in the House of Lords, but he was not interested. “He moved heaven and earth to try to get out of becoming a viscount and continue his work in the Commons. He even drafted and brought in a bill to enable the eldest sons of peers to escape succeeding their fathers if they wanted to. He was a sad man when he failed to get it passed into law,” Nancy Astor wrote. His legal obligation to fill the seat however, left his seat in the House of Commons empty, which Lady Astor decided to fill herself.

Astor understood the magnitude of the significance of being the first woman MP, and entered into her political career with her head held high and without fear of calling out well-established politicians when she disagreed with their views. She and Winston Churchill were energetic antagonists. At one dinner party Astor burst out at

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137 Astor, "Lady Astor Interviews Herself," 5-6.
138 Interestingly, his father, the first Lord Astor (William Waldorf) was also an American, and the first one ever to be made a peer. Arriving in England in 1893 and gaining citizenship by 1899, he bought his title, given to him in 1916, through repeated philanthropic gestures and by acquiring social and political clout through buying up London newspapers. He was once burned in effigy as “the most hated American living.” Kenin, *Return to Albion: Americans in England 1760-1940*: 200.
139 Astor, "Lady Astor Interviews Herself,” 6.
Churchill “If I were your wife I would put poison in your coffee!” To which Churchill replied “And if I were your husband I would drink it.”

Astor was once described as being “far more pleased to banter with George Bernard Shaw and Ramsay MacDonald than to discuss needlepoint or fashion with Lady X, Y, or Z.” “Sometimes…[she] pushed back her tiara as if it were an old hat or fanned herself with a dinner plate;” she was not an heiress and did not consider herself as part of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon – in fact she often spoke less than favorably about titled American women. In the historical record she is called both “a snob,” and “undignified.” She was both, and her arrogance and crassness alike stemmed from her Virginian roots rather than her English nobility. She was an aristocrat but did not consistently act aristocratically.

When George Curzon, husband of the above mentioned Mary Leiter Curzon (the servant-burner) was made Viceroy of India, Leiter was – though proud and deeply in love with her husband – less than thrilled at the implications of the massive promotion. “The lot of a Viceroy is one of absolute aloofness and everyone is in mortal funk of the august being. Being a Yankee I can’t understand it but I manage to assume the necessary amount of awful respect for His X when we appear in public,” she wrote.

142 Cooper, “Informal Ambassadors,” 188.
She grew weary of statesmanship in India, acknowledging that it was not in her blood. ‘It’s all very well for ‘royalty,’ they’re born to it. They’ve been brought up to stand for hours and to walk for miles round exhibitions.’ Here, then, is another woman whose true feelings on nobility are hard to pin down. Though thoroughly upper-class in upbringing, she felt uncomfortable with her status once she became one of the most powerful women in the entire British Empire; she was in but not completely of the aristocracy, though she had high standards and expectations. Leiter died on July 18th, 1906, and an obituary penned by Lady Henry Somerset touched subtly on this inner confliction: “The untimely death of Lady Curzon was universally mourned. While she was not so much in the public eye personally as some others of the American peeresses, none of her countrywomen had made a more solid place for herself in the very best of British society…”

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145 Ibid.
Consuelo Vanderbilt also lived a life of wavering aristocratic principles as the Duchess of Marlborough. Raised in the lap of luxury by a mother who always planned for her to marry into European nobility, she remarked on having “suffered indignities” when celebrating crowds pushed feathers through her carriage windows in 1900. But, while waiting for an older woman to make her way through a doorway she was once elbowed by a seriously irritated marchioness for ignoring her own rank. The marchioness “loudly claimed that I was just as vulgar to hang back as to leave before one’s turn.” When she attended Queen Victoria’s funeral, she admired the resplendent and dignified gathering of aristocrats as the finest of any country, but then spoke of the “pomp and circumstance” of the Victorian era as “tedious… The realities of life seemed far removed from the palatial splendor in which we moved and it was becoming excessively boring to walk on an endlessly spread red carpet.” Reflecting generally on the aristocratic tradition, she wrote “The accident of one’s birth has always appeared to me no adequate reason for personal pride…the achievements of others lend one no special glory.” After separating from her husband in 1906, the Duchess became increasingly involved in social and political work. She helped to found a Women’s Municipal Party that worked to get women involved in city politics. When in 1917 her Committee pushed her to fill a position on the London County Council Consuelo felt “dismayed, for politics held no attraction for me and my private work absorbed all my energies;

148 Ibid., 105.
149 Ibid., 135, 51-52.
150 Ibid., 139.
nevertheless, noblesse oblige, I accepted.” More than anyone else, Consuelo Vanderbilt truly was a republican aristocrat.

The transatlantic wives demonstrably did feel that they were entitled to high class treatment, but many of them wearied of the expectations and rituals that accompanied it in English tradition.

**American Solidarity (or Lack Thereof)**

With so many Americans in London, one wonders about the existence of an American expatriate community. Was the American woman able to find solace in a shared experiential and cultural heritage with a group of other transatlantic brides? From their memoirs and other sources it appears that there were individual friends and alliances; apparently Jennie Jerome, as Lady Randolph Churchill, spent so much time with two other Americans, “Mrs Standish and Mrs Sandys, that the trio were dubbed by the press ‘The Pink, the White and the Black Pearls.’” Altogether though, it seems that American aristocratic women only grouped themselves as a defined, exclusive body for two main reasons. American women came together to work on war relief efforts, and American women already established in England took on new arrivals and helped, often for a fee, to set them off in the “right” society.

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151 Ibid., 226-27.  
War efforts of American women will be more thoroughly discussed in Chapter Four. Regarding the business of introductions conducted by established American women, running such schemes not only trumpeted the established American’s social success, but allowed her some financial independence. While their dowries went to their husbands, after 1870’s Married Women’s Property Act, married women were allowed to keep any money that they earned for themselves.\textsuperscript{153} Consuelo Yznaga (Viscountess Mandeville and eventually Duchess of Manchester, married 1876) and Minnie Stevens (Mrs. Arthur Paget, married 1878) led the way, though Cornelia Wadsworth (Mrs. John Adair, married 1869) and Elizabeth Livingston (Mrs. Cavendish-Bentinck, married 1880) were also known to perform such functions.\textsuperscript{154} Yznaga would teach the newly-arrived Americans English social graces such as curtseying, and would arrange for their presentations at Court and introductions to the Prince (which, as has been shown, was the touchstone to social success), and even help to find them husbands.\textsuperscript{155} It was Minnie Paget who first evaluated Consuelo Vanderbilt when she arrived in London. Vanderbilt remembered “being critically appraised by a pair of hard green eyes… ‘If I am to bring her out,’ [Paget] told my mother, ‘she must be able to compete at least as far as clothes are concerned with far better-looking girls.’”\textsuperscript{156}

Such a harsh comment is an example of the ruthlessness displayed by many American women attempting to be accepted by high society, and particularly by already established Americans towards American women who were new to the

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{153} Fowler, \textit{In A Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess}: 40. \\
\textsuperscript{154} MacColl, \textit{To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started}: 341, 51. \\
\textsuperscript{155} Fowler, \textit{In A Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess}: 39-40. \\
\textsuperscript{156} Balson, \textit{The Glitter and the Gold}: 38.
\end{flushright}
London scene. A 1905 article from *Harper’s Bazaar* explained that “As a rule, one does not take too literally what one member of the American colony in London says of another member,” because of the “extremes of personal rivalry and jealousy and partisanship.” In fact, the author deemed the American colony to be “the storm centre of London society,” and the women’s “battles…against the admission of new competitors” to be the source for “some of the most thrilling gossip.” A new American woman trying to make her way in had to “be trebly armed in indifference to the inspired scandal and abuse that will instantly centre on her, and must be prepared, even under the happiest circumstances, for a good many seasons of relentless opposition.”

Even Consuelo Yznaga, described above as a great giver of introductions, was portrayed in a 1907 article in the *New York Times* about “The American Woman’s Influence in England” as being less than helpful to newcomers:

> If it is asked whether the Dowager Duchess of Manchester is of great assistance to other American women in the social aspirations in England, it may be answered shortly that she is not…If through her the King wishes to convey any condescension to some other American, then it is her bounden duty to do what she can to make a meeting easy and agreeable, but as for her lending a helping hand to the thousand and one ‘Climbers’ that bob up in London now and again, it is not in her and would be quite derogatory to her own exalted position to think of it.

Not only, then, did the American woman have to battle the prejudices of the English, but also the jealousies of her compatriots.

In her book *Titled Americans*, Elisabeth Kehoe wrote that Jennie Jerome “became the leader of the smart Anglo-American set,” but I have seen no discussion

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157 “Anglo-American”, "American Women in English Society: I - The Duchess of Marlborough (Nee Vanderbilt)."

in contemporary coverage of the American women in London moving as a self-conscious group, despite the existence of many Anglo-American organizations in London. Indeed “By 1936 there were nineteen American clubs and organizations, mostly in London.”  

The Anglo-American League was formed on July 13, 1898 and reportedly had over 500 members, but had ceased to function actively by 1900. Anglo-American groups “relied heavily upon racial mottoes and linguistic unity” reflecting the late nineteenth century’s fascination with classification and race theory – there was much discussion of the “English Speaking Race” and the commonalities of its peoples as a basis for international alliances and cross-cultural understanding. Such arguments were employed as late as 1914; in the preface to a book on Anglo-American relations celebrating 100 years of peace between the two nations the American author praised and credited the “temper and self-restraint of the English-speaking peoples.”  

A group called The Society of American Women in London also existed at this time. The society was formed in 1898 and worked on “Anglo-American scholarship schemes and women’s newspapers.” It exists today as the American Women’s Club of London. Their website says that “The purpose of the American Women’s Club of London is to provide social, cultural, educational and philanthropic activities for our members living in London.” They did not respond to my request.

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for information regarding their early membership, but an ad for the society in a 1916 publication listed Consuelo Vanderbilt as the chairman of the Philanthropic Committee. At that time other important positions in the Society were held by the wives of the American Ambassador, Consul-General, Secretary of the Embassy, and Naval and Military Attaches; women with influential but American and un-titled husbands. Whether or not any of the transatlantic wives (besides Vanderbilt) were active members is unknown, but “there has always been a tendency for American wives of foreign husbands to shy away from such organizations,” mused one American historian.

In the first years of the twentieth century, a directory of Americans and American businesses in London was published (edited by W.B. Bancroft, author of the above negative New York Times article about Consuelo Yznaga) as a “handbook” for Americans travelling to or living in London. It contained the addresses for offices of American newspapers (23) and magazines (14), the names and addresses of American residents (titled Americans, of whom Bancroft named 85, were listed separately,) and even where to go to get American oysters (Farren & Carter on Lower Thames Street). A short essay in the Directory entitled “American Business Enterprise in Great Britain” ruminated on the American “industrial supremacy” and its gradual but undeniable “invasion,” so that “the Englishman looks around him…[and] finds in his midst a host of representatives of American trade with whom he will have to reckon in the future.” Bancroft (the assumed author) proclaimed

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confidently that “the stream of the American invasion of England will increase rather than diminish in the early years of this twentieth century.” He was right. Indeed in a similar publication 14 years later, The Anglo-American Year Book listed almost 30 single-spaced pages of American businesses in London, 130 “Americans with British Titles” (all women) and also included a list of “Distinguished Englishmen with American Wives” (75 of them). The presence of such a list in this later directory is a clear reflection of the encroaching of the plutocrat/businessman into the English upper class and the important role of the American wife in that movement, as well as an even larger American cultural presence.

It is obvious from these directories and from the existence of Anglo-American societies that an American colony did exist in London at the turn of the century. It is unclear how active titled Americans were in this colony, and as has been shown it is likely that such a group was only amiable on the surface, covering up fierce competition below.

Conclusion

When writing history it is necessary to generalize, but it must be done carefully and with a grain of salt. I have here argued that earlier American wives had a harder time adjusting to England and were more likely to resolutely hold onto their

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167 The Anglo-American Year Book.
168 This 1916 year book also listed five upper class Anglo-American marriages for the spring and summer of that year: Frances Leggett and Mr. H David Margesson; Sylvia Wilder and Lieutenant Alvery Gascoigne; Katherine Henriette Seligman and Captain Geoffrey Fitzherbert de Tessier; Grace Pierce and Lord Torphichen; and Annabel Chapman and Captain Sir John Eardley Wilmot. Ibid., 48-49.
American identities. American brides in later decades lived in a world where women had more autonomy – the vote, increased property rights, divorce rights – and therefore more freedom of choice. Perhaps this is why the historical record reflects more Americans in London who felt less tied to their original American customs and culture (even if they sometimes acted otherwise); it had been more their choice to be there than it had been for the young women of the 1870s, ‘80s, and ‘90s, who, by both tradition and law, were much more under the control of their parents and their husbands.

We see in these women that it is possible to be both an aristocrat and a republican, to be both American and English (legally and emotionally), and to be both surrounded by luxury and endlessly bored. Many of the transatlantic wives were successful socialites, but they had conflicting affiliations. Through their experiences we see the struggle of democracy against aristocracy, the prejudices of the old world, the changing composition of the English upper class, the process of “Americanization” on an individual and societal level, and the movements of both the United States and Great Britain into the increasingly global “modern” era. By these examinations alone it is clear that these American wives were more complex individuals than the newspapers of the era painted them to be; such popular representations are the subject of the next chapter.
Chapter 3

Popular Opinion and Representation

“We have many opportunities of studying the American woman, for she has undertaken to annex as much of Europe as is practicable, and has succeeded very fairly...In any case, it is impossible for Europe to remain ignorant of her qualities, as impossible as to remain ignorant of her existence.”

- H.B. Marriot-Watson

Looking at the way the women of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon were represented by the press is another way to explore the three concerns of this thesis: the extended timeline of the phenomenon, the women’s lives as opposed to just their weddings, and the women’s stories as part of the aristocracy’s changing story. By examining public opinion and representation we can see patterns over time across the period of the phenomenon through which we can glimpse the kinds of attitudes that these women had to endure over the course of their lives. This serves as a measurement of the outlook of the aristocracy (as well as Americans), their acceptance of foreigners and the changing relationship between Great Britain and the United States.

