

SPECIAL RELATIONSHIPS: ANGLO-AMERICAN LOVE AFFAIRS,  
COURTSHIPS AND MARRIAGES IN FICTION, 1821-1914

by

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## ABSTRACT

*Special Relationships* examines depictions of love affairs, courtships and marriages between British and American characters in nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century American short stories and novels.

I argue that these transatlantic love stories respond to shifting Anglo-American cultural, political, and economic exchanges during the period. In some cases, texts under consideration actually helped shape those interactions.

I also suggest that many authors found such transnational encounters a useful way to define ideal versions of American national identity, and to endorse or challenge prevalent attitudes regarding class, race, and gender.

*Special Relationships* begins with Cooper's *The Spy* (1821), which I discuss in the Introduction. Part One examines works published by Cooper, Irving, Frances Trollope, Lippard, Warner, and Melville during the 1820s, 30s and 40s, and traces the emergence of the "fairytale" of the American woman who marries into English aristocracy.

Part Two places works by Henry James, Burnett, and several other writers in the context of a real-life phenomenon: the plethora of American women who between 1870 and 1914 married into European nobility.

I conclude by discussing the Anglo-American political rapprochement of the 1890s and the use by Jack London and Edgar Rice Burroughs of Anglo-American love stories to promote racial 'Anglo-Saxonism.'

To Liz.

In lots of ways, I couldn't have written this without you.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **James Fenimore Cooper and the Anglo-American Relationship, 1820**

In November 1820, James Fenimore Cooper, youngest son of an illustrious American family, made his literary debut with *Precaution*.<sup>1</sup> By that year, at least one hundred novels had been produced in the new republic since independence.<sup>2</sup> The nation's book market, though, was still dominated by English titles and English tastes, and American literary critics were calling evermore urgently for native poetry, drama and fiction that made use of local stories, characters and language rather than merely following English models.<sup>3</sup> Their ire had been piqued earlier in 1820 by the English critic Sydney Smith's notorious jibe. "In all four quarters of the globe, who reads an American book?" Smith had asked, derisively.<sup>4</sup>

Beset by financial problems, Cooper had taken up literature specifically as a means of making money and he aimed *Precaution*, an Austen-esque tale of a baronet's daughters picking their way through the matrimonial minefield of English high

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<sup>1</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *Precaution, a Novel* (1820; London: George Routledge & Sons, 1889).

<sup>2</sup> Cathy N. Davidson, *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America*, Expanded Edition (1986; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 3.

<sup>3</sup> For relevant discussions, see: James D. Wallace, "Cultivating an Audience from *Precaution* to *The Spy*," in *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Clark (London: Vision and Barnes & Noble, 1985), 38-54; Robert Weisbuch, *Atlantic Double-Cross: American Literature and British Influence in the Age of Emerson* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1986), ix-8; David Timms, "Literary Distances," in *The End of Anglo-America: Historical Essays in the Study of Cultural Divergence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991) ed., R.A. Burchell, 160-169; Malcolm Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages. Trans-Atlantic Mythologies and the Novel* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1995; reprint, London: Penguin, 1996), 53-58; Leonard Tennenhouse, "A Language for the Nation: A Transatlantic Problem," in *Revolutionary Histories: Transatlantic Cultural Nationalism, 1775-1815*, ed. W.M. Verhoeven (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 62-84.

<sup>4</sup> Sydney Smith, "Who Reads an American Book?," in *The Edinburgh Review* (Edinburgh: January 1820), reprinted on: <http://www.usgennet.org/usa/topic/preservation/epochs/vol5/pg144.htm> Accessed: 16 June 2005.



society, squarely at America's Anglophile reading public.<sup>5</sup> However, even Cooper's own friends criticised *Precaution* for its Englishness and, by the author's own admission, the novel's critical and commercial success was only "moderate."<sup>6</sup> So, for his second book Cooper set himself the task of writing "an American novel professedly."<sup>7</sup> He produced *The Spy: A Tale of the Neutral Ground* (1821), the story of an upper-class, New York-state family's divided political loyalties during the War of Independence and a Patriot secret agent's heroic efforts to protect them.<sup>8</sup>

Whether shrewd or lucky, Cooper's timing was perfect. A combination of factors made the early 1820s a ripe moment to introduce such an avowedly patriotic novel into the American marketplace.<sup>9</sup> Nationalist feeling generated by the war against the

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<sup>5</sup> Biographical details from: Richard Slotkin, *The Fatal Environment: The Myth of the Frontier in the Age of Industrialization 1800-1890* (New York: Atheneum, 1985; reprint, New York: HarperPerennial, 1994), 82-84; Warren Motley, *The American Abraham: James Fenimore Cooper and the Frontier Patriarch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 1-59; Robert Emmet Long, *James Fenimore Cooper* (New York: Continuum, 1990), 13-29; Wayne Franklin, "Introduction," in James Fenimore Cooper, *The Spy*, xii-xviii; Wayne Franklin, "Fathering the Son: The Cultural Origins of James Fenimore Cooper," in *Resources for American Literary Study* 27:2 (2001): 155-158.

<sup>6</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, from "unpublished autobiographical notes which Cooper wrote down in the 1840s," printed in Susan Fenimore Cooper, *Pages and Pictures from the Writings of James Fenimore Cooper* (New York: W.A. Townsend, 1861), Appendix 1; reprinted in Marcel Clavel, *Fenimore Cooper and his Critics: American, British and French Criticisms of the Novelist's Early Work* (Aix-en-Provence: Imprimerie Universitaire de Provence, 1938), 54.

<sup>7</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *The Letters and Journals of James Fenimore Cooper Volume One*, ed. James Franklin Beard (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1960), 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *The Spy; a Tale of the Neutral Ground* (1821), with an Introduction by Wayne Franklin (London: Penguin Books, 1997).

<sup>9</sup> See: Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); Len Travers, *Celebrating the Fourth: Independence Day and the Rites of Nationalism in the Early Republic* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); David Waldstreicher, *In The Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Edward Tang, "Writing the Revolution: War Veterans in the Nineteenth-Century Cultural Imagination," *Journal of American Studies* 32 (1998): 63-80; Rosemarie Zagari, "Festive Nationalism and Antiparty Partyism," *Reviews in American History* 26:3 (1998): 504-509; David Waldstreicher, "Founders Chic as Cultural War," *Radical History Review* 84 (Fall 2002): 185-194; Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed With Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

British of 1812—1814 was still on the rise. The economic depression that had followed the war was lifting, giving new energy to the nation's self-confidence and cultural life. With the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence approaching, the entire nation was entering into what Sarah Purcell calls "a period of particularly vigorous commemoration," marked by the appearance of popular written histories of the Revolution and its key figures, public festivals, and commemorative consumer goods.<sup>10</sup> Cooper needed a hit and, in these circumstances, he got one. *The Spy* was the first American novel to be reviewed by the influential *North American Review*, in which W.H. Gardiner applauded the tale for having "laid the foundations of American romance," and called Cooper "really the first who has deserved the appellation of a distinguished American novel writer."<sup>11</sup> Gardiner proudly predicted Cooper's novel would be the first work of a distinctly American literature, and, significantly, that it would establish an indigenous literary profession. Indeed, the commercial success of *The Spy* enabled Cooper to become "the first ... American author to earn a living exclusively from his writing."<sup>12</sup> In 1825, the fiercely nationalistic critic-novelist John Neal enthused:

If not altogether American, it is not altogether English; wherefore, let us be thankful. It is not, as ninety-nine out of a hundred, of all the American stories are, a thing of this country – a British book tossed up, anew;... if it be not a real North American story ... it is very like one; if not exactly that, for which we have been longing, it is the shadow, and perhaps the forerunner of it ...<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Purcell, 176.