The American Invasion

As has been well established in the two previous chapters, the influx of these American wives did not go unnoticed: Britons and Americans alike paid very close

attention to these newcomers. It is not just with the benefit of historical hindsight that we can classify these marriages as a phenomenon – it was realized and named as such as it was happening. Indeed, many living in England referred to it as “The American Invasion.” 170 In 1887 Oscar Wilde published an article by the same name in *Court and Society Review* in which he came out in favor, though rather patronizingly, of the American presence in London, saying that “…on the whole, the American invasion has done English society a great deal of good.” 171

The word “invasion,” does not have positive connotations though: an invader is the most unwanted of visitors to a society. In his 1901 book *The Americanization of the World*, the English writer William Stead wrote that “the presence of the American invaders in our midst is resented as if it were an outrage on international amity.” 172 In one of her novels, the American writer Edith Wharton imagined the English impression of the invasion by having one of her characters, an English aristocrat, contextualize the phenomenon it in this negative vein:

His mind rapidly reviewed the plunder, pillage, sack, and rapine of his native land throughout the course of history. First, the Romans had come, Then the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons. Then the Danes terrorized England for three centuries. Norman pirates took the country over in 1066. Five centuries later Turks raided the Thames and took prisoners to sell in the Libyan slave-market…But never had there been any phenomenon to match this, this …“invasion of England by American women…” 173

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170 This term referred to more than just the presence of the transatlantic wives, though it was often applied directly to them. It was also used in discussion of the material and industrial “Americanization” of Great Britain.
171 Wilde, “The American Invasion.”
In this chapter I will examine the reception and public portrayal of the transatlantic bride – most of it negative – on both sides of the Atlantic through the mediums of newspaper, journal, and magazine coverage as well as popular novels and plays.

**Representation in America**

From the very beginning of the phenomenon, a stereotype formed for the American heiress-wife. At first the stereotype was a largely positive one, though it demanded much from these young women: she was beautiful, intelligent, demure, sophisticated, sweet, and cultured. For example, an 1896 article in the American magazine *Godey’s Lady’s Book* that discussed the tendency for foreign diplomats in the United States to marry American women discussed the “type” that made for the successful wife:

> Her beauty has a clear-cut, refined style that has no counterpart anywhere else; her native grace of manner, added to piquancy and adaptiveness, renders her at ease in any situation in which she may find herself; and she readily picks up accomplishments, among which might be classed a facility for acquiring foreign languages. That breadth and finish of culture which comes through travel, which the European considers so essential to high breeding, the American girl absorbs and assimilates most readily.174

As time passed however, other descriptors crept into such passages – the young American aristocrat-to-be was title-hungry and selfish and, as shall be further discussed, a bad American.

Early Coverage

Early brides received enormous attention from the press. One reason for this was that it provided the country with a source of pride after the devastating Civil War; such unions testified to the fact that American society was functioning and that its citizens were worthy of international acceptance. Whole newspaper spreads were dedicated to the engagements and marriages, with lists of guests and gifts (diamonds, silver, rubies, turquoise, and gold) and speculations as to the inheritance. The bride was interviewed, her clothes were photographed, her “worth” splashed across headlines, and the groom’s family tree explained. After the ceremony took place, long columns in the newspapers would describe the flowers, the music, the clothes, and the famous guests in lavish, opulent terms.

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On the wedding day, huge crowds would throng outside the church, filling the streets of New York to bursting for a glimpse of the new American aristocrat and her dashing groom. In fact after Cornelia Martin’s April 18, 1893 New York City wedding to the fourth Earl of Craven, the wedding party and guests found themselves physically unable to leave the church after the ceremony because of the crowds pressed up against the doors.  

These great numbers of onlookers occasionally stole the show; the Goelet-Roxburghe wedding provides a good case study. The newspaper coverage of May

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177 Part of the Vanderbilt-Marlborough wedding spread. Ibid.
178 MacColl, To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started: 175.
Goelet’s November 10, 1903 wedding to the Duke of Roxburghe had more to say about the overwhelming crowds of people than on the couple themselves. “Fifth avenue [sic], in the vicinity of the church, was the scene before and during the ceremony of excitement and disorder unparalleled at any of the previous great weddings in New York,” wrote one paper.\textsuperscript{179} Driving up to St. Thomas’s Church, Goelet’s wedding carriage was so swarmed by onlookers “who did not hesitate to poke their heads into the open window of the vehicle” that the driver had to pull over short of the church while Goelet and her brother called for help from the police. Inside the church, gate-crashers were discovered in the galleries and escorted out before the ceremony.\textsuperscript{180} Other articles reported fifteen women who “crawled into a coal hole under [the] chancel to hear [the] words of [the] ceremony.”\textsuperscript{181}

The Goelet-Roxburghe engagement had been announced by the press with great fanfare. Goelet was described as having “a most aristocratic bearing,” and as having turned down the likes of the “Duke of Marlborough… Prince Henri of Orleans… the Russian Grand Duke Boris… Viscount Crichton, Prince Francis of Teck, [and] the Earl of Shaftesbury.”\textsuperscript{182} Newspapers in New York, Chicago, Washington, Connecticut, and as far away as Los Angeles covered the wedding. May Goelet was the last of six American women to become Duchesses during this time period, and was one of the few transatlantic brides to enjoy a happy marriage.

Up through the turn of the century American coverage of transatlantic marriages sang the praises of the young women who were able to charm and win such

\begin{footnotes}
\item[179] “Mob Around Bride,” \textit{The Washington Post} November 11, 1903.
\item[181] “Mob Around Bride.”
\end{footnotes}
prominent grooms. The American bride was also often praised for her “tact,” an adjective that ceased to be used in application to her character after the turn of the century, especially in England. There is obvious national pride in the introduction to an 1890 directory listing titled Americans: “…The American girl…[is] prettier than her English sister, full of dash, and snap, and go, sprightly, dazzling, and audacious,” sang Arthur Hartzell, the directory’s author. “…She is a revelation to the Englishman. She gives him more pleasure in one hour, at a dinner or a ball, than he thought the universe could produce in a whole life-time. Speedily he comes to the conclusion that he must marry her or die.”183 Women with such charm were women a nation could be proud of and be pleased to count as their representatives abroad. This warm reception did not last for long.

A Turn for the Worse

After the transatlantic marriage phenomenon began in the mid 1870s, it was not long until the American press turned from being dazzled by these women to being strongly critical of their actions. American brides were portrayed as guilty of betraying their country by turning their backs on democracy and taking American wealth overseas. This turn to strong criticism occurred in the late 1890s and the first few years of the twentieth century. I will explore these two veins of criticism presently, but first we should ponder the question as to why public opinion changed so radically. There are several probable factors that could have influenced this turn of opinion.

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The first factor is politics: relations with Great Britain were strained during this period and the two countries butted heads repeatedly. In the 1880s the nations quarreled over fish in the Atlantic and seals in the Pacific,\textsuperscript{184} they came close to war in the mid-1890s during the Venezuelan Boundary Dispute,\textsuperscript{185} they struggled for control of the Panama Canal from 1899-1901; and during an Alaskan-Canadian boundary dispute in 1901 Roosevelt sent 800 American cavalymen to the disputed border as a symbolic threat.\textsuperscript{186} Such repeated policy clashes did little to cultivate general fondness for Great Britain, and could likely have made the public less receptive to the idea of American elites becoming part of English families.

A second factor is financial: the collapse of the U.S. economy in 1893 understandably could have made the idea of American millions being shipped overseas unpalatable. And finally, and more basically, perhaps the novelty of the gaudy weddings simply wore off and Americans began to worry about implications of such unions when it became a significant amount of marriages and an oft-repeated pattern. Regardless of its motivation, the press did turn negative. Such negativity did little to discourage transatlantic marriages however, as the phenomenon continued for decades more.

A Betrayal of Republicanism

As mentioned above, one aspect of the negative press was that the patriotism of those involved began to be questioned. Now, a rich American girl marrying a

\textsuperscript{184} Dunning, The British Empire and the United States: A Review of Their Relations During the Century of Peace Following the Treaty of Ghent: 368.

\textsuperscript{185} The role of some of the transatlantic wives during this crisis and other effects on politics will be discussed in Chapter 4.

\textsuperscript{186} Burk, Old World, New World: Great Britain and America from the Beginning: Chapter 6.
member of the English upper class was betraying American republican morality.

“Upon the conscience of every man and every woman in this country is laid the weight of obligation to certify the success of our great experiment,” read the closing remarks of a historical introduction to an 1892 book celebrating American history and culture on behalf of the upcoming Columbian Exposition in Chicago. The authors (including James G. Blaine, the Secretary of State) continued: “Every woman who leaves the duty and decorum of her native land and prostitutes her American name to the scandals, the vices, the social immoralities and moral impurities of foreign cities not only compasses her own shame but mars the fair fame of the republic.”

Transatlantic brides were no longer celebrated with such a carefree attitude as before: implications and motivations of and for such unions were being considered and judged harshly.

A 1904 article printed in the Boston Post and picked up by The Woman’s Journal wrote ominously of the unhappiness facing heiresses who married for a title and not for love under the heading “A Warning to American Heiresses.” “Let us hope that the higher education for women may gradually wean the daughters of our millionaires from the worship of titles and aristocracy, and bring them to an intelligent appreciation of the nobility and value of American citizenship,” the author implored (emphasis mine). Though the American upper class as a whole consciously emulated the aristocratic lifestyle, it was increasingly unacceptable for rich American young women, the very products of successful American capitalism, to

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renounce republican ideals for aristocratic ones. In the eyes of many, that was something to ashamed of.

The Squandering of American Wealth

The second major critique of American heiresses marrying foreigners was based on money. These women were the daughters of successful American businessmen and products of a robust industrial American economy that then collapsed in 1893. That the fortunes of these families were being taken overseas and spent on the restoration of castles rather than feeding back into the American market became a real sore spot in the portrayal of transatlantic marriages. As described in the newspapers, it was not distaste for the plutocratic class in and of itself – though this was during a time when socialist and radical critiques of the wealthy was at high point in the United States – but rather a disgust for it leaving its own shores and entering a foreign economy.

The money involved in these marriages had always been a part of the news coverage of the engagements and marriages of these couples, and the often enormous wealth (or debt) of those involved was part of the fascination. In time the fascination turned to a grudge. An 1895 headline read “We Pay the Freight: Seven Titles Purchased at a Cost of Seventy-Five Millions.”189 In 1909 New York American published evidence for the folly of such matches through an inventory of “How American Incomes Are Being Spent in England.” Four American men were included, but there were 20 women. On this list were familiar names such as the Duchess of

Manchester (Consuelo Yznaga – spent $8 million “feeding the peasantry,”) the Duchess of Roxburghe (May Goelet – $20 million on “country house parties,”) the Duchess of Marlborough (Consuelo Vanderbilt – $15 million on “charities, public bazaars,”) the Honorable Mrs. Ward (Jean Reid, daughter of American ambassador to England Whitelaw Reid – $5 million on “pheasant shooting,”) the Countess of Granard (Beatrice Mills, daughter of the famous Ogden Mills – $6 million on “dinners and parties of all kinds,”) and the Countess of Craven (Cornelia Martin – $15 million on “shooting parties.”) Also listed were Americans Mrs. Arthur Paget, Lady Willoughby d’Eresby, Mrs. David Beatty, Lady Alistair Innes-Kerr, Lady Cheylesmore, the Viscountess Deerhurst, Lady Herbert, Lady Donoughmore, the Honorable Mrs. H. Coventry, the Honorable Mrs. F. Guest, the Honorable Mrs. A. Johnstone, and the Marchioness of Dufferin, between them spending another $45 million on frivolities.  

Mr. Frank Work, the unhappy father of transatlantic bride Frances, who married the Honorable James Boothby Burke-Roche (the eventual Third baron Fermoy) in 1880, combined these two forms of criticism – betrayal of republicanism and a loss of rightly American wealth and took his frustration to great lengths. When Work died in 1911, his obituary quoted an interview with him in which he had pronounced

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190 Clipping from the New York American, 1 October 1909, Whitelaw Reid Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, DC. Quoted by ibid., 77. This article is a good example of two important facts: first, that though some of the individuals from the transatlantic marriage phenomenon are better known to us now, others were indeed well-known at the time. Second, that even though the historical record is more reflective of certain individuals, those involved were often portrayed as a group.

191 They divorced in 1891.
It’s time this international marrying came to a stop for our American girls are ruining our own country by it. As fast as honorable, hard working men can earn this money their daughters take it and toss it across the ocean. And for what? For the purpose of a title and the privilege of paying the debts of so-called noblemen! If I had anything to say about it, I’d make an international marriage a hanging offense.\footnote{192}

Thankfully most Americans did not think such drastic measures were called for (although as previously mentioned there was an attempt to tax such unions and the President himself wished he could outlaw them), but there was a marked and dramatic change in the overall view of the American transatlantic bride: she was hurting her country morally and financially.

The Dangerous Aristocrat

A final trend that can be observed in public coverage of the transatlantic phenomenon was a fluctuating assignment of agency: on both sides of the Atlantic the American wife was intermittently portrayed as the hunter or the hunted. American girls were both title-mad, throwing themselves at any European aristocrat; and naïve innocents lured far from home under false pretenses, exploited for their inheritance. Sometimes the selfish American woman was blamed for her own unhappiness, and sometimes the English aristocrat was painted as the shallow villain, as in one frantic 1909 article in New York American headed “How Titled Foreigners Catch American Heiresses.” The spread was subtitled “Astonishing New Revelations of the Sordid Bargains, Heartless Schemes and Shameless Conspiracies Foreign Noblemen Have Employed to Win American Girls’ Fortunes.” In such cases the American bride was the trusting victim, swindled into a life of desertion and homesickness. The article

\footnote{192 Quoted by MacColl, To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started: 314.}
moaned “Will American girls ever be convinced of the folly of marrying foreign noblemen?” The long and heavily illustrated article was full of wretched biographies. “It is impossible to describe in detail all the cases of misery caused by marriages of this kind… they illustrate peculiarly the shameful rapacity of foreign noblemen, their disreputable habits and their utter lack of personal regard for their American wives.”193 When portrayed in this light it was the foreigner harming American citizens and values, not the American bride.

Representation of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon in the American press ran the gamut from high praise to low blows. The treatment of these marriages reflected public opinion on both domestic and international affairs, from the economy and the definition of patriotism to international policy.

**Representation in England**

*Stereotypes and Reception in England*

The stereotype of the American transatlantic bride in England was very similar to its American counterpart with a few key differences. In her book *Gilded Prostitution* Maureen Montgomery spent a lot of time working on this idea and on the psychology and power of stereotypes in general. She made the point that “Stereotyping usually involves people of a different nationality, social class, or

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193 “How Titled Foreigners Catch American Heiresses.”
gender, but the American heiress stereotype embraces all three” since she was an American, a plutocrat, and a woman.\textsuperscript{194}

Besides being extravagantly and lavishly dressed the stereotypical American arriviste as represented in England had an annoying accent, was very forward, and was by default assumed to be a New York heiress, even though plenty were neither from New York nor traditional heiresses. In Montgomery’s examination of the reception of the American bride in England, she observed that it worsened with time and that it “emphasized the detrimental effect they were having on the peerage. By the turn of the century conjecture and prejudice contributed to an image of the American woman as frivolous, vain, and calculating.” She pointed out that such harsh attitudes were most accepted and widespread at the peak of the phenomenon but that they existed right from the beginning in concern for the effect such women may have on the Prince.\textsuperscript{195}

This worsening reception of the American in London was very likely connected to the death of Edward VII in 1910. As has been shown, Edward was a great fan of the American arrivals and the “fast” society that they contributed to. His son and successor, George V, was not. “The American heiress wedded to British nobility is no longer to be received in favor at the Court of St. James’s,” smugly wrote a New York Times reporter in 1910, a month into George’s rule. The Times’ London correspondent had informed the New York office “that Sir John Lister-Kaye and Mr. Montagu Elliott have not been reappointed to their Court places because of

\textsuperscript{194} Montgomery, \textit{Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870-1914}: 248.
\textsuperscript{195} Ibid., 151, 78.
their marriage to American women.” The reporter said that this was to be seen “as a blessing in disguise,” as at this same time, as has just been shown, attitudes towards transatlantic marriages in the United States were also very sour. This new, unwelcoming attitude from the monarch “will be watched with interest,” mused the reporter. “If fewer American girls make English matches it will be good for this country, and good for the girls, too. They can do better at home.”