<sup>11</sup> W.H. Gardiner, review of *The Spy* by James Fenimore Cooper, in *North American Review* 15 (July 1822), 250-282; reprinted in *Fenimore Cooper: The Critical Heritage* eds., George Dekker and John P. McWilliams (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 66.

<sup>12</sup> James D. Wallace, *Early Cooper and His Audience* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 176.

<sup>13</sup> John Neal, review of *Lionel Lincoln* by James Fenimore Cooper, in *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* no.18, September 1825, 323-326; reprinted in Dekker and McWilliams eds., 81-83.

*The Spy* told of the fight for America's political independence in the 1770s and the novel quickly became celebrated for having struck a telling blow in America's ongoing struggle for cultural independence in the 1820s. Its popularity with readers in America and Europe was the ideal riposte to Sydney Smith.

This brief account of the publication of *The Spy* is useful for establishing the tone of Anglo-American relations at the outset of the period under consideration in this thesis, which is an examination of Anglo-American love stories produced by American writers between 1821 and 1914. (I say more about my chronological perimeters as well as my choice of texts below.)<sup>14</sup> The novel also is of interest here because it features an Anglo-American romance. Midway through, Harvey Birch, the spy of the book's title, interrupts the wedding of Sarah Wharton, the ardently Loyalist elder daughter of the narrative's central family, and announces that her fiancé, the English officer Colonel Wellmere, is already married. We already know Wellmere is a "supercilious" bully, who "sneers" at the American cause (28, 25).<sup>15</sup> Now, he is revealed to be an attempted bigamist. By preventing Sarah marrying Wellmere, Birch severs what Cooper has earlier described as one of the major attachments of colonial America to Britain: "the frequent intermarriages of the officers of the mother-country with the wealthier and more powerful families of the vicinity" (23). The worldly,

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<sup>14</sup> I would like here to clarify my use of the words England and Britain (and their derivations). I have tried throughout this thesis to avoid using the words interchangeably. I use Britain/British to mean pertaining to the British isles, and England/English to refer to things specifically English, including political systems and sets of values that were English in origin and were imposed on the other constituent areas of the United Kingdom. I have used the terms America and American to refer to the United States of America and make clear where I refer to the wider Americas. I generally use the word 'transatlantic' to refer to the Anglo-American relationship and have made clear where it refers to the European-American relationship.

<sup>15</sup> Throughout this thesis, I put page references to key works of fiction in parentheses embedded within the main body of the text. I have only included the name of the text in the parenthesis where I discuss more than one work in a passage and it would otherwise be unclear to which I am referring. I put references to other works in footnotes.

sophisticated Wellmere has attempted to deceive and sexually exploit the naïve, doting Sarah, just as, in the eyes of America's Revolutionaries, the monarchical British government he represents had politically deceived and economically exploited its until-now obedient American colonies; Birch puts a symbolic end to such mistreatment.

This was just the first of several Anglo-American courtships in Cooper's novels. If the political statement he makes with Sarah and Wellmere's relationship is straightforward, however, transatlantic couplings in Cooper's later novels are more complicated and ambivalent. Even within *The Spy*, when one considers Sarah's aborted nuptials alongside her sister Frances's engagement to a Patriot officer, one starts to see tensions in Cooper's imagining of the new American nation. I shall return to *The Spy* at the end of this Introduction and in Part One of the thesis examine works Cooper produced in the 1830s and 1840s alongside other writers' Anglo-American love stories. First, however, I would like first to describe in greater detail the literary-critical and historical contexts of my research.

## **Contexts**

In their Introduction to *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership* (2000), the collection's editors, Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault, observe that through the twentieth century the primary focus of scholars' research into Anglo-American relations has been "diplomatic and government-to-government contacts

rather than ... social, economic, intellectual, or cultural connections.”<sup>16</sup> Their comment risks overlooking the contributions of Marcus Cunliffe, Christopher Mulvey, Malcolm Bradbury, and others. Nonetheless, Leventhal and Quinault clearly were not the only academics who, entering the new millennium, felt the need to address a relative shortage of work on “social, economic, intellectual, or cultural connections” between Britain and America. New university courses have since been developed, new journals launched (*Symbiosis; The Journal of Transatlantic Studies; Comparative American Studies*) and new books published (by scholars such as William E. Van Vugt, Richard Gravil, and Susan Manning), all with the intention, to borrow from an essay by Laura M. Stevens called “Transatlanticism Now,” of “chart[ing] the flow of texts and people across the ocean,” not only between the U.K. and the U.S.A., but also around other Atlantic areas – continental Europe, Africa, South America, Canada, the Caribbean.<sup>17</sup>

It is a sign of what Stevens calls the “almost startling quantity and variety” of new transatlanticist projects that several articles, hers included, have appeared in order to provide academics with an overview of developments in the field.<sup>18</sup> In another such essay, published in 2003, Lawrence Buell reflects on the “surge” over the previous

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<sup>16</sup> Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault, “Introduction,” in *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership*, eds. Leventhal and Quinault (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 1.

<sup>17</sup> William E. Van Vugt, *Britain to America: Mid-Nineteenth-Century Immigration to the United States* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999); Richard Gravil, *Romantic Dialogues: Anglo-American Continuities, 1776-1862* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000); Susan Manning, *Fragments of Union: Making Connections in Scottish and American Writing* (New York: Palgrave, 2002). Citation: Laura Stevens, “Transatlanticism Now,” in *American Literary History* 16:1 (2004): 93. Other overview essays include: Stephen Shapiro, “Reconfiguring American Studies?: The Paradoxes of Postnationalism,” in *49<sup>th</sup> Parallel* 8 (Summer 2001): <http://www.49thparallel.bham.ac.uk/back/issue8/shapiro.htm> Accessed: 24 January 2006; Donna Gabaccia, “A Long Atlantic in a Wider World,” in *Atlantic Studies* 1:1 (April 2004): 1-27; Amanda Claybaugh, “Toward a New Transatlanticism: Dickens in the United States,” in *Victorian Studies* 48:3 (Spring 2006): 439-460.

<sup>18</sup> Stevens: 93.

fifteen years of “American literary studies in transatlantic context.”<sup>19</sup> He notes, “Specialists in Anglo-American literature between the American Revolution and the dawn of modernism have been relatively slow to join in,” but welcomes in particular the publication of Paul Giles’s *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Culture, 1730-1860* (2001) as evidence that “things have begun to change significantly.”<sup>20</sup>

In *Transatlantic Insurrections* and its sequel *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (2002), Giles insists on the importance of reading American literature comparatively:

By examining the cultural narratives of the United States from ... a position through which American fictions are brought into juxtaposition with those of other countries, it becomes easier to appreciate the assumptions framing these narratives and the ways they are intertwined with the construction and reproduction of national mythologies.<sup>21</sup>

Buell applauds *Transatlantic Insurrections* for suggesting the “revisionary” potential of reading premodernist American literature transnationally, but also cautions, “the endeavor is still at an early stage.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Lawrence Buell, “Rethinking Anglo-American Literary History,” in *Clio* 33:1 (Fall 2003): 65.