Again a mirror of how these women were represented in the States, the English press presented a varying power dynamic in who was pursuing whom. At the beginning of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon, the impoverished English aristocrat was clearly described as the “heiress hunter,” shamelessly pursing wealth. With the passage of time however it was the American women who were seen as pushing their way into high society and hunting aristocrats. “It was Americans who were accredited with the taint of commercialism and moral weakness, not the peers who allegedly sold their titles, or the peeresses who sold introductions,” Montgomery pointed out. Just as the Unites States newspapers first questioned the motives of the foreign men and then the morality of the American women, England over time gave the Americans more agency.

Besides the stereotypes of glamour, shallowness, and pushiness, Americans faced the broader typecasting of the American character. In her 1908 memoir Jennie Jerome, wife of Sir Randolph Churchill and mother of the future prime minister,
remembered facing broad prejudices and assumptions that all Americans were the same:

No distinction was ever made among Americans...all were grouped in the same category, all were considered tarred with the same brush. The innumerable caricatures supposed to represent the typical American girl depicted her always of one type: beautiful and refined in appearance, but dressed in exaggerated style, and speaking – with a nasal twang – the most impossible language. The young lady who, in refusing anything to eat, says ‘I’m pretty crowded just now,’ or in explaining why she is travelling alone, remarks that ‘Poppa don’t voyage, he’s too fleshy,’ was thought to be representative of the national type and manners. 198

Such characterizations and expectations put great pressure on Americans trying to make it in English society both as individuals and as a group. As I have mentioned before, this was the dawn of the “globalized” age, when members of different nations first began to come into contact with each other on a large scale. All that they had to work with at first were second-hand descriptions of national characteristics, and the early transatlantic wives paved the way for future Americans in England.

Man-Stealing

Beyond the unpleasant “Ugly American” stereotyping, English reception focused largely on the fact that American girls were snapping up all the eligible men, and had such resources that English girls could not compete with them. A resentful English mother, despairing over the 8th Duke of Marlborough’s marriage to American Lily Hammersley, called the American girls “sad poachers,” “forward hussies,” and

“the most formidable of competitors,” and noted that “There are two things I wish the Americans would keep to themselves: their girls and their tinned lobster.”  

An American publication that catalogued Americans of title – as well as eligible Europeans with titles to give – discussed this problem in its introduction. In response to “American girls carrying off all their matrimonial prizes,” English women “criticize our girls very sharply for thus invading their domain, and attribute their success entirely to their fortunes,” explained the author. He explained that an English girl, even if from a prosperous family, could never have the funds to offer that an American girl could because of the English systems of primogeniture and strict entailing of estates: the vast majority of the family’s inheritance and property went to the oldest son and heir. Thus rich American women had a bargaining chip that English girls, even if they were from prominent families, lacked.

While male members of the upper class were able to marry “down” and retain their social position, it did not work that way for English aristocratic daughters; if they married down, they sank to the social level of their husband. With money tight for many aristocratic families, English daughters began to receive smaller settlements from their families, making them less attractive to aristocratic sons who needed an income. “With a decent allowance, the daughter of a peer might well find the single life preferable to being married to someone so far beneath her, and indeed, by the turn

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200 Hartzell, Titled Americans: A List of American Ladies Who Have Married Foreigners of Rank: 256.
of the century, fully one-third of the daughters of peers were spinsters,"¹ wrote historian Kathleen Burk in her book about Anglo-American relations, meaning that a third of that generation of English aristocratic women did not reproduce. A recent dissertation by Kimberly Schutte that analyzed British aristocratic marriage patterns from the 15th through the 20th centuries repeated this idea, pointing out that “in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the rates of unmarried elite women equaled or outpaced the rate of hypogamy. It had become more acceptable for a woman not to marry at all than to marry a baronet.”² Unsurprisingly, Schutte discovered an increase in exogamous marriages by British women beginning in the 1880s, coinciding with the agricultural depression and the beginning of serious social and political changes for the aristocracy (see Chapter One). She did not claim outright that this increase was due to a lack of eligible men or the presence of foreign women, but did say that men, in reaction to the agricultural depression, began to marry “from a wider group of women” to help themselves financially.³ Though the increase in British aristocratic women’s exogamous marriages was significant during these decades (34.32% in the 1870s, 42.37% in the 1880s, 51.38% in the 1890s, 42.56% in the 1900s, 52.15% in the 1910s, 61.60% in the 1920s, and 65.24% in the 1930s),⁴ Schutte pointed out that British aristocratic men had significantly more exogamous marriages than women did⁵ (American women must be reflected in those numbers). Schutte never connected the dots, but American women snapping up so many

² Kimberly F. Schutte, "Marrying by the Numbers: Marriage Patterns of Aristocratic British Women, 1485-2000" (University of Kansas, 2011), 272.
³ Ibid., 49.
⁴ Ibid., 40, 46.
⁵ Ibid., 39.
aristocratic men *must* have been a significant factor for these changes. With fewer options, British aristocratic daughters had to choose between marrying down or remaining unmarried. Here then, is another direct way in which the presence of American wives seriously altered the composition, traditions and tendencies of the English upper class.

When Sir Louis Harcourt married American Mary Ethel Burns in 1899, the father of the groom, himself married to American Elizabeth Cabot Motley (1876) wrote to Joseph Chamberlain (husband of Mary Endicott of Massachusetts as of 1888) “We are all Americans now!” and The *Daily Chronicle* described Sir Louis’s bride as “one of the victorious army of Columbia’s daughters which seems to be threatening to carry off the flower of fashionable London’s eligible young men.”

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is no small wonder that English women of marrying age resented the presence of these new-money, democratically-raised American women as a serious threat.

Classless

It was not only that most of the American women arriving in London had vast sums of money; it was how they had gotten it and how they used it with which the English found fault. Americans were frequently portrayed as classless spendthrifts with garish taste. In 1896 an unnamed critic sent to Ladies’ Realm a list of titled women who were “true representatives and leaders of Society” as compared to “the wives of the **nouveaux riches**” and “Anglicized Americans who are always advertising themselves and their parties in the newspapers,” tasteless and indiscrete.\(^{208}\) Almost every article discussing the American invasion wrote about the flashy and expensive fashions sported by American women in London. In Chapter 4 I will show how American women often refurbished their new English houses in modern taste, sometimes to the chagrin of the rest of the English family.

Sir Randolph Churchill and Jennie Jerome got engaged after knowing each other for only three days, and both sets of parents required significant persuasion before they gave their consent. Randolph’s father, the 7\(^{th}\) Duke of Marlborough, made inquiries into Leonard Jerome, Jennie’s father. On receiving the report he wrote to his son, “from what you tell me and what I have heard, this Mr J. seems to be a sporting, and I should think vulgar kind of man. I hear he drives about six and eight horses in New York (one may take this as a kind of indication of what the man is);” a man

obviously from a less-refined class.\textsuperscript{209} In her memoirs, Jerome wrote about this perception and representation of American women as uncouth. “In England, as on the Continent, the American woman was looked upon as a strange and abnormal creature, with habits and manners something between a Red Indian and a Gaiety Girl,” she wrote.

Anything of an outlandish nature might be expected of her. If she talked, dressed, and conducted herself as any well-bred woman would, much astonishment was invariably evinced, and she was usually saluted with the tactful remark, “I should never have thought you were an American” – which was intended as a compliment.\textsuperscript{210}

Frivolous, uncultured behavior was expected of the American woman and was directly associated with her nationality. Acting otherwise was received as atypical and uncharacteristic of the group’s perceived identity and tendencies.

Montgomery suggested that the English used these American newcomers as scapegoats, faulting them with the aristocracy’s own declining importance and decreasing standards (A 1903 comment: “It is considered by the taste of the day quite a creditable thing that some pork-packer’s dollars from Chicago should buy a coronet in Mayfair.”\textsuperscript{211}) These were “Changes which owed,” in Montgomery’s opinion, “much more to domestic developments within the British economy than to the entry of foreign plutocrats into high society.”\textsuperscript{212} The comments of H.B Marriot-Watson (including the above one about pork-packers’ daughters), the author of a 1903 article evaluating “The Deleterious Effect of Americanisation upon Women,” help to

\textsuperscript{210} Cornwallis-West, \textit{The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill}: 47.
\textsuperscript{211} Marriot-Watson, “The Deleterious Effect of Americanization Upon Women,” 789.
\textsuperscript{212} Montgomery, \textit{Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870-1914}: 157.
confirm Montgomery’s theory. Though his focus was on what a materialistic upbringing had done to the American woman, he gave background information on the state of English society. Industrialization and trade had created a new generation of “merchant princes,” who began to swagger among [their] ancient superiors in the guise of an equal. One can imagine (if they ever saw it with clear prophetic eyes) how our fathers stared in dismay and chagrin at this ugly invasion. The ranks of the aristocracy were broken, a press of newcomers poured in and would take no denial. The whole face of society changed. Nay, more than that; for if the case be examined rightly it is clear that the whole of modern civilization felt the shock.213

Trying to find an explanation for these rapid changes, English aristocrats took stock of their surroundings and noticed the dozens of American women dripping with jewels and laden with gowns custom-made by the famous Parisian designer Charles Frederick Worth pushing their way into the previously closed ranks of the aristocracy. The presence of rich American women in the aristocracy was conflated with the changing class structure and lessening of social boundary rigidity in England. During their day, these women were given too much responsibility in the question of changing class structure in England; today we do not give them enough.

In Europe, “class” was something one acquired through generations of family inheritance, whereas many of the transatlantic wives came from families that had acquired their status just a generation before. In the eyes of many English aristocrats then, they had no place in the aristocracy. The author of a long article in 1905 comparing the relative merits of “Titled Colonials v. Titled Americans” complained that the Americans arriving in London were not even from the proper high class in the

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United States. “For in these days it is not the old New England and Southern families whose daughters marry European noblemen, but the daughters of European emigrants with no sense of public responsibility,” he wrote. They were *nouveaux riches* and “therefore…[have] no inherited tradition…they have none of the Old World dignity, democratic simplicity, and serious conception of public and private duty, which distinguished the best society in the United States before the era of progress and vulgarity ushered in by President Jackson.” American women were therefore resented for barging into a life and lifestyle which “true” aristocrats did not think that they had a right to because of their classless backgrounds.

*Cold-Hearted Wives and Bad Mothers*

Another line of attack taken by the English was even more personal: the American woman was described as cold, unfeeling, and a bad mother. Marriot-Watson had much to say on this subject in his article on what the American way of life did to women, saying that “The evidences that American women are deliberately turning their backs on natural laws have accumulated of recent years. Their cold-bloodedness is, in effect, a signal of degeneracy, testifying to the desiccation of natural sentiment.”

He cited the arguments of Miss and Mrs. Van Vorst, the authors of a 1903 book called *The Woman Who Toils* (to which a praise-filled letter to the authors from President Theodore Roosevelt serves as the preface) in his argument that American life led to decreasing fertility, and that the cause is “*moral* and not *physical.*” (Emphasis mine.) Lifestyle and worldview were to blame. He also referred to an article in the *North American Review* in which the author, Mrs. Bisland,

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214 Ibid., 790.
explained that “this failure in natural and wholesome increase among our white natives is due to nothing more or less than the over-education and abnormal public activities so ardently encouraged among our women since the close of the Civil War.” Such education, they agreed, made the American woman “indifferent to her own peculiar forces.”

Two years later (in 1905) another article in Contemporary Review, an English quarterly, by an author signing his or her name as only “Colonial,” agreed. Written in frustration that wives from other colonies of the British Empire who had married into the English aristocracy (“Colonial peeresses”) received little to no attention/recognition compared to titled American wives, Colonial set out to tear down the American wife as sterile and heartless with little to offer besides money. Colonial pointed out that though there were seven fewer Colonial peeresses than American ones, they had produced close to double the number of children. “While six of them have neglected to present their husbands with heirs, nineteen Americans are guilty of the same neglect.” Widening the inventory to beyond the peerage, “since 1840 the number of titled Americans, exclusive of knights’ wives, has risen to seventy-four, of whom thirty are childless and fourteen have but one child.” Such numbers, he wrote, were “proof, if any were needed, of the growing sterility of American women.” Therefore an American wife did not bring “fresh vigor” to “a decayed English family” at all. In actual fact, if “American women…were…really to swamp the peerage it would rapidly decline.” The article provided the following table:

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215 Ibid., 790-91.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Americans of Title</th>
<th>Their Children</th>
<th>Colonials of Title</th>
<th>Their Children</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 Peeresses</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>23 Peeresses</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Wives of Baronets</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30 Wives of Baronets</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 with a Courtesy Title</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42 with a Courtesy Title</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total: 74</td>
<td>Total: 107</td>
<td>Total: 95</td>
<td>Total: 266</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Colonial also made the point that of the few children that American wives had produced, none had gone on to become important figures in English society (ignoring thirty-one-year-old Winston Churchill, who at the time of the article’s publishing had already become a Member of Parliament.)

Holding the American individuals entirely responsible for a declining population is not entirely accurate; birth rates were declining in the English and American upper classes in general. A 1909 article in the English journal *Nineteenth Century and After* demonstrated that over the past half-decade, the upper classes “have reduced their birth-rate by more than one-half, and have passed well below the point at which the number of births compensates for the number of deaths.” And in 1880 the birth rate in the United States was lower than that of every European country with the exception of France; birth control and sterility were portrayed as (and likely were) the culprits.

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216 Colonial, "Titled Colonials v. Titled Americans," 862-68.
An earlier article, from 1896 by the English-French Charles de Thierry, also in *Contemporary Review*, had very similar things to say on “the sterilizing effect of a materialistic democracy.” In American women, he wrote, “the utilitarian philosophy had done its worst,” and the women’s “abnormal development of self-reliance and independence” had fostered a “hardness” and “lack of sentiment.” He accused them of a “tendency to over-refinement,” and a “fond[ness] of making paltry class distinctions and of giving dress the importance of birth in Europe.” Overall, he questioned “what have they ever done, except to make society tawdrier and more unsatisfying than it was before?” The unvoiced follow-up question to such a tirade of negative descriptions is “What, therefore, are they worth to us?” If the American way of life produced women who were so unpleasant to be around, difficult to manage, and who fostered such shallow values then they were surely unfit to mother the next generation of the aristocracy.