<sup>20</sup> Buell, “Rethinking”: 65. Paul Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections: British Culture and the Formation of American Literature, 1730-1860* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> Paul Giles, *Virtual Americas: Transnational Fictions and the Transatlantic Imaginary* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Buell, “Rethinking”: 72, 68. While welcoming and largely praising Giles, Buell and Robert Weisbuch do both criticise elements of his work. Buell writes that Giles’s technique of coupling an American with an English author – “pairing superficially improbable twins” – sometimes “seems like little more than a gimmicky stand-in for more strenuously nuanced examination,” and that Giles’s pleasure with his stylistic conceit causes him to disregard more rigorous and wide-ranging study of historical, social and literary contexts. “Repetitiousness and critical thinness become the downsides of the critical audacity here,” Buell says (70). Weisbuch, meanwhile, argues that Giles’s work is “sometimes valuable more for individual readings than for a larger argument,” and that the absence of wider perspectives often leads him to make claims that cannot be substantiated when put into larger socio-historical and literary context. He also feels Giles goes too far in his refusal to see any truth in national mythologies; “One wishes, at times, that he would entertain the merest possibility that national

Critics involved in this “endeavor” have used a number of strategies and devices for throwing texts into transnational perspective, often deploying more than one such tactic in combination with others. These include comparing British and American works that address similar themes and events; examining the literary responses of an American author to a British one or vice-versa; relating the friendship (or enmity) between a British and an American author and assessing the mutual influence of that relationship; scrutinising an author’s travels from his or her homeland to another part of the Atlantic region and their recording of that experience; and placing texts written on either side of the Atlantic together in the context of a particular social change that impacted on both continents.<sup>23</sup>

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characterization is based on some realities.” Robert Weisbuch, review of *Transatlantic Insurrections*, by Paul Giles, *Symbiosis* 7:2 (October 2003): 262, 264.

<sup>23</sup> In addition to titles already noted, other recent publications on Anglo-American literary relations that I have consulted for this thesis are: David Timms, “Literary Distances,” in *The End of Anglo-America: Historical Essays in the Study of Cultural Divergence*, ed. R.A. Burchell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 160-183; Lawrence Buell, “Melville and the Question of American Decolonization,” *American Literature* 64:2 (June 1992): 215-237; Stephen Fender, *Sea Changes: British Emigration and American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993); Malcolm Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages. Trans-Atlantic Mythologies and the Novel* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1995; reprinted London: Penguin, 1996); Alex Zwerdling, *Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London* (New York: Basic Books, 1998); James C. Simmons, *Star-Spangled Eden: 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America Through The Eyes of Dickens, Wilde, Frances Trollope, Frank Harris, and Other British Travellers* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2000); Janet Beer and Bridget Bennett eds., *Special Relationships: Anglo-American Affinities and Antagonisms, 1854-1936* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002); Elizabeth Kelly Gray, “American Attitudes Toward British Imperialism 1815-1860” (Ph.D. diss., The College of William and Mary in Virginia, 2002); W.M. Verhoeven ed., *Revolutionary Histories: Transatlantic Cultural Nationalism, 1775-1815* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002); Annamaria Formichella Elsdon, *Roman Fever: Domesticity and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century American Women’s Writing* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2004); Monika Mueller, *George Eliot and the United States: Transatlantic Literary and Cultural Perspectives* (Madison, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2005).

Beer and Bennett’s volume is also titled *Special Relationships*. I decided to maintain my title even after I had discovered their book as I believe it even more apt to describe my text. I would, of course, reconsider were I ever to seek publication for this thesis. The phrase “special relationships” did not come into common usage until after the period on which I focus in this thesis. It probably originates with Winston Churchill in 1945. Source: Anne Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895-1956* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1996), 6.

This thesis takes an approach that, while by no means unique, I have not yet seen used as the primary methodology for a transatlanticist study of nineteenth-century American literature: I concentrate on one particular type of Anglo-American encounter and explore its representation within prose fiction, following the theme for almost a hundred years. Specifically, I examine love affairs, courtships and marriages between English and American characters.<sup>24</sup>

My original intention for the thesis seems in retrospect fairly straightforward: to respond to Leventhal and Quinault's call for greater understanding of the ways in which British and American people have, since the American Revolution, interacted with each other through literary texts, economic networks, and other forms of cultural expression and social contact. My primary argument here is that my featured writers use transatlantic love stories as a means of registering and commenting upon the shifting nature of Anglo-American cultural, political and economic exchanges from the 1820s until World War One and that, in some cases, the texts under consideration actually helped shape those interactions.

As the project developed, however, I began to see some of its further implications. I have become increasingly influenced by the desire of Giles, Stevens, Buell, and many more for relativising the study of American literature as a means of recontextualising narratives that, left to be read only in a national and nationalist framework, can make

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<sup>24</sup> During the latter stages of writing this thesis, I became aware of Jean Clark DuBro's PhD dissertation, "Purchasing Power: Transatlantic Marriage Novels in American Literature" (Ph.D diss., The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2004). DuBro writes about some of the same novels I feature here. Her interest, however, is not in their depiction of the Anglo-American relationship, but in interconnecting issues of gender and capitalism. There is some minimal overlap between our two theses, but I hope mine complements and advances rather than duplicates Ms. DuBro's.



the unequal power relations they encode seem immanent, unarguable, and legitimate. Standing behind these critics' work (or, at least, my understanding of it) is the theorising of modern nationalism by Benedict Anderson and his successors.<sup>25</sup> They expose the powerful and all-pervasive mythologising of the nation-state as a unified, natural and often divinely-ordained entity, which when successful works to coerce citizens into accepting and/or effacing – certainly not dissenting against – “the actual inequality and exploitation” between genders, classes, regions and ethnic groups that may be embedded in and perpetuated by their nation’s very political organisation.<sup>26</sup> Demonstrating that nations are constructed or “imagined” rather than organic entities opens up the possibility for them to be reconstructed or reimagined in more equitable structures. It also enables us better to understand how certain nations’ mythologies work to authorise their subjugation of other nations, and even to rethink the very rightfulness of the nation-state as an organising category for the world’s people.

During my research, I have engaged more and more with the work of scholars such as Anderson, and Nancy Cott, who in *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (2000) describes how since the Revolution the legal institution of marriage has been moulded and remoulded as an expression of changing American national ideals; how the use by politicians, reformers, writers and the mass media of marriage as a

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<sup>25</sup> The studies of nationalism I have found particularly useful for this thesis are: Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* Revised Edition (1983; London: Verso, 2006); Ann Dummett and Andrew Nicol, *Subjects, Citizens, Aliens, and Others: Nationality and Immigration Law* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990); Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny eds., *Becoming National: A Reader* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996); Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (London: Sage Publications, 1997); Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Ida Blom, Karen Hageman and Catherine Hall eds., *Gendered Nations: Nationalism and Gender Order in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Berg, 2000); Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed With Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002).

<sup>26</sup> Benedict Anderson, 7.

persuasive metaphor for wider interpersonal and inter-community relations has helped to structure the nation's social, political and legal organisation; and how debate over what constitutes 'suitable' marriage has been a site of contest between different interest groups to define what is and what is not 'truly' American.<sup>27</sup> In short, Cott's work revealed to me the importance of marriage in that ongoing process of "imagining" the nation.

Cott's book lead me to other scholars – Michael Grossberg, Candice Lewis Bredbenner, Elizabeth Freeman, to name just three – and their writing about the ideological function of marriage within the American nation-state.<sup>28</sup> By now, I had collected a tall stack of novels and short stories, British and American, written between 1821 and 1914 that feature Anglo-American romantic relationships. I had been reading these texts to see what differences and similarities between Britons and Americans their authors identified, and how they used such comparisons to express a preference for the people, social customs and political organisation of one country over the other. I now began to examine them also from another angle.

By their very nature, these texts simultaneously foreground and connect issues of marriage and nationhood. For many of their key characters, even considering marriage with someone of another country raises difficult questions about their conception of and commitment to national values. Is there something unpatriotic in

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<sup>27</sup> Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000).

<sup>28</sup> Michael Grossberg, *Governing the Hearth: Law and the Family in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Candice Lewis Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own: Women, Marriage, and the Law on Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Elizabeth Freeman, *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002). I cite other works on the nationalist function of marriage throughout the thesis.

choosing a foreign spouse instead of a compatriot? Which comes first – love, or the nation? Can the value-systems of two people raised in different cultures ever be compatible enough to sustain a life-partnership? (In 1898, John Bassett Moore, writing a U.S.-government commentary on nationality law, thought not: “The intimate relation, the mutual affection, the common sympathies, the family, the education of the children in allegiance, fidelity, and love to the government, the common pecuniary interests, the obligation to live with each other as long as life lasts, and the tranquillity and harmony of domestic life, all require that *the husband and wife should be of the same nationality* [my italics].”)<sup>29</sup> What ideological compromises might have to be made to ensure compatibility? Will the influence of a foreign spouse change a character’s perceptions of his/her home nation, especially if marriage entails emigration? Are British and American conceptions of marriage different? If so, which is preferable, and what might the answer to that question say about one or the other nation’s construction of marriage as an extension and reflection of communal ideals?