The American woman in England, then, was represented as classless, snobby, irritating, and could not be counted on to produce heirs. Just as in the United States though, such negative press appeared to have had little effect on the volume or frequency of the transatlantic marriage trend.

*A Force for Good*

Despite all these negative characterizations there existed still others who saw this influx of American youth and wealth as a force of good, a topic that will be

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wives could be their procreation rate over the course of the phenomenon in conjunction with a discussion about the place of birth control in upper class societies at the time.

largely expanded on in the fourth chapter. In 1887 Oscar Wilde wrote that, though he could not predict what her overall effect would be on the English, there could be “no doubt that, of all the factors that have contributed to the social revolution of London, there are few more important, and none more delightful, than the American Invasion.” And Jennie Jerome, having lived through it all as the first transatlantic wife in 1874 and living until the inter-war period (she died in 1921), reflected in her 1908 memoir that “A great deal of water has flowed under the bridge since those days.

The steady progress of American women in Europe can be gauged by studying their present position. It is not to be denied that they are sharing many of the ‘seats of the mighty,’ and the most jealous and carping critic cannot find fault with the way they fill them. In the political, literary, and diplomatic world they hold their own. The old prejudices against them, which arose mostly out of ignorance, have been removed, and the American woman is now generally approved of.”

Others claimed that the American woman breathed a breath of fresh air into stuffy institutions that needed airing out. Perhaps the Americans and their louder, faster ways just took some getting used to.

**Representation in Literature**

The American wife of the English aristocrat became such a well-known cultural trope on both sides of the Atlantic that she became a stock character in popular literature, from the high-brow to paperbacks beginning with 1882’s *A

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220 Wilde, "The American Invasion."
Transplanted Rose by Mrs. M.E.W. Sherwood, previously an etiquette writer. In all the novels and short stories the characters are, of course, fictitious caricatures of the actual transatlantic wives, but they were inspired by real people and occurrences. In fact Minnie Paget and Consuelo Vanderbilt are thought to have been the models for Henry James’s Fanny Assingham and Maggie in The Golden Bowl, and Conchita Clossum in Edith Wharton’s The Buccaneers was based on Consuelo Yznaga.

All of the stereotypes and cultural judgments that have just been discussed in the previous sections of this chapter are evident in the novels and short stories in which the American wife, bride-to-be, or husband-hunter was a character. Montgomery made the point, and she was right, that the way these women were described in novels was not very different to the way they were described in the press.

A good illustration of how well-known a character the transatlantic bride was is that even Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, in an 1892 story published in the Strand Magazine, came across an American heiress in the story “The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor.” In the story, the distraught second son of the Duke of Balmoral, Lord Robert St. Simon, seeks Holmes’s help in the recovery of his missing new American wife, the heiress Hatty Doran of San Francisco, who disappeared during the wedding reception. Watson shows Holmes coverage of the odd occurrence and preceding marriage announcements in the recent papers, one of which read:

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222 Fowler, In A Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess: 25.
224 Montgomery, Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870-1914: 139.
One by one the management of the noble houses of Great Britain is passing into the hands of our fair cousins from across the Atlantic...Lord St. Simon...has now...announced his...marriage with Miss Hatty Doran, the...daughter of a California millionaire. Miss Doran...[has a] graceful figure and striking face ...and it is currently reported that her dowry will run...over the six figures.... As...the Duke of Balmoral has been compelled to sell his pictures within the last few years, and as Lord St. Simon has no property of his own save the small estate...it is obvious that the...heiress is not the only gainer by an alliance which will enable her to make the easy and common transition from a Republican lady to a British peeress.  

In this one fictitious newspaper announcement is a neat summary of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon and the stereotypes and assumptions surrounding it: irritation at how many Americans were becoming in control of great estates at the expense of English girls; the representation of the bride as only American, rich, and beautiful; the plight of the younger son of a great English family; and evidence of financial difficulty in the aristocracy, making the marriage a cash-for-titled exchange and not a love match.

When Holmes asks St. Simon to describe his new wife Hatty’s character, St. Simon explains that not only was she not born into an old established family, but that her father did not make his fortune until Hatty was already twenty. Before then she lived in mining camps and spent lots of time outdoors. “She is what we call in England a tomboy, with a strong nature, wild and free, unfettered by any sort of traditions. She is impetuous – volcanic... She is swift in making up her mind and fearless in carrying out her resolutions,” St. Simon says delicately. An uncultured, headstrong American woman, and the opposite of what the English valued and thought appropriate for a lady of the upper class.

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Not only is she classless and title-hungry, but Hatty’s American English is impossible to understand. Before Hatty disappears, St. Simon hears her talking hurriedly with her maid, Alice. "Lady St. Simon said something about ‘jumping a claim.’ She was accustomed to use slang of the kind. I have no idea what she meant," St. Simon says offhandedly. “American slang is very expressive sometimes,” Holmes reassures him (and later translates the expression for him as an American mining term). Doyle pokes fun at the crassness of American English again at the story’s resolution. Holmes has located Hatty – who had caught a glimpse of her first husband, assumed dead, during the St. Simon service and run off with him – and brings her before St. Simon to apologize. Doyle makes it very clear by her language alone compared to the slick, formal speech of St. Simon that she is a very different sort of person from a dissimilar background and far-away part of the world. “I know that I have treated you real bad,” says Hatty to St. Simon, “and that I should have spoken to you before I went; but I was kind of rattled, and from the time when I saw Frank here again I just didn't know what I was doing or saying. I only wonder I didn't fall down and do a faint right there before the altar." Doyle thereby represented the American woman as the crassest of New Money and altogether classless in his topical story.

Whereas Doyle poked fun at the phenomenon once with Sherlock Holmes, others wrote on the topic many times. Henry James was the master of the story of the American abroad. James famously wrote about Americans in Europe in almost all of his major works, in which the American wife was a common character. His stories played on the irony of Americans attempting to be cultured and fit into high class as
their attempts to do so “led to a degradation of the very culture they mimicked;”\textsuperscript{226} a contradiction embodied by the real-life transatlantic wives. A prolific writer and extreme anglophile, many of his works, notably \textit{Daisy Miller} (1878), \textit{The Portrait of a Lady} (1881), \textit{The Siege of London} (1883), and \textit{The Golden Bowl} (1904) among others, meditated on the topic of transatlantic marriage.

An American by birth, James gained British citizenship the year before his death, and spent most of his life in England, where he cringed at “The Americans looming up – dim, vast, portentous – in their missions – like gathering waves – the barbarians of the Roman Empire,” and their culture-leveling effect; he felt that he himself belonged in England, but did not welcome the arrival of other Americans. “It was as if someone demanded that he now share his toy with others, and in so doing, the bauble had become tarnished and defaced,” wrote Richard Kenin in his profile of James in his 1979 book about Americans in England.\textsuperscript{227}

In James’s 1883 short story \textit{The Siege of London}, the American woman Mrs. Headway, having failed in New York society, wants desperately to be accepted by the English upper class world: “If once I’m all right over here, I can snap my fingers at New York! You’ll see the faces those women will make,” she says. She begs the help and advice of the already-established American Mr. Littlemore and is unflinchingly honest about her aims. “I may as well be frank, for I ain’t at all ashamed. I want to get into society. That’s what I’m after!” She capitalizes on the English’s delight at her “Americanisms,” and exaggerates her accent and her stories. “‘They come to laugh at

\textsuperscript{226} C. Brook Miller, "Our American Cousin: Anglo-American Cultural Politics and British National Identities" (Indiana University, 2003), 210.
\textsuperscript{227} Kenin, \textit{Return to Albion: Americans in England 1760-1940}: 135.
me,’ she said; ‘they come simply to get things to repeat. I can’t open my mouth but they burst into fits.’” (Years later, similar exaggerated American-ness and malapropisms would be expected from the real life American hostess Laura Corrigan.) Ignoring her repeated pleas, Mr. Littlemore tells the mother of Mrs. Headway’s intended, Sir Arthur, that she is not a respectable woman. Despite his mother’s disapproval, Sir Arthur marries her anyway.228

In Gertrude Atherton’s American Wives and English Husbands (1898) the two main characters, the American girl Lee and the English noble boy Cecil, meet as children, and bicker from the beginning about whether “Boys were made to wait on girls” (the American girl’s opinion) or vice versa (the English boy’s opinion: “I never heard such rot.”)229 As has been discussed in the last chapter, this was a cultural difference that real transatlantic wives were forced to live with when they moved from American high society, which centered on women, to English high society, which centered on men. In the story Cecil has an American stepmother, who “went to London a rich widow, but without letters to the other Americans in power, who are mostly New Yorkers with a proper contempt for the aristocracy of wealth in its first generation.”230 Lee is introduced to this woman, and is surprised that she still has her accent. Cecil explains to her that “American women are so popular in England that I fancy they grow more and more American as the years go by.”231

230 Ibid., 100.
231 Ibid., 184. Cecil’s statement here is at odds with my proposed theory of transatlantic wives holding onto their American identities less strongly as time passed. However, this book was written during that
Edith Wharton’s last novel, *The Buccaneers*, published posthumously, was on the topic of transatlantic marriage. Herself a witness to and reluctant participant in the New York social scene, Wharton lived through an unhappy marriage – to an American – at the close of which she moved to France for the rest of her life. *The Buccaneers* (1938) begins in 1873 and follows the St. George sisters and their friend Conchita Clossom (based on Consuelo Yznaga) in their marriage quests, along the way touching on every possible stereotype and popular representation of the transatlantic wife. When the St. Georges fail to make it in New York society, they leave for London where they rely on the established American matron Miss Jacky March, whose “narrow front door led straight into the London world,” and whose “services were sometimes rewarded by a cheque, or a new drawing-room carpet, or a chinchilla tippet and muff...” for an introduction. One of the young men that they meet, the son of a baronet, is anguished that his father has sold their Titian painting to pay off their debts. When hearing of the possible engagement of one of the St. George sisters to a local aristocrat, Seadown Brightlingsea, the baronet exclaims “Seadown marry an American? There won’t be a family left in England without that poison in their veins.” Conchita marries the younger Brightlingsea son, Sir Richard, and it is an unhappy marriage – he drinks and dallies and there is little money. The St. George sisters visit her and are scandalized by her half-joking, half-serious talk about finding a lover. “Lady Richard rose from the sofa. ‘So sorry! I forgot you little Puritans

earlier phase of the phenomenon, when so many transatlantic wives were indeed resolutely American and acted so.


233 Ibid., 96.
weren’t broken in yet…”234 As has been shown, all such occurrences were based in reality: paying for introductions by successful Americans, the selling of great works of art, the idea of American blood as diluting a noble line, un-loving marriages, and the taking of lovers as a socially acceptable practice.

Such novels were warnings to future American wives and reprimands to past ones, and give excellent insight to how the world saw American transatlantic wives and the workings of the phenomenon at large.

**Representation on the Stage**

Beyond being regular subjects of newspaper, magazine, and journal articles as well as characters in novels and short stories, the figure of the American heiress also made her way to the stage in several plays and musicals. In these productions the stereotypes and caricatures were made larger than life. For example, the operetta by Victor Herbert called “*Miss Dolly Dollars*” had an opening number entitled “She’s a Lady with Money: The Self-Made Family.”235

One popular show was the operetta *The Dollar Princesses*, which played for two New York seasons and was also shown in Berlin, Austria, and Spain (“*Die Dollarprinzessin*” and “*El Imperio del Dollar*”).236 Leafing through the score and reading the lyrics it is difficult to keep track of who is pursuing whom (the broke Marquis de Jolifontaine’s attention seems to swing from Alice, daughter of Coal

234 Ibid., 109.
Trust president John W. Cowder, to other American girls) but there are many lyrics that cast the transatlantic marriage phenomenon as a cutthroat business transaction. For example, in the song “Self Made Maiden,” Alice sings of knowing why she is pursued: “A fellow swears by Heaven he loves her until death, She hears one word in seven, he only wastes his breath! She sizes up her wooer in less than half a flash, For while he’s talking to her, she knows he’s after cash!” She acknowledges that to such a man, she is “a self made Yankee maiden…down on all pretense; Her heart and head are laden with dollars and with sense.” She compares these transactions to buying cattle. (“You settle the amount, And that is all the battle, you’ve got a Duke or Count.”)237 In the title song, “The Dollar Princesses,” Alice sings about the idea of the cold American woman is touched on, “Having a heart but of stone.” The first copyright of this play is listed as 1907 to a publishing house called Breitkopf & Härtel, and the cover page notes that the American adaptation of the play was done by George Grossmith Jr.; perhaps the lyrics are so harsh and grossly stereotypical because they were not written by an American.

Another show that played in America was “The Title Mart,” by Winston Churchill (an American writer – the fact that there was a Winston Churchill who had a famous transatlantic bride as a mother is merely a happy coincidence). In it, the cash-strapped English nobleman Lord Tredbury arrives with his friend Reginald Barking in the Adirondacks to visit with the Blackwell family, hoping to win the daughter and heiress Ethel. He evaluates his situation at the beginning of the play thus: “Well, here I am in America, with fifteen thousand pounds’ worth of debts, two

country places mortgaged up to the leads, - assets, a letter of introduction to Mrs. Blackwell, stepmother to an heiress worth twenty millions.”

When Lady Marjorie Ticknor, staying in fashionable Newport, writes to “Treddy” that she knew the Blackwells in London (“where I assisted in getting a few invitations for Mrs. Blackwell, -- for a consideration”) and that Edith is not worth his time, Treddy persuades his friend Barking to switch identities with him for the duration of their visit. When Barking meets Edith for the first time he finds her surprisingly beautiful. He tells her, “Do you know, I expected to find you quite ugly and unattractive,” to which she replies, “You must have been reading Henry James.”

Edith’s stepmother, Mrs. Grace Blackwell, is the one who is title-hungry and wants Edith to marry a Lord, not Edith, who tells Grace that she intends for love to be a part of her marriage decision. “Love! Oh, my dear, that isn’t necessary in a modern marriage, when one need never see anything of one’s husband.”

Leaving Newport, Lady Marjorie joins the mix and comes to stay with the Blackwells as well. Towards the end of the play she is in a conversation with Mrs. Grace Blackwell, who talks about the American aristocracy. “It seems so strange to have an aristocracy in a Republic. Doesn’t the Constitution, or the Declaration of Rights, or whatever you have, forbid it?” Lady Marjorie asks. Mrs. Blackwell says “My dear, how very English you are! Our aristocracy is founded on republican

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239 Ibid., 14.
240 Ibid., 27.
241 Ibid., 73.
principles, and we have the right to be as arrogant as we choose. Any one [sic] who has sufficient discrimination and determination and sang-froid may belong. We are not encumbered by duties or responsibilities, and we have a code of our own.\textsuperscript{242} By the end of the play Barking and Lady Marjorie are happily engaged, as are Lord Tredbury and Edith. The play is a spoof on English and American national character stereotypes and on the perceived shallowness of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon, though it does echo the reality of many of the transatlantic marriages.