As we shall see, as certain characters pass through the stages of attraction to, courtship with, and acceptance or rejection of a foreigner, they feel compelled to assert and argue for certain values that they attribute to their national upbringing, often in response to direct challenges by a would-be spouse to their code of belief. This trope seemed to me to appear most often and most urgently in the stories by American authors I was reading, especially those written in the early decades of the period under consideration. This is perhaps unsurprising. From the Declaration of Independence until the 1850s, it is arguable that mainstream American politicians and

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<sup>29</sup> John Bassett Moore, *History and Digest of the International Arbitrations to Which the United States Has Been a Party* Volume 3 (Washington, D.C.: G.P.O, 1898); cited in Bredbenner, 15 (no page reference for original text).

public figures primarily defined the American nation negatively, by the ways in which it was *not*-Britain.<sup>30</sup> An Anglo-American love story provided an American author with an opportunity to test the strength, if you like, of an American character's allegiance to her or his country through their encounter with a British lover, against whose beliefs she or he is forced to define themselves as American, i.e. *not*-British, either by rejecting their suit, or only accepting it if the suitor is willing to Americanise. The character's choices about whether or not to marry and who to marry become the key way for them to avow their affiliation to the nation-state and express their national identity.

What was particularly interesting to me about these narratives is that even when their conclusions seem to have asserted their main character's American-ness, it is via a process of negotiation that necessarily generates questions about the coherence and legitimacy of their nationally defined value system, questions that are not always satisfactorily answered by their endings. In this sense, when put under a little pressure, the texts themselves do some of the work for which Paul Giles calls: they relativise "conceptions of national identity" and expose them as "much more divided and unstable" than they may at first glance seem.<sup>31</sup> They suggest through collision and comparison with nominally British values how the "system of authority" embedded in a character's conception of American national identity, including their

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<sup>30</sup> For discussions of American self-definition against Britain, see: William Brock, "The Image of England and American Nationalism," *Journal of American Studies* 5:1 (1971): 225-245; Michael Kammen, *A Season of Youth: The American Revolution and the Historical Imagination* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); David Simpson, *The Politics of American English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Bradbury, 1-13; R.A. Burchell ed., *The End of Anglo-America: Historical Essays in the Study of Cultural Divergence* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991); Robert A. Ferguson, *The American Enlightenment, 1750-1820* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1-22; Howard Temperley, *Britain and America Since Independence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 1-58.

<sup>31</sup> Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections*, 14.

understanding of ‘proper’ relations between different groups of people within the nation, might actually “be construed as an arbitrary and performative rather than integrated or naturalized phenomenon.”<sup>32</sup>

In order to pursue this line of thinking further (and no doubt influenced by the fact I work within a department of American Studies rather than English Literature), I decided to concentrate on American authors, and to focus in particular on those authors whose transnational fictions best offered the possibility of seeing constructions of national identity from unconventional and revealing angles. My thesis now took on a second objective. I contend that many of my selected authors find Anglo-American romances a useful way of trying to define their ideals of American national identity. Some, I claim, do so as a means of endorsing as ‘properly’ American prevalent attitudes regarding issues such as class politics, race and immigration, imperialism, and gender relations, often in an effort to counteract social changes that threaten the hegemony of those attitudes. Others, I propose, purposefully attack such attitudes, taking advantage of the opportunities opened up by the transnational encounter to offer alternative versions of national identity. In other words, some authors apparently seek to offer a cohesive and usually conservative interpretation of national identity, which they want us to understand becomes stronger for having been tested, and some seem to want to expose divisions and uncertainties in American life. Often, I hope to demonstrate, the authors who fall into the former group also end up revealing but not resolving inadequacies, injustices, and tensions that complicate their particular nationalist projects.

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<sup>32</sup> Giles, *Transatlantic Insurrections*, 14, 125.

Below, I seek to show how *The Spy* establishes a particular and problematic version of American national identity. I continue in Part One by reading works published by Cooper, Frances Trollope, George Lippard and Herman Melville during the 1820s, 30s and 40s. I investigate the ways these works use Anglo-American romance narratives as a means of celebrating and/or critiquing American society. Through this section, I trace the emergence of the “fairytale” of the American woman who marries into the English aristocracy, contending that this fantasy crystallised with Susan Warner’s novel *Queechy* (1852).<sup>33</sup> I suggest that until a softening in Anglo-American relations in the late 1840s, American readers would have considered such a narrative unacceptable, but from then onwards the “fairytale” provided welcome imaginative escapism for a middle-class readership suffering increasing economic uncertainty. The section ends on Louisa May Alcott’s *Little Women* (1868—69), which I argue reproduces the resumed chilliness in Anglo-American relations that resulted from the American Civil War.<sup>34</sup>

Part Two places works by Henry James, Frances Hodgson Burnett and other writers in the context of a real-life phenomenon: the plethora of wealthy American women who between 1870 and World War One married into European nobility. The public controversy surrounding this phenomenon became a focal point for anxieties over growing economic disparities in American society, rapidly increasing immigration, the institution of marriage, and the relationship between women and the body politic.

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<sup>33</sup> Susan Warner (writing as Elizabeth Wetherell), *Queechy* (1852; London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1898?).

<sup>34</sup> Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Camille Cauti (1868—69; New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2004).

My chosen texts make revealing interventions in this public debate. In Part Two, I describe the Anglo-American political rapprochement of the mid-1890s, its underpinning by contemporaneous theories of white racial superiority, and the sense of Britain and America's joint imperialist destiny that emerged from it. The section ends with readings of Anglo-American marriages in Jack London's *Adventure* (1911) and Edgar Rice Burroughs' *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912). I situate these novels in the context of that new Anglo-American imperialist worldview.<sup>35</sup> My Epilogue considers Edith Wharton's stories of Anglo-American romances and their reflections on the mores and morals of the later nineteenth century, especially regarding gender and marriage.

As might be apparent from this brief outline, many of the fictions included in this thesis centre around romantic relationships between American women and English aristocrats. I might not yet have tracked down every story written between 1821 and 1914 that features an Anglo-American romance narrative, but I have read more than three dozen, and the great majority do involve an American woman and an English nobleman, which invites the question: why?<sup>36</sup>

There are some readily discernible reasons that aristocrats feature so prominently. Often they are figured as representative of the British class system and English values. As the very thing that Americans in independence rejected, the possibility that an

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<sup>35</sup> Jack London, *Adventure: A Novel* (1911; London: T. Nelson & Sons, undated); Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*, with an Introduction by John Taliaferro (1912; New York: The Modern Library, 2003).

<sup>36</sup> I have found a further half-dozen short stories and novels that feature the marriages of American women to aristocrats of other European countries, including works by James and Wharton, and numerous texts by English authors that deal with Anglo-American elite marriages.

American woman might find an English aristocrat attractive represents a challenge to fundamental U.S. national values. Alcott in *Little Women* and James in “An International Episode” (1878—79) have American women reject aristocratic Englishmen as if patriotically replaying the Revolution and celebrating anti-aristocratic American values.<sup>37</sup> By contrast, Lippard in *Quaker City* (1844) uses a Philadelphian woman’s obsession with marrying into the English aristocracy to argue that Americans have betrayed their Revolutionary, democratic principles and are sliding back into English hierarchies.<sup>38</sup> In Warner’s *Queechy* and Burnett’s *The Shuttle* (1907), meanwhile, marriage into influential English aristocratic families actually provides American women with a platform for their patriotism, enabling them to spread democratic principles and energetic American capitalism to the Old World.<sup>39</sup> In almost all cases, authors take the opportunity to write about magnificent mansions, ancient castles, landscaped estates, horse-drawn carriages, lavish dinners, and fabulous clothes; authors presumably calculated, often correctly, that such glamour would appeal to audiences on both sides of the Atlantic.

Why, though, male rather than female aristocrats? One reason might be that under the British system, it was, of course, the male children of aristocratic clans who inherited the lion’s share of the family wealth, property and power: male aristocrats could be seen as truly embodying the British political system and social organisation. I want to suggest, though, that authors’ repeated choice of American women for Anglo-American love stories might not simply have been an inevitable consequence of their

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<sup>37</sup> Henry James, “An International Episode” (1878), in James, *Major Stories and Essays*, eds., Leon Edel et al (New York: Library of America, 1984; reprint, 1999), 61-135.

<sup>38</sup> George Lippard, *The Quaker City, or The Monks of Monk Hall*, edited with an Introduction by Leslie Fielder (1844; New York: The Odyssey Press, 1970).

<sup>39</sup> Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Shuttle* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1907).



choice of a male English suitor; the prominence of American women in these narratives is itself significant. In order to explain why, it is useful first to look briefly at the institution of marriage in the Anglo-American world.

In one respect, the United States and Britain diverged in their respective cultural and legal formations of marriage after American independence. Whereas in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, the British government imposed severe restrictions on informal or ‘common-law’ marriages, post-Revolutionary American “marriage law made matrimony much easier for a couple to enter.”<sup>40</sup> American law in effect relaxed the statutory requirements to be met by a couple seeking to marry and conferred the same legal status on self-constituted marriages as those solemnised by a church wedding and acknowledged by public authorities. This was both an ideological and practical move. The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution imagined into being a nation predicated on each individual (each adult, white individual, at least) having the autonomous right to enter into contracts with each other and with the state; this extended to marriage. Matrimonial law now enshrined the rights of individuals to marry according to personal choice and not only rejected the rights of families to arrange marriages on behalf of their children, but also

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<sup>40</sup> Grossberg, *Governing the Hearth*, 69. Information in this Introduction on the formation of marriage in the new American republic, unless otherwise stated, from: Sondra R. Herman, “Loving Courtship or the Marriage Market? The Ideal and its Critics 1871-1911,” *American Quarterly* 25:2 (May 1973): 235-252; Grossberg, 1-152; John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 107-278; Roderick Phillips, *Putting Asunder: A History of Divorce in Western Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 144-158; Carole Shammas, “Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52:1 (January 1995): 104-144; John Witte, Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 194-215; Cott, *Public Vows*, 1-55; Hendrik Hartog, *Man and Wife in America: A History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 63-164; Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Wife* (London: Pandora, 2001), 146-225; Freeman, 1-44; Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 145-195.

marginalised the importance of familial permission for a marriage. There was in any case no practical way of enforcing tight controls on marriage over the entire population. The United States was a geographically giant nation, especially after 1803's Louisiana Purchase. Away from the major east-coast conurbations, it consisted of small and widely scattered settlements, and the state had not yet developed "technologies of governance to monitor and control a people strewn unevenly over a huge expanse of land."<sup>41</sup>

In fact, marriage itself was co-opted by policymakers as a means of keeping control over the country's growing and dispersed population. Legal historian Matthew Lindsay argues that for most of the nineteenth century politicians, judges, preachers, mainstream social scientists and the general public all viewed marriage as "an intrinsically valuable institution," necessary for the very stability of the United States.<sup>42</sup> As the settlement of the West continued, there was a significant proportion of the population always in transit, and new communities flowered and disappeared with bewildering frequency. In such circumstances, the family unit was the one continuous grouping of people. It represented the most reliable unit of governance, and the state continued to depend upon it through much of the nineteenth century. Relations within the family, including the obedience of the wife to the husband, children to parents, and in the antebellum South of slaves to masters, were dictated by law, custom, and the Church, all of which specified the man as the head of the household and authorised him to enforce physically his will on his dependents (within certain boundaries). Married men were, then, in effect charged with maintaining the

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<sup>41</sup> Cott, *Public Vows*, 157.

<sup>42</sup> Matthew J. Lindsay, "Reproducing a Fit Citizenry: Dependency, Eugenics, and the Law of Marriage in the United States, 1869-1920," *Law and Social Inquiry* 23:3 (Summer 1998): 555.

good behaviour of the rest of the population. Marriage was necessary because it created married men, and from married men spread social discipline.<sup>43</sup>

This conception of the gender relations within marriage was something the United States had maintained from pre-Revolutionary times. American marriage law continued to be shaped by the same notion of coverture that underpinned British common law. Sir William Blackstone, the legal theorist whose epic *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765) remained in America the definitive textbook for lawyers and law students through the 1800s, explained coverture thus: “the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during marriage.”<sup>44</sup> A married couple shared a single legal identity: the husband’s. Coverture entitled a man to full sexual access to his wife’s body – the ideology held that she had given her once-and-for-all consent to this on her wedding day; it decreed a married woman could not make contracts, and that her property and wages became her husband’s. Consent may have been fundamental to the American conception of marriage but, as Mary Shanley comments, “To contract a marriage was to consent to a status which in its essence was hierarchical and unalterable.”<sup>45</sup> A husband was authorised to act and make decisions on behalf of himself and his wife.

In 1855 and again in 1907 Congress used coverture as the basis of new laws on citizenship, in 1855 by conferring automatic U.S. citizenship of the foreign-born

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<sup>43</sup> See: Lindsay, 541-553; Cott, *Public Vows*, 1-76; Yalom, 177-225; Coontz, 145-176.

<sup>44</sup> Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England* (1765; New Haven: Yale University Blackstone Collection, 1984), I.430; quoted in DuBro, 14.

<sup>45</sup> Mary L. Shanley, “The Marriage Contract in Seventeenth-Century English Political Thought,” *Western Political Quarterly* 32:1 (1979): 79; quoted in Debra Ann MacComb, *Tales of Liberation, Strategies of Containment: Divorce and Womanhood in American Fiction, 1880-1920* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000), 62.

wives of American citizens, whether or not they wanted it, and in 1907 by introducing a law that formally expatriated American women who married foreign men under the assumption they would now share their husband's national citizenship.<sup>46</sup> A woman's national identity was subsumed into her husband's. Even before 1855 and 1907, many individual court decisions took for granted that in transnational marriages the woman assumed her husband's nationality.

There was much to be lost, then, for an American woman who wanted to marry a foreigner, more so than for an American man, who would not forsake his American citizenship on marriage to an alien woman. In many of the stories I analyse here, the woman risks losing her national identity, not solely in bureaucratic terms, but also in terms of emotional and intellectual selfhood. Under coverture, by marrying a foreigner, she will forego her right to determine her actions according to American principles. In *Queechy*, this creates a problem for its patriotic heroine Fleda Ringgan when she contemplates marriage to the English aristocrat Carleton. Can she willingly surrender her identity to him, as marriage requires, *and* maintain her American-ness? The solution in *Queechy* is that Fleda teaches Carleton to be more American, so that she can in good conscience then in marriage follow his lead.