\textit{Conclusion}

The public representation and popular opinion of the American girl was, when viewed as a whole, quite a mixed bag of overlapping patterns. Beginning in the language of fairy tales, newspaper portrayal turned negative and language of cultural stereotypes and betrayal began to follow the American woman. Once in England she faced a mountain of harsh and very personal criticism, from her language to her fertility. Caricatures, mostly un-flattering, of her appeared in books and on the stage. The most shocking piece of all of this however, is how little an effect it had on the rate of transatlantic marriages; the American wife rose above it and, as she was negatively accused of doing by English writers, did just as she pleased.

\footnote{\textsuperscript{242} Ibid., 147.}
Chapter 4
The American Impact

“Before the century is out, these clever and pretty women from New York will pull the strings in half the chanceries in Europe.”
– Prime Minister Palmerston

“In accounting for the changes in English high society since the [eighteen] seventies, Lady Dorothy [Nevill] put them down to two main influences, Anglo-American marriages and the Stock Exchange.”
–Richard Davis

Introduction: A Logical Contradiction

The American women who crossed the Atlantic with their riches financially sustained the families into which they married. They did so by paying off their debts and allowing them to maintain the standard of living to which they had been traditionally entitled. They crossed the Atlantic with their millions, but also with their opinions and practical and social expectations. In the grand scheme of things the migration of these women contributed greatly to the passing of the old ways of rigid English society even as they maintained it. The opening up of previously closed societies, hunting parties, and estates was welcomed by some of the upper class English and scorned by others. In Gilded Prostitution, Montgomery affirmed the competing reactions to “the American invasion” as “admiration for their adventurous

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243 MacColl, To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started: 2.
and inquisitive spirit, and fear for the consequences of their social success.”

By nature, the advance of progress means rejection of what is established, and of course comes with its yea- and naysayers.

The logical contradiction is, as Cannadine put it baldly after his short discussion of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon (two and a half pages out of more than seven hundred about the decline and fall of the British aristocracy – a gross oversight): “plutocracy was undermining aristocracy, even as it supported it.”

This theme repeats itself when we look at the effect that American women had in society and politics, the final lens through which this project assesses the way that the story of the transatlantic wives was such an important part of the English aristocracy’s story, and drives home the point that it was the lives, and not merely the weddings of these women, that were remarkable.

In history books about the Anglo-American relationship, transatlantic brides do not receive much credit for being an influential force in international relations. They also receive little to no attention in the discussion of the domination of American culture and products of much of the West – this is misfortunate and inaccurate. Such credit is deserved and ought to be more widely studied and accepted.

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246 Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy*: 399.
Paying Attention to Contemporaries

A New York Times article from 1907 entitled “The American Woman’s Influence in England” cited the immense influence of Americans Consuelo Yznaga (Duchess of Manchester) and Minnie Stevens (Mrs. Arthur Paget) “upon not only the social life of London but upon the friendly relations between Great Britain and the United States,” which, according to the author, went “far beyond mere ballroom popularity or royal favor, and...[came] as close as woman may to affairs of State and Cabinet councils.”247 Interestingly, the article claimed that these two women were the exception, not the rule in the amount of influence they wielded in Society. The author questioned why that may be:

…Has English sentiment changed in its attitude toward American women since the seventies? Is it less ready now to submit to that subtle influence which all clever American women are said to exert? Will the English take nothing but our money now, and let the influence go by the board? Is the American woman to lose her power...?

In some ways, the answers to this author’s (“W.B.B.”) questions are yes, but only if we define social power as being one and the same as being an intimate of the monarch. The very movements of Americans in the midst of the aristocracy pulled at boundaries that had been set in stone for centuries. By leading momentous charitable efforts, by running for office (and winning), by changing the role of the country house hostess and a myriad of other things, American women did indeed affect society even when they did not become close personal friends of the monarch. W.B.B. had too narrow of a definition.

In discussing the influence that these women had on English society, it is important to recall Richard Davis’s observation in his important article “We Are All Americans Now!” He remarked that these women’s contemporaries assigned far more importance, significance, and power to them than we do now. As I have shown, Americans back home were variously proud, angered, and worried about what the departure of all these promising young women would do to the American economy and society, and what such marriages said about republican morality. On the other side of the Atlantic, the English were variously suspicious, thrilled, and enraged by the effect these women were poised to have, and did end up having. Therefore, before I endeavor to interpret the lives of these women as influential and impactful, let me first share a few words of some of their contemporaries to lay the foundation of such a notion and to prove that the pursuit of such an argument is worthwhile, necessary, and accurate.

William T. Stead, an English journalist at the turn of the century, once mused that “among the influences which are Americanizing the world, the American girl is one of the most conspicuous, and the most charming.”248 A short sampling of other articles proves that Mr. Stead was not alone in his opinion. A very praising biographic article about Jennie Jerome’s life in 1908 was entitled “The Most Influential Anglo-Saxon Society Woman in the World.” She “is as important in politics as she is in journalism, and as famed for her hospital work as for her beauty.” The caption under the included photo of her read “The society queen who made the American woman a

A 1905 article about Jerome from a Harper’s Bazaar series on American Women in English Society claimed “No American woman in England has led a fuller life; none has been more behind the scenes of politics or wielded a greater influence on party leaders and party counsels.” Obviously, Jerome was considered a powerful woman and a force to be reckoned with by her contemporaries.

Besides pulling political strings as Jerome did, “One of the direct results of the presence of so many American wives in English society is to make it livelier. This may seem a bold thing for an American to say,” American social commentator George Smalley wrote in 1888, “but I am, in fact, only quoting what I have heard the English themselves say, and say often.” Evidently, however, this new liveliness was not entirely welcomed by all: in the 1870s several blue-blooded, titled ladies sought the help of Archbishop Benson, asking that he put together a “moral mission” and “devotional meetings” to fight the demoralizing effect of the new Americans. I think that this serves as even stronger evidence than all of the positive commentaries that American women were seen as having social power and impact. Clearly, American women were judged by some contemporaries to be dangerous, and to be causing enough ripples that some feared for the disappearance of the old order.

As a final example of the importance assigned to American women in the English upper class by their contemporaries, a charitable “open letter” to New York heiress Elena Grace (Countess of Donoughmore) in the Tatler in 1910 stated that, in

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250 “Anglo-American”, "American Women in English Society: II. Mrs George Conwallis West (Formerly Lady Randolph Churchill - Nee Jerome)."

251 Quoted in Fowler, *In A Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess*: 48.

the author’s opinion, there was a lack of “common justice” in the press “to that
wondrous thing, American womanhood,” as it had “done much to change the face of
London society.”

In a word, they brought the grit and ‘go’ of a new race to bear on our rusty if cherished
institutions. They have made us more modern in our ways and more up-to-date in our
opinions; they have taught us how to manage the mere man, and how to rule our own houses
and keep our own money. In a word, they opened our eyes to women’s rights long before we
ever heard of a Suffragette demonstration. We were a weaker, more backward, and certainly
poorer people before the seventies and eighties brought us the first of our now well-known
Anglo-American alliances.253

From this small sampling of comments, in conjunction with the quotes that head this
chapter, there can be no question that, as they lived and breathed, these Americans
had a powerful enough impact on English society for their contemporaries to notice it
with either glee or desperation. I will now explore in which areas of society these
effects, influences, and impacts were felt, and how they were achieved.

The Power of the Almighty Dollar

Articles and testimonials of all sorts from the turn of the century refer to the
“power of the almighty dollar.” American (and English) businessmen were making
names for themselves in London at the same time as they were supplying financially-
stricken aristocrats with their wealthy daughters. In fact the transatlantic marriage
phenomenon can be seen to fit into the more global movement of the rise of
plutocrats and plutocracy and the breaking down of class barriers. As another piece of
evidence regarding the changing standards and possibilities of the era, the English
self-made man made his debut during these decades, and men who were once middle

253 MacColl, To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started: 310.
class began receiving peerages. Just as a shopkeeper’s son could grow up to be a successful businessman and receive a title, now a speculator's daughter from New York could run Blenheim Palace. Fueled largely by money, old established social barriers began to break down at the turn of the twentieth century, and American wives were a major part of that larger story.

In *Gilded Prostitution*, Montgomery agreed with this idea. She explained that there was “some common ground between Americans and other men of wealth in London society” in their motives and origins, and that their presence “allows for a discussion of the influence of Americans on the aristocracy’s attitude towards businessmen.”²⁵⁴ In her exploration of this and of the new plutocracy’s general effect on the aristocracy, Montgomery downplayed Americans as *instigators* of the plutocratic transformation, but concluded that they were an important part of it. She wrote that “their social success contributed to the acceptance of a business ethic which was reflected in the flight of young aristocrats to the City and their growing fascination with the stock market.”²⁵⁵ Montgomery was correct that it was not singularly the presence of American plutocrats that inspired the rise of the power of the successful capitalist, but I would argue that it was a more significant factor in the breaking of these historic social barriers than she deemed it to be.

Happily for us historians, one creative reporter was paying attention to these changes in the 1890s. Elizabeth L. Banks, an American investigative journalist in London, conducted a series of experiments to test the power of the “Almighty Dollar”

²⁵⁵ Ibid., 79, 83.
after an accusatory conversation with an Englishman in which he stormed that Americans believed that their wealth could get them anything, but that it actually could not buy things of *real* English value like social influence. To test the idea, she put out an advertisement seeking a social “chaperon” to be paid to introduce her to high society: “A young American lady of means wishes to meet with a Chaperon of Highest Social Position, who will introduce her into the Best English Society. Liberal terms. Address, ‘Heiress.’”

Many answered her ad willingly, even when she made it clear that she came from a family of “ordinary people, with little or no refinement and education…they are what in my country would be termed as ‘common as dirt.’” All they cared about was that she was willing to pay large sums of money, agreeing to take her on before even meeting her in person. From this advertisement she also received a handful of proposals of marriage – direct and indirect – such as in this charming epistle:

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Possibly you may desire to enter London society with the idea of what is called ‘settling yourself. You may be more or less alone in England; and perhaps you like this country, its society, and customs. You would possibly desire to marry an Englishman of high social position, who could place you in a certain circle where you would lead others…I am a country gentlemen [sic], have a fine place, house, and estate, have been an officer in a distinguished regiment, and know many people of position and rank…. On the other hand, it would be an absolute necessity that you should be a lady of considerable fortune; and when I mention this I trust that you will not judge me until you know my reasons for thus putting it. Whatever fortune you have would be always your own…
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Through her continuing correspondence with these members of the English elite, Banks was able to prove her challenger wrong and demonstrate that the mighty dollar

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257 Ibid., 100.
258 Ibid., 101-02.
could indeed buy things which, in the past, one could only achieve through a direct bloodline.

An even starker example of what had become the ubiquitous power of the American dollar in English society, well worth being quoted in full, is from an ad placed in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1902 that read

An English Peer of very old title is desirous of marrying at once a very wealthy lady: her age and looks are immaterial, but her character must be irreproachable; she must be a widow or a spinster – not a divorcée. If among your clients you know such a lady, who is willing to purchase the rank of a peeress for twenty-five thousand pounds sterling, paid in cash to her future husband, and who has sufficient wealth besides to keep up the rank of a peeress, I shall be pleased if you will communicate with me in the first instance by letter when a meeting can be arranged in your office. I beg you to keep this confidential. The peer will pay handsomely for the introduction when it is arranged.259

According to Richard Kenin in his book on the history of Americans in England, this ad was penned by the fifth Marquess of Donegal, who was at the time 79 years old, heirless, and had been bankrupt several times. Somehow, however, he succeeded in winning one Miss Violet Twinning, a Wellesley alumna. Their son was born in their first year of marriage, and succeeded to the title upon the death of his father at the tender age of seven months.260 Episodes such as these are a clear indication that money was changing the way that a previously impenetrable society worked. One could now buy power, influence, famous company (and spouses), and titles. Perhaps then, one could conclude that a sad effect of the American presence in the English upper class was to have subtracted some of the romance that has always been so captivating about aristocracy.

259 Quoted in Kenin, *Return to Albion: Americans in England 1760-1940*: 139.
260 Ibid.
Philanthropy was an important way for Americans to garner themselves positions within the established upper classes, and another way that the Almighty Dollar became an influential force in England. “The habit of giving is one of the Americanisms which have not yet been successfully acclimatized in the Old World,” remarked W. T. Stead in his 1901 book about Americanization. Of Carnegie’s philanthropy he wrote “we may at least point to his example as one which we should be glad to see British-born millionaires attempt to imitate.”

As mentioned earlier, the first Astor in England, William Waldorf, very much bought his peerage through enormous charitable donations. Consuelo Vanderbilt, Duchess of Marlborough, began her political career through charitable works and developed a reputation as a great philanthropist. In her examination of the Duchess in her recent dissertation showing the political and diplomatic power of the transatlantic brides, Cooper drove home the point that, unlike other English philanthropic women of her era, Vanderbilt did not simply throw money at projects, but rather earned the trust and respect of those whom would be affected by her donations. She helped to open a Home for Prisoners Wives in London in May of 1907 and fought for the educational and health rights of lower class women and infants in a myriad of ways across her lifetime.

Money has always meant power, but in turn-of-the-century England, who had the power and how they got it was changing. Americans, as part of a larger group of rising plutocrats, were able to be a significant force in society by virtue of their deep pockets more than their surname or social background.

The American Effect in the Big House

One of the prime motivations for an impoverished heir to go “heiress hunting” was to ensure the survival of his family’s estate, which by the 1880s were beginning to be sold off in the face of high debts, taxes, and death duties. Surely the first place that the effect of the new American wife was felt, therefore, was at home in the Big House on the country estate, where she was bound to spend the majority of her year (the London Season being only three months long). Expected to save the estate from sale, American dowries also paid for refurbishment, often a gargantuan task of enormous expense. Perhaps unforeseen by their English grooms, it was not the faded paintings, ripped rugs, or chipped porcelain that the new American wife first felt the most urgent need to address, but instead simple comforts like heat and electricity. Homesick letters to parents in America complained about the drafts and the cold that gave them chilblains, and the inefficiencies of living in huge stone houses with no power or running water. For example, servants carrying buckets of originally hot water down miles of corridors before reaching the lady’s bathtub was unacceptable to young women who had always had their own tub with faucets. Lady Camoys, the former Mildred Sherman of Newport, eventually refused to go to dinner at other country houses altogether so as to avoid having to freeze through dinner in a sleeveless, low-cut evening dress.²⁶² Many American wives were able to use their imported fortunes to change these situations.

We can assume that it was not merely due to their low coffers, but also to their love of tradition and resistance to change that the homes of England’s elite had been

loathe to adopt the comforts of modern technology. Indeed, Consuelo Vanderbilt brought great wealth to her marriage with the Duke of Marlborough, but could not persuade him to install bathrooms, “owing to [his]…dislike of innovations.” Such a situation even existed in the Royal household until Edward became King: after Queen Victoria’s death, the new King Edward is said to have barked “Get this morgue cleaned up!” at his sisters the first time he entered Buckingham Palace as a monarch. Whether or not this is an accurate quotation, plumbing, an extended telephone system, and garages for his motorcars were soon installed to bring the Royal family into the twentieth century.