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<sup>46</sup> Information in this paragraph, from: Virginia Sapiro, "Women, Citizenship, and Nationality: Immigration and Naturalization Policies in the United States," in *Politics and Society* 13:1 (1984): 1-26; Linda Kerber, "A Constitutional Right to be Treated Like American Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship," in *US History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays* eds., Kerber et al (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 17-35; Bredbenner, 45-79; Marian L. Smith, "'Any woman who is now or hereafter may be married...': Women and Naturalization, ca.1802-1940," *Prologue (Magazine of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)* 30:2 (Summer, 1998), reproduced at <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/summer/women-and-naturalization.html> (Accessed: 14 July 2006); Nancy F. Cott, "Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1914," *The American Historical Review* 103:5 (December 1998), 1440-1474; Jacqueline Stevens, *Reproducing the State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 135-137; Ann Marie Nicolosi, "'We Do Not Want Our Girls To Marry Foreigners': Gender, Race, and American Citizenship," *NWSA Journal* 13:3 (Fall 2001): 1-21.

I suspect that for American writers in particular the figure of the American woman courted by an Englishman was particularly potent because it gave this opportunity to dramatise either her unpatriotic decision to forfeit her national identity or her patriotic struggle to maintain her American-ness instead of or as well as marrying the Briton. If the War of Independence involved its American leaders defining America against Britain, then in the decades that followed, Anglo-American courtship stories in their own, small way made national identity something to be fought for and negotiated all over again and so gave writers occasion to construct their particular version of ‘true’ American-ness.

American marriage law and custom set not only a gendered hierarchy within marriage, but also fixed particular roles for men and women based on the supposed ‘natural’ strengths and weaknesses of each gender. In crude terms: while men (hunter-gatherers) were to earn the money, women (nurturers) were to raise the children. As recent historical and cultural interrogation of the nineteenth century has revealed, these spheres were not in reality as separate as once thought, but there nonetheless operated powerful idealisations of the distinct parts to be played within marriage by husband and wife.<sup>47</sup> Historians such as Linda Kerber and Carroll Smith-Rosenberg have demonstrated how in the United States during this period women’s traditional domestic role as homemaker and mother increasingly became charged with public significance: women were expected to educate their children in the virtues that

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<sup>47</sup> For an excellent overview of recent scholarship that interrogates ‘separate spheres’ in this way, see the essays in Monika M. Elbert, ed., *Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature, 1830-1930* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000).

would make them dutiful American citizens.<sup>48</sup> “Thus,” as Bredbenner notes, “her commitment to her family’s welfare and her patriotism could be conflated.”<sup>49</sup> If an American woman married a foreigner, however, in the values of which partner’s nation would their children be educated? Many texts under consideration here end with the engagement or wedding of the key protagonists but for those that extend into marriage itself, such as Burnett’s *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) and Wharton’s “Madame de Treymes” (1907), this question adds extra pressure to American women’s efforts to maintain American-ness while married to a non-American.<sup>50</sup>

Although the relationship between man and wife was undoubtedly hierarchical, marriage in the early republic was being increasingly conceived of as a partnership, perhaps not of equals, but of two mutually supportive people, each of whom contributed valuable skills. As Debra MacComb explains, “The notion of companionate marriage based in reciprocal duties and satisfactions was in accord with the period’s republican sentiments.”<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Linda Kerber, *Women of the Republic : Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1980); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998). See also: Ruth H. Bloch, “The Gendered Meanings of Virtue in Revolutionary America,” *Signs* 13:1 (Autumn, 1987): 37-58; Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “Domesticating ‘Virtue’: Coquettes and Revolutionaries in Young America,” in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. Elaine Scarry (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988; reprint, 1990), 160-184. Christine Bolt, *The Women’s Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993); Bredbenner, 1-79.

<sup>49</sup> Bredbenner, 12.

<sup>50</sup> Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886; London: Penguin, 1994); Edith Wharton, *Madame de Treymes* in *Madame de Treymes and Three Other Novellas* (1906-07; New York: Scribner, 1995), 211-282.

<sup>51</sup> MacComb, *Tales of Liberation*, 60.

Indeed, it was roughly in the period between the Revolution and the 1820s that in America and Britain the modern conception of wedlock emerged.<sup>52</sup> Most notably, by the 1830s, love – understood through the lens of Romanticism to be the mysterious, spontaneous, all-powerful, ungovernable, exclusive, and enduring mutual attraction of two unique and individual selves – had overtaken “property and social standing and other prudential factors” as the primary motivation and necessary precondition for marriage.<sup>53</sup> This was certainly true among the growing middle classes, whose values were increasingly setting the tone of public discourse and the standards of permissible behaviour.<sup>54</sup> As Karen Lystra and Ellen Rothman have both demonstrated, Americans of all classes internalised and acted upon the new culture of romantic love. Whereas in earlier times in the Anglo-American world, one expected to marry to satisfy the economic and social needs of one’s family, one now married out of personal choice and for love (within, of course, legal definitions of eligibility, which in America permitted only heterosexual, monogamous, same-race marriages). Although, as Marilyn Yalom points out, “property, family, and social status continued to weigh heavily in the decision,” especially for women, who were generally denied the same professional routes to wealth and security as men and so relied to a greater extent on marriage to fulfil economic needs and desires.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> In addition to texts on love and marriage already noted, see: Joseph Kett, *Rites of Passage: Adolescence in America 1790 to the Present* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 1-108; Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Mary Evans, “‘Falling in Love with Love is Falling for Make Believe’: Ideologies of Romance in Post-Enlightenment Culture,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 15:3-4 (1998): 265-275.

<sup>53</sup> Lystra, 6.

<sup>54</sup> See texts noted in footnote 52 for discussions of the relationship between romantic love and class. See also Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct*, 167-181.

<sup>55</sup> Yalom, 176.

The socioeconomic, demographic, religious, familial and cultural shifts that over several centuries propelled romantic love to this position of pre-eminence have been enumerated elsewhere and do not need rehearsing at length here.<sup>56</sup> What is important to note, though, is that, as cultural historians such as Yalom, Lystra, Stephanie Coontz and Elizabeth Freeman have recounted, there emerged in the first half of the nineteenth century what might be termed a culture of love, propagated through novels, poems, sermons, conduct manuals, advice literature and advertising, and embodied in the romantic trappings of the new ‘white’ wedding, which was popularised in America as in Britain by Queen Victoria’s nuptials in 1840.<sup>57</sup> This culture rendered finding one’s ‘soulmate’ the primary aspiration of a young person’s life, and it made marriage appear, in Freeman’s words, the “natural, inevitable, and sacred” sequel to falling in love.<sup>58</sup> Young people were cautioned that only romantic love should form the basis of a marriage, and only monogamous marriage conferred religious, moral, legal and social legitimacy on romantic love; i.e. cohabitation, sex, and procreation conducted outside marriage were all culturally prohibited and/or legally punishable.

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<sup>56</sup> In addition to the texts noted in footnotes 40 and 52, and below in this paragraph, see Joseph Allen Boone’s, *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), especially 1-64, and the same author’s article “Modernist Maneuverings in the Marriage Plot: Breaking Ideologies of Gender and Genre in James’s *The Golden Bowl*,” in *PMLA* 101:3 (May, 1986): 374-388. In the latter, Boone succinctly enumerates the “complex series of factors” that contributed during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries to the emergence of romantic love: “including demographic shifts in kinship patterns, economic and political developments, and, perhaps most influential, the Puritan glorification of ‘holy matrimony’ (as opposed to celibacy) to combat Catholic ideals.” He goes on to note that with “the rise of sentimentalism and practice of capitalism, those odd bedfellows of the eighteenth century, a secularized version of the Puritan ideal emerged in the concept of the loving companionate marriage” and it was comprehensively “adopted by the newly enfranchised middle class” (375).

<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Celebrating the Family: Ethnicity, Consumer Culture, and Family Rituals* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 207-208; Coontz, *Marriage, a History*, 166-168.

<sup>58</sup> Freeman, xi.