Those that did manage to persuade their spouses that change was for the better had a noticeable effect. Jennie Jerome’s money allowed for the addition of electric lighting to their London house in 1879 – the Lord Mayor of London’s house was not so equipped until 1881 American wife Helene Beckwith did not enjoy having to walk down the corridor before the servants “clad only in a wrapper” to take a bath, so she turned a closet into a mini-bathroom. The estates at Hamstead Marshall and Easton Nesten both received indoor plumbing under the respective directions of Americans Mrs. Bradley Martin and Flora Sharon. Lily Whitehouse, as the Honorable Mrs. Charles Coventry, felt the need to bring in a steamship’s oil heater when renting Stonor Park from the Camoys family to fight the chill. Lady Camoys herself, also an American, sawed the posts off of the four-poster beds (and threw out the hangings)

264 MacColl, To Marry an English Lord: Or, How Anglomania Really Got Started: 268.
“because she thought they were grimy.” Such basic and fundamental remodeling swept the English countryside, along with extensive aesthetic renovation that was not always to the family’s taste.

The American elite of the Gilded Age were enamored of the Louis XV aesthetic: they built their country houses to look like chateaus and decorated their town houses with eighteenth-century paintings, furniture, and marble. Such taste was applied to many English estates by their American chatelaines. May Goelet, as the Duchess of Roxburghe, gave Floors Castle a large-scale makeover that included wall-coverings of red damask, upholstery of pink brocade, Belgian tapestries, and rich paneling and gilding. Florence Garner (Lady Gordon-Cumming)’s renovations to the Altyre property included mosaic and parquet flooring, red and white ceilings and molding, and cherub-bedecked Italian furniture. Disgusted with these changes, her sister-in-law never returned to the house. Such confrontations were a very direct application of the “Americanization” process in terms of materialism, and an example of how the older aristocratic ways of life were one by one edged out of practice.

Beyond making their houses fit for habitation, and in many cases making them shockingly splendid, American wives – several in particular – were also responsible for introducing new traditions and customs into dinner and house parties. Cornelia Wadsmoth, Mrs. John Adair, “was a highly influential hostess, credited with pioneering the use of several small round tables for dinner (thus freeing hostesses from the rigors of precedence).” Though this sounds like a minor detail, such a reform

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267 Ibid., 144-45, 229-30.
radically changed the way an elite dinner party functioned, and is a clear signal that such gatherings were now expressly for enjoyment and no longer purely political functions, which had always been the basic purpose of aristocratic entertaining.²⁶⁸

“England is all right for splendor but dead slow for fun,” Consuelo Yznaga, Duchess of Manchester, once remarked. She set out to change this. When Yznaga was the hostess, guests could look forward to sledding down the stairs on silver serving trays, playing charades in fancy dress, and all sorts of hijinks such as “apple-pie beds, shaving soap where one expected meringue, [and] ordinary soap where one expected cheese.”²⁶⁹ Her (English) friend Gladys de Grey got in on the fun with pranks of her own like buying inexpensive china and having a servant drop it during dinner and reveling in her husband’s furor that the heirloom Sévres had been shattered. People came to expect such frivolities. So much so in fact, that Daisy, Princess of Pless, once dismissed a real earthquake as a practical joke and stayed in bed for the duration.²⁷⁰ A society memoir from 1936 was entitled It Was Such Fun, and it sounds like, with these energetic American women at the helm, it really was.

Beyond revamping the physical interior and exterior of the houses, saving them from sale to strangers, and introducing new forms of entertainment, American wives influenced their home environment with their republican spirits. The discomfort some Americans felt with their servants has been touched upon previously. They also had to come to terms with being the landlady to all those living on their estate. Consuelo Vanderbilt got into serious trouble with her husband, the

²⁶⁸ Ibid., 354.
²⁶⁹ Fowler, In A Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess: 46.
²⁷⁰ Ibid.
Duke of Marlborough, for approving the fixing of roads on their country estate at the request of their tenants.\textsuperscript{271} One American wife discovered that the kindly tradition of packing up and donating leftovers to the tenants was actually not so nice after all, as all the leftovers, dessert included, were crammed into the one single can. No doubt she improved the recipients’ lives by insisting that different foods be packed separately.

American brides kept some of the most important families of English society from selling their ancestral estates and leaving the land, the very definition of their aristocracy. Beyond this simple fact, they brought this old-fashioned world into the twentieth century with such new-fangled technological luxuries as light, heat, and running water. The way they ran their refurbished homes contributed to the larger movement that was the “lightening,” if you will, of high society. The gathering of the elite was no longer for political dealings or out of social obligation, but for fun and games. Clearly significant, this influence on the way the English upper echelons socialized can be examined still further beyond the context of the home.

\textbf{The American Effect in Society}

\textit{The Changing Role of the Aristocracy}

English high society underwent many serious structural changes between 1874 and 1939. At the beginning of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon the

\small\textsuperscript{271} Balson, \textit{The Glitter and the Gold}: 126-27.
aristocracy was a body defined by its control of the land and dominance in politics. By the end of the phenomenon, their landed and political monopolies had been broken up irreversibly. The definition of a successful socialite changed dramatically as well: in the 1870s it was exemplified by being close to Prince Edward and running with his “Marlborough House Set,” hosting glorious weekend retreats for him at country houses and being present at the magnificent and exclusive balls of the London season. By the tail end of the phenomenon, it meant something very different and manifested itself as hosting ritzy, excessive dinner parties in private London houses to which members of the international cultural elite were invited. The point in time where this social change occurred was Edward VII’s death in 1910. Edward had been the undisputed leader of high society for four decades (and as has been shown, he very much enjoyed the company of pretty Americans), and after his death aristocracy and royalty were never again as intrinsically linked. (His son and successor, George V, disapproved of “fast” society and did not participate.) What is critical for this study are the two facts that, first, American wives contributed to these changes and second, that they prospered socially in both of these eras.

To continue chronologically after Edward’s death and looking beyond the influences of his and George V’s tastes, the Great War was an especially hard blow to the aristocracy, in that many aristocratic homes were shut down for good, what was left of ancestral fortunes dried up, heirs were killed off by the score, and by the simple but profound fact that war is a great equalizer. Aristocrats, shopkeepers, and servants fought alongside each other and saved one another’s lives in the trenches; the enormous country mansions were turned into military hospitals and convalescent
homes; and aristocratic women became nurses and carried out the type of work for others that chamber maids had done for them their whole lives.\textsuperscript{272} The American community in London came together during the First World War and worked on war relief efforts with great energy and dedication, as will be fully examined later in this chapter. London hostesses, American and English, continued to plan and execute successful social events, but by the time the war was over, the nature of English society had changed irrevocably. Just as after Edward’s death a rift opened between the monarchy and the upper class, the gap between the aristocracy and “the people” would never again be as wide as it had before the War.

By the inter-war period, “the aristocratic principle of formal entertaining” had withered away as well, and became further depoliticized. Those lucky few who secured invitations to exclusive dinner parties were no longer only the men of the House of Lords and their wives. Such gatherings were also no longer stuffy or so refined – fashion was changing, night clubs and cocktails were in the vogue, and there was a great fever for dancing. “…Members of the peerage married (and divorced) more widely, more transatlantically, and more plebeianly than ever before,” remarked Cannadine in his appraisal of the interwar era.\textsuperscript{273}

Indeed, the serious politicians began to distance themselves from London socializing, to be replaced by “a new generation of transatlantic social leaders, like Elsa Maxwell, Laura Corrigan, Nancy Astor, Emerald Cunard, and Henry Channon,”\textsuperscript{274} who led the “new” social scene. American women had social power

\textsuperscript{272} Cannadine, \textit{The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy}: 84.
\textsuperscript{273} Ibid., 352.
\textsuperscript{274} Ibid., 353.
before and after the change. One historian chronicling English society in the inter-war years went so far as to claim that all the best-known hostesses, barring the English Mrs. Grevill and Lady Colefax, were Americans during the period, showing again the mistake of cutting off the study of these women decades early.

Though King George and Queen Mary snubbed this “fast” social set, their oldest son, David – the future Edward VIII who would abdicate the throne for an American woman of fast inter-war London society – enjoyed and partook of this atmosphere. Even with the Prince in their midst, by the interwar period the aristocracy was no longer a political body. This separation of politics and royalty from high society, begun with Edward’s death and completed by the interwar period, was a change of enormous magnitude for the aristocracy, which had always functioned as a political force close to the royal family.

Last but not least, another change that the aristocracy experienced was the fact that throughout this entire period “high society” became less and less aristocratic by composition. By the interwar period one no longer needed to be titled to be a leader of society.

The American Woman as a Societal Leader

To digress from this chronological discussion and speak more generally on American women’s social power and influence across the period, many of England’s great hostesses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were American wives, right from the beginning to the end of their “American invasion.” As has been repeatedly

established throughout this study, American women in England’s upper class were
given great credit for being an influential force while the transatlantic marriage
phenomenon was ongoing. Perhaps this credit was given most strongly when
speaking of the American woman’s effect in society. For example, two days after
Consuelo Yznaga’s November 20th, 1907 death an anonymous letter appeared in the
Times on her behalf. It identified her as one of the pioneers of the transatlantic
marriage phenomenon, and having held a place in society for more than three
decades. The writer praised her for having “brought into this country that rare
combination of high intelligence, a sunny nature and uncommon personal charm,
which has since made such a conquest of English society, and must as time passes
have a profound physiological influence on a certain stratum of the upper classes.”276
(Emphasis mine.)

As Lady Randolph Churchill, Jennie Jerome once hosted a dinner party at her
London home called A Dinner of Deadly Enemies, to which she invited people not on
good terms with each other. The guests’ allegiance to their hostess overrode their
discomfort, so that long-held grudges and ongoing silent treatments were broken.
“The guests all knew each other, and as they looked about the table they all saw that
Lady Randolph had attempted the impossible and had conquered. A social miracle
had been performed,” wrote a contemporary.277 To have carried off such an ambitious
social feat required great power and respect within the upper echelons of society.278

276 Fowler, In A Gilded Cage: From Heiress to Duchess: 69.
277 Smalley, Anglo-American Memories: 374.
278 While only a few American women, such as Jennie Jerome, are the subjects of published
biographies, many others were counted as movers and shakers of society. Montgomery included
Elizabeth Motley (Lady Harcourt, married 1876), Elizabeth Livingston (Mrs. Cavendish-Bentinck,
As a final example of their perceived social power by contemporaries, one that testifies to the idea that American women *diluted* the aristocracy even as they sustained, Lady Londonderry reflected in 1938 that “Society as such now means nothing, and it represents nothing except wealth and advertisement…It does not represent what it formerly did, and it is well that this should be understood…England has become Americanized.”

Continuing with this idea, large numbers of Americans living in England, titled or not, naturally brought new cultural practices, habits, and fads with them. These included everything from dances to grapefruits to surprise parties to roller skates. As to be expected, some of the English were delighted and some were appalled with such innovations. In his 1940 dissertation on the Americanization of Great Britain, Richard Heindel explained that titled American women were seen as having “destroyed the backbone of the aristocrats by ‘choosing them,’ inject[ing] free and easy ways into society, and promot[ing] a lenient view on divorce, unpunctuality, midnight hansom rides, and hotel and apartment life.” The author “Colonial” of the previously cited article comparing the merits of titled Americans to titled Colonials wrote that the Americans had made society “brighter, but they have also helped to

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married 1880), Mary Endicott (Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain, married 1888), Jeannie Chamberlain (Lady Naylor-Leyland, married 1889), Eloise Breese (Lady Willoughby d’Eresby and later Countess of Ancaster, married 1905), and Amy Phipps (Mrs. Frederick Guest, married 1905) as hostesses who acquired influence in English politics. Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages, 1870-1914*: 221.


Ibid., 350.
make it shallower, more extravagant, and more vulgar than it ever was before."\(^{282}\)

That is a fair evaluation, but it is not their entire legacy: American women also had a more serious effect on English politics and Anglo-American relations.

### The American Effect on Politics

"The American woman is claimed by her admirers as being independent. But she is more than that; she is anarchical. The State has been built upon certain sociological facts as foundation; the American woman is destroying these, and with them therefore the structure of the State as it exists now."

- H.B. Marriot-Watson\(^{283}\)

Historian Charles Campbell listed the Vanderbilt-Marlborough, Churchill-Jerome, Curzon-Leiter, Herbert (the English ambassador to the United States) – Wilson, Harcourt-Motley, and Chamberlain-Endicott marriages as politically significant in his 1957 book about Anglo-American relations. “Here was an extraordinary galaxy of American women married to British governmental leaders. One might almost stop with that in explaining the rise of friendly feelings between America and Britain,” he wrote. In fact he did stop there in his explanation of the transatlantic wives’ role – more detailed exploration, however, is warranted.

Anglo-American relations experienced enormous transformation during the transatlantic marriage phenomenon: in the 1870s the average citizen would have laughed at the idea of his country being allied with the other, and by 1939 the two nations had fought a World War as allies (and were about to fight another one) and


were intricately tied economically. In the 1870s Great Britain was unquestionably the world’s Great Power, and by the end of the period the United States had indisputably taken this position. Dana Cooper’s recent PhD dissertation, entitled “Informal Ambassadors: American Women, Transatlantic Marriages, and Anglo-American Relations, 1865-1945” is the only work dedicated in its entirety to the political impact of transatlantic wives and their role in these changes. It is an important step towards giving this remarkable group of women their due, and she credits more than just their sunny American nature.

This is an important historical argument that Cooper supports well and is the first of its kind in terms of its length and detail. Only a couple of other scholars have recognized the political worth of this group of women to before. “The marriages helped to persuade English aristocrats that our democracy was conservative and stable, and convinced the masses that we were becoming plutocratic. Greater friendliness in Britain’s upper classes was inspired by dollars which appealed to personal and family self-interest, and merged politics into a social background,” wrote PhD candidate Richard Heindel in 1940. And in his 1998 book about class in inter-war England, historian Ross McKibbin described the English’s tolerance of high society Americans as a political act; “eliciting American support for a decaying empire, particularly when it became clear that without such support that empire could scarcely survive, might be deemed a patriotic duty. Thus for some… the introduction of Americans ‘into English drawing rooms’ was an act of policy.”

Cooper argued that the transatlantic marriages represented a continuation of the age-old practice of marriage as a diplomatic act, used to unite kingdoms and nations that stood to gain from a symbolic alliance. She profiled the three transatlantic brides about whom we know the most: Jennie Jerome (Lady Randolph Churchill), Consuelo Vanderbilt (The Duchess of Marlborough), and Nancy Langhorne Shaw (MP Lady Astor), and discussed the different avenues they took to influence politics. Though it is unwise to hold up a few well-known individuals as representative of a large group, it is similarly unwise to completely ignore important figures for solely that purpose, so I will give a short description of these three women’s careers; it is true that they stood out from the rest of the transatlantic American wives by their political activity, but they also stood out from many English wives, by default serving as representative figures for their countrywomen. In these profiles I am deeply in Cooper’s debt as I have relied heavily on her valuable collection of quotations and newspaper articles. In my analysis I differ from Cooper in that I have included Wallis Simpson as an important political figure, and I assign more significance to American efforts during British wars.