“Ideas of love formed the basis of middle-class standards of sexual purity, marital happiness, and emotional fulfilment in Victorian America,” Lystra writes.<sup>59</sup>

Women in particular were conditioned by this culture to consider their wedding day the single most important day of their life, and their selection of husband their only genuinely meaningful choice in life. As a result, conduct manuals, sermons, novels, plays, and magazine articles frequently implored young women to think carefully whether they were ‘truly’ in love with a particular man, and advised that ‘true love’ could only come about when both partners were of the same social, ethnic and national origins. In turn, women who failed to marry for true love were either pitied for their misfortune or condemned for their mistake.

The citizenship legislation of 1907, which punished American women marrying foreigners with expatriation, in effect asserted that, if a woman’s life was defined by her marriage, then her patriotism could be judged by the nationality of her husband. In fiction and in wider culture, an American woman’s decision to marry a foreigner was frequently treated as an implicit snub to Americans; love might have been considered ungovernable, but nevertheless the reaction of compatriots to an American woman falling in love with a foreigner was that she was demonstrating a conscious, unpatriotic preference for another country. Either she had failed in her patriotic duty by falling in love with a foreigner, or she was not truly in love. It was held that she was literally choosing another national identity for herself – after 1907, this became

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<sup>59</sup> Lystra, 7.

true in absolute legal terms.<sup>60</sup> Behind Benedict Anderson's enquiry into nationalism lies the question of why over the past two centuries millions of men have volunteered during wars "not so much to kill, as willingly to die" for their nation.<sup>61</sup> One might add that, if men have been expected to die for the nation, women have been expected to fall in love for it.

The culture of romantic love was the counterpart – both cause and effect – of the new definition of marriage as a consensual, contractual relationship. Their mutual ascendancy was connected not only with the development of the new American nation, but in both Europe and America also with another phenomenon of modernity: the rise of the novel during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as the most widely read literary form – the very vehicle with which the newly powerful middle classes defined and disseminated their values. Numerous critics have described this process and demonstrated the centrality of modern notions of love, courtship, and marriage in it.<sup>62</sup> The love story – two individuals overcoming obstacles to their union and eventually marrying – became the most common narrative structure for the novel, the architecture even of texts that, like *The Spy*, as we shall see, purport to be about other things. In a study I find particularly useful, Joseph Boone discusses how "the tradition of romantic wedlock [has been] embedded in Anglo-American fiction since its beginnings" and shows how the conventional courtship plot "at once encode[s] and perpetuate[s]" both the privilege accorded to heterosexual love in modern society, and

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<sup>60</sup> In a later legal challenge to the 1907 Expatriation Act, the Supreme Court held that as marriage was a voluntary act, so the expatriation that went with it "must be considered as elected." *Mackenzie v. Hare* (239 U.S. 299); quoted in Nicolosi: 10.

<sup>61</sup> Benedict Anderson, 7.

<sup>62</sup> Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979); Boone, *Tradition Counter Tradition*; Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Love: Victorians to Moderns* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992; reprint, 1994); Catherine Belsey, *Desire: Love Stories in Western Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994).

the uneven distribution of power within heterosexual marriage.<sup>63</sup> In her seminal *Revolution and the Word: The Rise of the Novel in America* (1986), Cathy Davidson describes the significance of the genre – with its reliance on love and marriage and assumptions therein about individual rights and gender roles – in shaping the shared ideals and practices of the fledgling American republic. To adapt a phrase of Davidson’s, the forty years that followed the Revolution saw the coemergence of the new U.S. nation, the new literary genre of the novel, and our modern conception of love and wedlock.<sup>64</sup> All three elements of this symbiosis have, of course, continued to develop and change ever since. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to say that, by 1820, when Davidson concludes her study, the United States of America, the novel, and romantic wedlock were all established realities; in process, yes, but unlikely to disappear or even change beyond recognition. The start of the 1820s seems, then, a suitable point at which to begin an account of novels (and some short stories) that wrestle with intertwined issues of U.S. nationhood and marriage. I would like to note, though, that I have always regarded this thesis as the middle section of a possible larger study. The first section of this study would look at earlier Anglo-American love stories such as Pocahontas narratives and Susanna Rowson’s *Charlotte Temple* (1794), and the second at texts, including films and television programmes, produced between World War One and the present day.<sup>65</sup> Ideally, such a study also would include British works as well as American. 1821 is a useful place to start this thesis, and, given the shifts in Anglo-American relations caused by the First World War, 1914 seems a suitable point at which to end it, but the selection of these dates is

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<sup>63</sup> Boone, *Tradition, Counter-Tradition*, 1, 2.

<sup>64</sup> Davidson’s original phrase is: “the coemergence of the new U.S. nation and the new literary genre of the novel.” Davidson, vii.

<sup>65</sup> Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple and Lucy Temple*, edited with an Introduction by Ann Douglas (1794 and 1828; New York: Penguin, 1991).

nonetheless arbitrary, and I would like one day to place the work done here in a longer chronological context. For now, though, I return to 1821 and *The Spy*.

### **James Fenimore Cooper, Continued**

Harvey Birch's mission, which seemingly he receives direct from George Washington himself, involves not only saving Sarah Wharton from marriage to Colonel Wellmere. The spy must also ensure that Sarah's sister, the passionately republican Frances, can marry her fiancé, the Patriot officer and family cousin Peyton Dunwoodie. In his Introduction Cooper describes the duties of the real spy on whom he based Birch – “to get possession of as many of the secrets of the enemy as possible” – but what Cooper here characterises as a story about military espionage is in fact dominated by questions of wedlock (4). Only once, at the very start of the story, do we see Birch carrying tactical information; the rest of novel is taken up with his efforts to help the Wharton sisters. When Sarah and Frances's brother Henry, a Loyalist officer, is wrongly accused of spying, an offence for which he probably will be executed, Dunwoodie is assigned to deliver his future brother-in-law to trial. Frances refuses to marry Dunwoodie if his hands are to be “stained with the blood of my only brother” but Dunwoodie, although divided between his love for Frances and his duty, insists he must carry out orders (76). The couple reaches an impasse that takes twenty-five chapters (three-quarters of the book) to overcome when the courageous, ingenious Birch helps Henry escape to Loyalist lines, and Washington absolves Dunwoodie of his responsibility for recapturing his future brother-in-law, enabling he and Frances finally to marry. Whereas Wellmere and Sarah's relationship is unequal, with the

Englishman the dominant and exploitative partner, Frances and Dunwoodie's relationship is one of genuine mutual love and "reciprocal duties and satisfactions," with both characters dictating the terms on which their marriage will be made, and both working to ensure it can happen. The novel in this way dramatises the shift from earlier models of marriage to modern, republican matrimony.

In helping Frances and Dunwoodie overcome the impediment to their union, Birch repeatedly risks his own life, is shot at, imprisoned, has his house burned to the ground, his possessions stolen, his decrepit father killed, and is made a social pariah by Patriots who believe him to be a Loyalist master-spy, a cover story that even after the war's conclusion he heroically refuses to contradict in order to protect other, more illustrious men from being exposed as wartime double agents. Birch's patriotism is selfless; he later refuses Washington's offer of money as reward, telling the commander-in-chief "not a dollar of your gold will I touch; poor America has need of it all!" (398). Even when Washington warns that while he will "be known as the leader of armies," Birch, who is told that for reasons of national security he can never reveal details of his service, "must descend into the grave with the reputation of a foe to your native land," Birch still refuses (398).

If Washington's interest in the Whartons seems odd (not only is Henry a Loyalist officer but Mr. Wharton is a Loyalist sympathiser who pretends "to maintain so strict a neutrality, as to ensure the safety of his large estate, whichever party succeeded"), his deployment and endangerment of one of his finest spies in protection of them is justified in the novel's final chapter (24). This is set during the war with Britain of

1812—14 and Wharton Dunwoodie, Frances and Peyton's son, is in the vanguard, an officer successfully leading the fledgling nation into battle with the old enemy. This is the "great and glorious fate" that Washington has earlier predicted for America (399). Washington has, we now realise, kept the upper classes safe despite their divided loyalties during the Revolution, so that they may produce an officer class of men to lead the United States in future wars. Birch reappears in this final chapter; he dies helping young Dunwoodie's platoon. Lower-class men like Birch, who when not spying earns a meagre living as an itinerant peddler, have willingly and, the novel makes clear, rightfully sacrificed their wellbeing and ultimately their lives for the good of "wealthier and more powerful families," and, in turn, the nation that depends upon them.