Jennie Jerome

Jennie Jerome, as the wife of Sir Randolph Churchill, found her way into political circles first through the career of her husband (and was famously influential over her son Winston’s career), but in time worked independently on her own causes.

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286 Cooper, “Informal Ambassadors,” 20, 16.
She was once the subject of an article in a Boston newspaper under the heading “Lady Churchill was U.S. Best Ambassador.”

Jerome became very involved in the Primrose League (named for Conservative ex-Prime Minister Disraeli’s favorite flower). The League was a Conservative political association founded by Sir Henry Drummond Wolff and Lord Randolph Churchill in 1883, whose goal was “to embrace all classes and all creeds except atheists and enemies of the British Empire.” The Ladies Council was chaired by the Duchess of Marlborough (Consuelo Vanderbilt), and Jerome, with No. 11 on her membership badge, was an active member. Working to win people over to Conservative party beliefs, she led community events across England with her mother-in-law. In just twenty years the League boasted over a million members.

Jerome did a lot of work for her husband’s political campaigns, particularly in the early 1880s, and Cooper credits her with bringing “an American style of politics and campaigning to Great Britain.” Where others handed out pamphlets, Jerome went door to door asking for votes, apparently saying to those who opened their doors “Please vote for my husband; I shall be so unhappy if you don’t.” Unsurprisingly, some found this charming and others found it aggressive in a very un-Anglican

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289 Cooper, “Informal Ambassadors,” 117.
290 Ibid., 118.
The following rhyme was written about the impression she left on the countryside during her campaigning:

But just as I was talking,
   With Neighbor Brown and walking,
To take a mug of beer at the Unicorn and Lion
   (For there’s somehow a connection),
Who should come but Lady Churchill,
   With a turnout that was fine.
And before me stopped her horses
   As she marshaled all her forces,
And before I knew what happened I had promised her my vote;
From the vision that had hovered,
‘Twas much too late to rally, and I had changed my coat.
On their mission brave, whole-hearted,
   The tandem and their driver and the ribbons pink and brown [Churchill’s racing colors]
And a smile that twinkled over,
   And that made a man most love her,
Took the hearts and votes of all Liberals in the town.
   Bless my soul! that Yankee Lady,
Whether day was bright or shady,
   Dashed about the district like an oriflamme of war.
When the voters saw her bonnet,
   With the bright pink roses on it,
They followed as the soldiers did the Helmet of Navarre.

The poem credits Jerome with inspiring disinterested citizens, and those who normally voted for the opposition to vote for her husband. It describes her as persuasive and powerful. With this energy, dedication, and charisma behind him – leading him – Lord Churchill won all of his re-election campaigns, and he was not the only one to credit his American wife with much of the victory. Attorney General Sir Henry James wrote to Jerome “You must let me very sincerely and heartily congratulate you on the results of the election, especially as that result proceeded so very much from your personal exertions. Everybody is praising you very much.”

292 Cooper, “Informal Ambassadors,” 120.
When Lord Churchill, believed to be suffering from syphilis and beginning to lose his mind, suddenly resigned as Leader of the House of Commons and Chancellor of the Exchequer, the newspaper *Town Topics* wrote that “We are sorry Randy is in the muck, less for his own account than for that of the gallant American girl he had the luck to marry. She had worked so hard to popularize him and forward his ends.”

In 1885 Queen Victoria honored Jerome with the Order of the Crown of India in recognition of her energetic advocacy for Indian women’s medical rights. An audience with a reigning monarch is nerve-wracking for even the most confident and successful of people, but Jerome managed the protocol, including the intensely difficult full curtsy, with grace. The only tense moment was when Queen Victoria, having trouble getting the actual pin through the embroidered jet on Jerome’s gown, plunged the point into her shoulder before properly fastening it. Having survived, Jerome promptly ordered a gown made of a blue that perfectly matched the ribbon off of which her proud pin hung, there for all to see how important a difference she had made.

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296 Ibid., 204.
The Venezuelan Boundary Dispute between the United States and Great Britain prompted Jerome to start the quarterly *Anglo-American Review* (later renamed the *Anglo-Saxon Review*, as a publication already existed under the previous name), referred to as “Maggie” by its contributors – cultural elites from the US and Great Britain alike. The purpose of the journal, whose first issue was published in June of 1899, was described by Jerome as “to render the U.S. and Great Britain more intelligible to each other.” Ten issues were published before it was discontinued – it was hugely expensive and therefore did not reach a wide audience and did not turn a profit, and her professional relationship with John Lane, the publisher with whom she worked on the project, was unproductive. Nevertheless, it serves as an example of a transatlantic wife and other private transatlantic citizens working to influence

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297 Scanned from ibid.
Anglo-American relations. For such work Jennie Jerome was regarded as a woman with distinct political influence through her familial connections and her own works.

**Consuelo Vanderbilt**

As noted earlier, the Duchess of Marlborough, Consuelo Vanderbilt, worked for the comforts, health, and education of women and children through the establishment of schools, housing projects, and charitable organizations. (She was nicknamed “the Baby Duchess” for her work centering on mothers and young children.) In 1913, however, in reaction to the conditions in which women were being forced to work in sweat shops, she made her first attempt to change things through political action. The conference that she organized, in which working women gave their testimonials about their jobs and lives, succeeded in that eight more industries were deemed qualified for the London trade boards. A newspaper article covering the convention rewarded Vanderbilt with the remark: “It is evident that the Duchess of Marlborough understands the British public. She is in closer touch with the thrifty spirit of the nation, which abhors the house-burning and window-breaking of her radical co-workers.”

Always working for the under-represented, particularly women, she leaned on organizations great and small on the issue of municipal housing for women. Her attendance at the 1913 International Woman Suffrage Alliance Convention in

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301 Cooper, “Informal Ambassadors,” 162.
Budapest brought her into the suffrage movement, a cause her famous mother, Alva, was already championing.

Believing that women needed and deserved more say in London affairs, Vanderbilt helped to found the Women’s Municipal Party in 1913. After the War, the Party asked her to run for London County Council. She was popular during her campaign, and to the wartime tune of “Tramp Tramp Tramp the Boys are Marching,” London children sang “Vote Vote Vote for Mrs. Marlborough.” She was elected, and was the first woman ever to serve on that Council. Her political career, alas, was not a long-lived one, as her 1921 divorce from the Duke made her ineligible for public life of any kind. One wonders what more she could have gone on to achieve politically, as in her short time in public service she made such a difference and set a precedent for others. She continued to be a powerful force in social reform through continued charitable and philanthropic efforts, changing the lives of many working class women.

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304 Scanned from Kenin, Return to Albion: Americans in England 1760-1940: 158.
and children for the better through improved housing, health, and educational opportunities.

Nancy Astor

A study of the influence of the American woman on English politics without serious consideration of Lady Nancy Astor, that most interesting English-Virginian creature discussed in Chapter 2, would be seriously flawed. A very vocal woman with a strong personality and quick mind, she was the first female to sit as a Member of Parliament from 1919 to 1945. (One other woman, Constance Georgine Gore-Booth – Countess Markiewicz – had been elected in 1918, but as an active member of Sinn Féin chose not to take the seat in protest. Therefore Astor was not the first female MP to be elected, but was indeed the first to actually sit in the House of Commons.)

As briefly mentioned in an earlier chapter, Astor’s path to Parliament was through old laws and family obligations: Astor’s husband Waldorf had been the MP representing Plymouth, but upon the death of his father he inherited the title of Viscount, and his corresponding seat in the House of Lords. Waldorf did not want this honor and fought to stay in the House of Commons but was unable to uproot the centuries-old system. At the suggestion of their local Conservative party, Nancy stepped in to hold his seat for him in the House of Commons while he fought his House of Lords appointment. Unsurprisingly, comments such as “the first woman member really should be a native of the kingdom,” accompanied her along her
campaign, and crowds shouted at her to “go back to America.” Newspapers around Great Britain and the United States followed her with great interest for being an American, a woman, and a generally unusual person. She won over the hearts of many however, and by the time she entered the House of Commons on December 1, 1919, she had become known as “our Nancy.” She ended up serving for almost thirty years.

From all accounts, one either loved her or despised Nancy Astor. Chips Channon described her as “a queer combination of warm-heartedness, originality and rudeness.” Consuelo Vanderbilt explained her political relationships thus: “She was adored by her constituents but disliked by the classic Parliamentarians who considered her repartees undignified.” Indeed, her mode of attack seems to have been straightforward assault, exemplified by her method of bucking up convalescing Canadian soldiers when her country home, Cliveden, was converted to a military

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308 Ibid., 196-7.
hospital during the Great War. To those who had lost hope she would hiss that they were “going to die because they had no guts. If you were a Cockney, or a Scot, or a Yank, you’d live. But you’re just a Canadian, so you’ll lie down and die.” Mercifully, there is more than one account of such provocation leading to the full recovery of the soldier in question.\(^\text{312}\)

As mentioned earlier, Astor famously feuded with Winston Churchill. He did not respect her as a politician and never accepted her rightful presence in the House of Commons. “I find a woman’s intrusion into the House of Commons as embarrassing as if she burst into my bathroom when I had nothing with which to defend myself, not even a sponge,” he spat. (“Winston, you’re not handsome enough to have worries of that kind,” Astor readily replied.\(^\text{313}\) A particularly interesting jibe she made to Winston declared “The trouble with you is that you have the worst blood of two continents in your veins.”\(^\text{314}\) As discussed in Chapter 2, Astor’s own character was a confusing mixture of Anglican and American values.

Once in Parliament, Astor fought for better relations between her two countries, temperance (her first husband had been a violent alcoholic), and the rights of women and children. (During her election campaign, posters around Plymouth read “Vote for Lady Astor and Your Babies Will Weigh More.”\(^\text{315}\) She was not intimidated by debate or a room full of disdainful men and would interrupt speeches

\(^{312}\) Cooper, “Informal Ambassadors,” 191. Quoting Nancy Astor Manuscripts, MSS5:1, 132; Virginia Historical Society; Draft of Nancy Astor’s Autobiography, MS 1416/1/6/86, University of Reading.


\(^{315}\) Cooper, “Informal Ambassadors,” citing Elizabeth Coles Langhorne, Nancy Astor and Her Friends (New York: Praeger, 1974), 89.
that she disagreed with and ignore the rules of exchange within the House. She worked for expanded voting rights for women, for increased public childcare assistance, and nutritional regulation. A list of achievements that she could proclaim in her 1929 reelection campaign included “equal votes for women, pensions for the aged, widowed, and orphans, a national electrical system, and European reconciliation on Locarno lines.”

Though she was chiefly concerned with the rights of women, she did not present herself as a gender candidate, and she also worked to appeal to people of all classes.

On a speaking tour of the United States (her hometown of Danville, Virginia, renamed her street “Lady Astor Street” in her honor) Astor spoke to many women’s groups about her service in the House of Commons and Anglo-American relations. As Cooper points out, and as can be read in the transcripts of her speeches (collected in a book she titled My Two Countries), Astor cleverly presented herself as more English or American depending on the situation, thus following in the footsteps of other American wives trying to make it in the upper class.

Astor and her husband found themselves at the center of some conspiracy rumors in the 1930s about the company they entertained at their country home, Cliveden. The infamous “Cliveden Set,” which the Astors strongly denied existed, was said to be a pro-Nazi group, a claim that Lord Astor’s 1937 visit to Hitler did

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317 However, after other women were elected into the House of Commons, Astor rounded them up and demanded that they join her in a new Woman’s Party – she was unsuccessful. Ibid., 206-06. Citing Anthony Masters, Nancy Astor: A Life (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1981), 149.


little to dissuade. “Suddenly, Cliveden became known as a hotbed of communism, fascism, and appeasement.” Her career was permanently damaged, but she worked tirelessly throughout the Second World War as the mayor of Plymouth and at the military hospital at Cliveden.\textsuperscript{320}

As time passed Astor became increasingly radical and decreasingly lucid, and would voice publicly that Catholics and Jews were attempting to take over the government; such speeches led other MPs to write her off as a “conspiracy scaremonger.”\textsuperscript{321} In 1944 her family urged her not to run for reelection, and she reluctantly agreed but sourly resented them for it. Her last day in the House of Commons was June 15, 1945. She said “I leave the House of Commons with the deepest regret…I don’t think any other assembly in the world could have been more tolerant of a foreign-born woman…who fought against so many things they believed in…I am heart-broken…I shall miss the House, but the House won’t miss me. It never misses anybody.”\textsuperscript{322}

She died in May of 1964. Lord Attlee, a former Prime Minister, wrote in The Observer that

Nancy Astor could be bold as brass; but she was in fact a kind and compassionate woman with, especially where women were concerned, a great sense of justice. She was no respecter of persons, and would take you down a peg as soon as look at you, but not if you were getting a raw deal or down on your luck… Her most valuable work was to make it possible, often behind the scenes, for able and worthier people, welfare workers and social reformers, to get a hearing and a chance to act. She was amongst the impresarios of the Welfare State…People like Nancy Astor, quite apart from their good works are atmospheric. They make things hum.\textsuperscript{323}

\textsuperscript{320} Ibid., 207.
\textsuperscript{321} Ibid., 209 Citing Masters, Nancy Astor: A Life: 209.
An undeniably sharp, contradictory, and fascinating woman, Lady Astor was a great annoyance to many, but an inspiration to many more. Her political service grew to be the proudest and most defining achievement of her life and she was tireless in her efforts as an American who cared deeply for the welfare of the British people and the stability of the Anglo-American relationship.

Wallis Simpson

While not a political woman herself, Wallis Simpson affected English politics perhaps more than any other American woman, causing a constitutional crisis and the eventual abdication of Edward VIII in 1936, diverting the line of succession to his brother, soon crowned George VI (whose daughter reigns the United Kingdom today). As mentioned earlier, contemporaries noticed Simpson’s “Americanizing” effect on the Prince during their courtship. Later, when the press began to abandon its respectful silence, though it would not reach its full-blown explosion for another month, Chips noted that “All the world knows is that the King is the slave of an American, who has had two husbands and two divorces.”

Once the press began its full disclosure, the public division over the issue logically also became more out in the open. It has been previously mentioned how defiantly anti-Wallis Lady Astor became during the crisis. After the abdication was officially announced, Astor, fearing political ramifications and always concerned about the Anglo-American relationship, took it upon herself to broadcast to America that the British

324 Channon, *Chips: The Diaries of Sir Henry Channon*: 77.
government’s refusal to have Wallis Simpson as Queen should not be misinterpreted as a slight against the United States.\textsuperscript{325}

“If the Abdication affair showed anything about aristocratic society, it was merely to underscore the extent to which it had lost its identity, its coherence, its purpose,” wrote Cannadine.\textsuperscript{326} This ties back to my earlier discussion of the changing identity of high society: the king abdicating for an American woman was a powerful symbol of the “Americanization” of English society, of the relaxation of social barriers that the American presence helped fuel, and once again that the story of the American transatlantic wife is an integral part of the story of the English upper class. Such changes had begun well before the Abdication Crisis, but clearly helped along—perhaps cemented—by the most famous American wife, Mrs. Wallis Simpson.

These four women, on whom the historical record has plenty to say, demonstrably shaped every sector of English politics that they touched. Their stories combat Ross McKibbin’s interpretation that “in the end the influence of American culture on England was aesthetic and not political.”\textsuperscript{327} Plenty of other American women, about whom less is known individually, contributed to English social and political movements in other ways however, particularly through their activities on behalf of Great Britain during wartime.

\textsuperscript{325} Kenin, \textit{Return to Albion: Americans in England 1760-1940}: 218.
\textsuperscript{326} Cannadine, \textit{The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy}: 355.
\textsuperscript{327} McKibbin, \textit{Classes And Cultures: England 1918-1951}: 527.
American Efforts in British Wars

Between 1874 and 1939, the duration of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon, England found itself in its fair share of international skirmishes, during which transatlantic wives came to the aid of the new country in whatever ways possible. Beyond being admirable, the interesting thing about these stories is that they felt the need and duty to get very involved in English wars almost always as a self-conscious American group rather than as members of British families, as mentioned in my discussion of American solidarity in England in Chapter 2. Such actions were surely attempts at proving their loyalty to their new country, but also appear to be taken as representatives of the United States.

The Venezuelan Boundary Dispute

An old dispute over the exact boundary between Venezuela and British Guiana led to mounted tensions mounted between the United States (defending the Monroe Doctrine) and Great Britain which President Grover Cleveland brought to an urgent level in the fall of 1895. War was possible; plans were drawn up. Charles Campbell’s 1957 book about Anglo-American relations between 1898 and 1903 noted that the Marlborough-Vanderbilt wedding of November 6, 1895 had a temporary soothing and distracting effect on these strained relations.328 An uncertain and uncomfortable time for American expatriates in Great Britain though, many left.329 Of those who stayed, Jennie Jerome in particular refused to be intimidated and seems to have made it her personal mission to prevent the threatened war. She invited

powerful Londoners to dinner at her home to urge them not to act rashly, and tried to convince important politicians and journalists that the situation had been heightened by “extreme political propagandists” and would blow over. Having witnessed her efforts firsthand, an American general told a U.S. newspaper that much important work was being done by Jerome, who was leading a group of

ten daughters of the United States, who are working quietly and mightily to prevent war between the two countries that are looking at each other in a sinister way. For these women, the war means a thousand times as much as it does to other American [sic]; and they have untold power of international arbitration…These particular ten are so situated that they are in the midst of the greatest powers that rule England today. Their influence, thrown upon the scales, would turn it whichever way they bent themselves.330

Could there be a more convincing document testifying to the fact that transatlantic wives played a vital, and until now largely overlooked, role in international relations? Margot Asquith, wife of British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith, is known to have once said that Jerome “could have governed the world,”331 and a British journalist wrote during the conflict that “if there should come hard war talk, Lady Randolph Churchill would set out lecturing, as she did when she elected her husband a few years ago. And her talks would put things straight in a short time…And she would be convincing.”332 Eventually Great Britain agreed to arbitration over the boundary, and a new official boundary, favoring Venezuela (and by extension the United States), was decided upon on October 3rd, 1899. While Jerome and the other American women working with her were not a part of the official negotiations, they did as much

as they could to influence public opinion, and were seen by their contemporaries and having the power to sway such affairs.

*The Boer War*

The Boer War, a conflict between Great Britain and its colonial subjects in South Africa, broke out in 1899. American public opinion favored the Boers, but the United States “was the only power not to condemn Britain officially over her actions in South Africa.”\(^{333}\) In the beginning, things did not look good for the British. Mrs. A. A. Blow, a transatlantic wife whose husband was deeply involved in South African mining, was apparently the original source of the idea for an American-funded hospital ship,\(^{334}\) but credit for the idea is also given to Jerome, who chaired the committee devoted to making the idea reality from its first meeting on October 25, 1899. The post of Vice-Chairman went to Mrs. Cornelia Adaire, Honorary Secretary fell to Mrs. A. A. Blow, and Treasurer to Fanny Ronalds. Also involved were the “Duchess of Marlborough, [the] Countess of Essex, Mrs. Earle, Mrs. Van Duzer, Mrs. Taylor, Mrs. Seild, Mrs. Joseph Chamberlain, Mrs. Bradley Martin, Mrs. Arthur Paget,” and Mrs. Brown Potter among others, all transatlantic wives.\(^{335}\) They called themselves the “American Amazons,” and set forth to raise enough American-only donations to purchase and outfit a hospital ship for English soldiers. Their October 27, 1899 appeal in the New York Times, under the title “American Women in London Act,” read in part: “It is resolved that the American women in Great Britain, while deploring the necessity for war, shall endeavor to raise among their compatriots

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\(^{333}\) Burk, *Old World, New World: Great Britain and America from the Beginning*: 421.


here and in America a fund for the relief of sick and wounded soldiers and refugees in South Africa. A spokesperson for the group told the Daily Mail that

This is just the chance we have been waiting for. Of course, if we had our way, we should want to subscribe to the war directly, or to have our husbands and brothers volunteer; but the British Government is not in need of funds, and it would not allow our husbands and brothers to enlist. No one, however, can find any fault with works of mercy such as we propose.

More than enough funds were raised (although some Americans were less than eager to give – Andrew Carnegie refused), and the ship, called the Maine, embarked on a successful tour of duty in South Africa under both flags on December 23, 1899 with Jerome onboard. A few months later, a gun carriage was invented that would allow for the transport of the 4.7 gun to the front lines. The carriage’s inventor named the gun The Lady Randolph Churchill in recognition of her efforts during the war. (She fired the gun’s test round!)

336 Ibid.
337 Ibid.
338 “Having obtained the promise of a flag from Queen Victoria, Lady Randolph…requested a standard from President McKinley so that the Stars and Stripes and Union Jack could fly side by side on the hospital ship. The President prudently declined to risk a public outcry, so an un-anointed [sic] flag flew from the mast.” Bradford Perkins, The Great Rapprochement: England and the United States, 1895-1914 (New York: Atheneum, 1968), 94.
What is especially interesting about all of this is the fact that American women in England banded together to work as a self-consciously American group on war relief for a war that the United States did not support and was not involved in. Though they were not representing the opinions of their original country’s government in their actions, they were still clearly working as Americans and not as British citizens, once again showing their split national identities and affiliations.

*The Great War*

By the time the First World War came to Great Britain, Jennie Jerome had been replaced by Consuelo Vanderbilt as the leader of American war efforts and minder of Anglo-American relations. She headed not one, not two, but three separate women’s aid groups during the war.

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340 The S.S. Maine in South Africa, flying its two flags. [http://www.atlantictransportline.us/content/07Maine.htm](http://www.atlantictransportline.us/content/07Maine.htm), crediting Cornwallis-West, *The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill*. 
She chaired the American Women’s War Relief Committee, created on August 15, 1914, which included such well-known American wives as Jennie Jerome, Minnie Stevens (Mrs. Arthur Paget), Mrs. Whitelaw Reid (the former ambassador’s wife) and her daughter Lady Ward, Mrs. Walter Hines Page (the then-current ambassador’s wife), Viscountess Harcourt, and Mrs. Walter Burns, who was made a Dame of the Order of the British Empire in reward for her work through the organization. The group “organized themselves immediately upon the outbreak of the war, to express their sympathy with Great Britain and to aid their adopted country,” which they did first by providing 6 ambulances to the Army. American donations surpassing $300,000 during the organization’s first year paid for a four hundred bed military hospital and a staff of American nurses in Devonshire. “The second scheme of usefulness decided upon by the Committee was a carefully organized and wide-reaching system of Economic Relief…Four workrooms were started in different districts of London where many hundreds of women, thrown out of employment by the war, found a haven and a means of earning a honest livelihood,” Vanderbilt wrote in 1916.\textsuperscript{341}

Vanderbilt also headed the Woman’s Emergency Corps’s work in placing women in previously male-only jobs. Mere days after the war began, Consuelo put out a call for women to step forward and volunteer to work in these now-vacant jobs. Ten thousand responded. Finally, Vanderbilt oversaw an international fundraiser for

women and children left with nothing by the war. Over $180,000 arrived from the United States in support of this cause.\textsuperscript{342}

The Anglo-American Year Book’s 1916 edition was full of essays about the American community’s efforts during the Great War, including the work undertaken by women. An essay on “Anglo-American London in Wartime” paid homage to Minnie Stevens (Lady Arthur Paget), calling her “the most wonderful beggar” for her fundraising work at charity events around London. She also started an international fund to pay for French and English homes for blinded soldiers, and her daughter Lady Ralph Paget founded and worked at a Serbian hospital.\textsuperscript{343} The same essay credited Stevens with much of the “success of the War Fair at the Caledonian Market for the benefit of the wounded Allies.” At this fair, “where the saleswomen were ladies of title and position,” many American women ran stalls:

Mrs. A. H. Scott was responsible for the organizing…Mrs. Selfridge sold books autographed by their authors and her daughters served ice cream. Miss Newton Crane had a china stall, which was cleared each day before closing time. Lady Newborough [Grace Bruce Carr] made French hats at low price her special interest; Mrs. John Astor, who has worked so energetically to collect funds for the American Women’s Hospital at Paignton, dealt in remnants. The Countess of Essex [Adele Grant] had a vegetable stall and Mrs. John Mackinnon Robertson a little booth where Italian reproductions found a place.\textsuperscript{344}

The essay went on and on naming American women who donated their time, their homes, and their own fortunes to war relief efforts like the Red Cross – The Countess of Craven, Lady Leslie Kaye, the Duchess of Manchester, the Countess of Granard,


\textsuperscript{343} The Anglo-American Year Book: 43-44.

\textsuperscript{344} Ibid., 44-45.
the Duchess of Roxburge, Viscountess Maidstone, Lady Cheylesmore, Lady Cooper,
the Countess of Essex, Lady Newborough, Lady Naylor Leyland, and more.345
Another focus of the American community’s wartime efforts was raising money to help Americans stranded in Europe by the war get safely home; many American clubs and societies dedicated money and energy to such schemes.

Other American women showed a brave face and kept up morale during the war in different ways. Lady Emerald Cunard was in America when the war began, and before she returned her Grosvenor Square house was bombed. She promptly moved into the Dorchester Hotel where she continued to entertain throughout the war. “The Cunard suite…soon became the salon of wartime London, into which statesmen and soldiers, British and American, would drop in daily for a drink.”346 She hated the war and did not let it dictate her life, refusing to go to the shelters when the alarms sounded, and rejoicing in the fact that air-raids prolonged a party since the guests couldn’t leave.347 One of Emerald Cunard’s competitors, an English hostess named Lady Sibyl Colefax, also hosted her parties, called “Ordinaries” at the Dorchester Hotel during the war, during which she paid special attention to introducing Americans to Englishmen in her own effort at maintaining Anglo-American relations. On evenings when both Lady Cunard and Lady Colefax hosted soirees, guests had to make the delicate choice of whose to attend, as attempting to appear at both would end up in a severe reprimand from the hostesses, especially from Emerald. Nancy

345 Ibid., 46.
346 Masters, Great Hostesses: 150-51.
347 Ibid., 151.
Mitford of the famous Mitford sisters “wickedly admitted that she preferred to go to Lady Cunard, if she had the choice, as her dinner was free.”\textsuperscript{348}

Not long after the war’s conclusion, Lady Cunard stood with Chips Channon at a society wedding. Chips remarked on how speedily London had rebounded to its pre-war life. Looking around the room filled with beautiful guests, he happily gushed “\textit{This is what we have been fighting for}!” Emerald Cunard was shocked: “Why dear, are they all Poles?”\textsuperscript{349}

We have seen now, how many of these American wives became important, even integral members of English society. Their efforts in the wars of their adopted countries are, in this author’s opinion, to be especially commended and a sign of real effort at cultural assimilation, desire for acceptance, and a feeling of duty towards the country in which many of them had no original desire to live. Through their wartime efforts, and the work of the handful overtly political women it is clear that the transatlantic women had a real impact on British-American relations at the turn of the century. At the beginning of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon, Great Britain and the United States were antagonists with Great Britain being the stronger of the two. By the end of the phenomenon they were intimate partners and the United States was the new world power. This group of women had something to do with that change by means of their material, social, and political lives.

\textsuperscript{348} Ibid., 191-92.
\textsuperscript{349} Ibid., 151.
A Concluding Thought

I have here mentioned by name perhaps no more than a quarter of the dozens and dozens of American women who married Englishmen during the transatlantic marriage phenomenon. As is the rule of preservation and cultural memory, it is generally only those with extraordinary lives who make it into the history books. Consuelo Vanderbilt, Jennie Jerome, and Nancy Astor each have significant historical records and therefore figure largely in any study of transatlantic wives. It is tempting, but irresponsible and inaccurate for a historian to hold up a few noteworthy individuals as representative of a very large group of people, which past authors writing about the transatlantic marriage phenomenon have sometimes done. These three women, and a handful of others, were indeed unique and powerful individuals who stood out from the crowd. Contemporaries, however, felt the influence of the group, “the American invasion,” more profoundly than that of individual personalities, and lists of war group members and hostesses for whom even only a few stories survive make it clear that the most well-known of the group were part of a larger fabric that influenced English society in ways great and small. American women as a group influenced politics, social and fashionable trends, and brought together great minds or simply the rich and famous as hostesses for almost seven decades of modern English history.
Conclusion

The women of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon were not the first Americans in England, nor were they the last: one million American soldiers were stationed in Britain during the Second World War, many of whom married English girls. However, the American women who married Englishmen between 1874 and 1939 were unique. They married almost exclusively into the aristocracy and the upper class, where they had a large impact on English society.

The academy has not given these women the attention and recognition that they deserve. These American women served as representatives of their country, willingly or not, in culture, society, and politics. They helped keep the upper class afloat yet inevitably diluted the class purity of the aristocracy, forcing out many of the “old ways.”

In this thesis I have argued that the transatlantic marriage phenomenon ought to receive greater attention from scholars, and in different ways than it has in the past. We should examine the full span of the history, from the mid-1870s to the Second World War. We should shift the focus from the weddings themselves – their numbers and their motivations – to the lives conducted by the women once they married, and how such lives both influenced and reflected the changing times in which they lived.

Finally, the transatlantic wives should be recognized as being influential figures in the history of the English aristocracy at the turn of the 20th century. Their presence demonstrated the growing power of money in the English upper class and contributed to the transformations of upper class social practices. As individuals who
lived through these early days of globalization, they navigated the waters of national 
prejudices and the “Americanization” of England. For all of these reasons, scholars 
should credit the women of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon as worthy of 
academic study, and they should study them in the context of changing social 
dynamics in modern England.
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