Not all the novel's working-class men are so compliant. Birch's genuine patriotism is contrasted with that of the Skinners, a band of "ragged and unseemly" Patriot thugs (129). Cruel, violent, vengeful, uncouth, rapacious and cowardly, Cooper repeatedly condemns the Skinners, approvingly having them flogged by the Patriot Captain Lawton and his soldiers (210-11). This act is depicted as just punishment for the Skinners' habitual "burning, robbing and murdering" (211). Later, in the aftermath of Sarah and Wellmere's aborted wedding, the Skinners arrive to "plunder" the family estate of its silverware and burn it to the ground (259). Notably, "the good order of the Wharton home" survives the Anglo-American conflict, but not the Skinners; they are the real villains of this piece (12). Directly before their flogging, Cooper inserts a conversation about the Patriots' prospects of winning the war, during which the Skinners' leader tells Lawton, "I hope we shall [win] soon; and then we will have a

free government, and we, who fight for it, will get our reward” (209). The flogging that takes place on the next page seems as much retribution for such upstart sentiments as for “burning, robbing and murdering.”

Cooper treats the flogging as a comic episode. He depicts more seriously a scene towards the end of the novel when the Skinners’ leader is executed – summarily lynched – by Loyalist soldiers (381-84). By contrast, Henry Wharton’s spying trial is conducted by benevolent Patriot judges who give the Loyalist officer time and opportunity to defend himself. Both episodes are depicted by Cooper as just: the “wealthier and more powerful families” are entitled to one sort of due process, less affluent people to another. The lynching is a chilling, powerful passage of writing, but not because Cooper wants us to have sympathy with the Skinner. Rather, because it is emotionally detached and almost entirely pitiless. Although Cooper acknowledges it is a “horrid event,” his main concern is in emphasising until the end the Skinner’s unforgivable cowardice on facing death – he is willing to change sides to save his skin – and its comparison with other, more noble deaths, such as the steadfast Lawton’s in the following chapter and Birch’s own.

Cooper does not quite say the Skinner deserves his “horrid” fate, but he makes clear that neither does the man deserve a future in post-Revolutionary America. For the good of the nation, the working class should behave like Birch – support “the wealthier and more powerful families” and expect neither economic recompense, greater status nor even credit for it. Patriotic virtue lies in selflessly assisting the landed upper classes, and certainly not in seeking for oneself political or financial

“reward,” as do the Skinners. The decades immediately after the Revolution witnessed in America a series of social upheavals, changes greatly accelerated in the years following the war of 1812—14. These included the growth of market capitalism and its disruption of traditional social hierarchy. As E. Anthony Rotundo has explained, in these new cultural conditions, individualism, economic competitiveness and upward social mobility became positive, prized qualities, replacing social deference and ‘knowing one’s place’ as the key social obligations of adult men.<sup>66</sup> Read in this context, one can see Cooper, scion of an old, landed family, using *The Spy* to denounce the newly released social aspirations of the “nascent proletariat” that the Skinners represent.<sup>67</sup> As Scott Bradfield succinctly puts it, for Cooper, “Revolution creates a new nation which does not require any further Revolutions.”<sup>68</sup> The moral of this story is working-class obedience.

Robert Lawson Peebles has written: “the generations who succeeded the Revolutionaries ignored the divisive aspects of the revolt against Britain to create a myth of national unity.”<sup>69</sup> In *The Spy*, whose enormous success made it a contributor to that “myth of national unity,” overturning existing class hierarchies is condemned as unpatriotic and destructive, and those who would engineer class mobility deserve “horrid” consequences. The Skinner leader is executed and his sidekicks simply disappear after being chased by armed Patriot soldiers away from the Whartons’

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<sup>66</sup> E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 10-30.

<sup>67</sup> Robert Clark, “Rewriting Revolution: Cooper’s War of Independence,” in *James Fenimore Cooper: New Critical Essays*, ed. Robert Clark (London: Vision and Barnes & Noble, 1985), 201.

<sup>68</sup> Scott Bradfield, *Dreaming Revolution: Transgression in the Development of American Romance* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1993), 37.

<sup>69</sup> Robert Lawson Peebles, *Landscape and Written Expression in Revolutionary America: The World Turned Upside Down* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 17.



burning estate. Cooper does not “ignore” class division; instead he violently imagines it killed and expelled from the new American nation.

At the head of the new nation are families like the Wharton-Dunwoodies. We discover in the final chapter that Peyton and Frances now live in apparent prosperity on Peyton’s Virginia plantations and that he has been elevated to the rank of General. What is perhaps most striking about this resolution is its sense of *plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose*.<sup>70</sup> Cooper’s claims at the start of *The Spy* that the revolt against England was “the cause of the people,” a cause backed by just a “few ... leading families” (23). However, by the end of *The Spy* the Revolution has not in any way shifted social power and privilege to “the people,” but actually has consolidated it within “leading families.” Peyton Dunwoodie was, after all, already a wealthy man *and* already related to the Whartons before he married Frances.<sup>71</sup> Their union ensures the Wharton branch of the family does not lose its social position after the Loyalists’ defeat. Its wealth may through Frances be in part subsumed into the Dunwoodie branch of the family, but its name and status live on in Wharton Dunwoodie. As the veteran historian Francis Jennings reminds us in *The Creation of America: Through Revolution to Empire* (2000), the leaders of the Revolution had little intention of creating a democratised, egalitarian society.<sup>72</sup> The War of Independence transformed the mode of governance in America, but its primary beneficiaries were the emergent bourgeoisie and the existent ruling class of landed gentry, not “the people.” Robert

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<sup>70</sup> George Dekker describes Cooper’s aim always to advance “continuity in discontinuity.” George Dekker, “James Fenimore Cooper and the Romance Tradition,” *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters* 20:3 (1990): 212.

<sup>71</sup> For more on this, see Shirley Samuels, *Romances of the Republic: Women, the Family, and Violence in the Literature of the Early American Nation* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 69.

<sup>72</sup> Francis Jennings, *The Creation of America: Through Revolution to Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Clark has pointed out that the middle class are virtually non-existent in *The Spy*, leaving it open to upper-class families like the Dunwoodies to lead Cooper's imagined America of 1812—14.<sup>73</sup> Noticeably, having taken twenty-five chapters to solve the problems of Frances and Dunwoodie's courtship, the novel then very hurriedly ends the War of Independence, rushing through its "illustrious" conclusion in just two, brief and perfunctory sentences (400). For Cooper, the most significant achievement of the Revolutionary period is not military or political, but the replacement of those "frequent intermarriages of the officers of the mother-country with the wealthier and more powerful families of the vicinity" with marriages *between* wealthy, powerful American families – marriages that sustain the pre-Revolutionary social order.

Having in *The Spy* strangled the claims of the working class to a share in the post-Revolutionary spoils, in *The Pioneers* (1823), which is set ten years after independence, Cooper dramatised the contest for land and power in the fledgling nation between the long-established landed gentry, represented by the Temple and Effingham families, and the emerging middle class, embodied in the greedy, proto-industrialist Richard Jones.<sup>74</sup> Not dissimilarly to the Skinners, Jones is thwarted both by his own over-ambition (a mining scheme ends in a disastrous fire) and by the dynastic marriage of beautiful, worthy Elizabeth Temple to handsome, heroic Oliver Effingham, which promises to ensure future generations of Temple-Effinghams to keep Jones and his descendants in check.

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<sup>73</sup> Clark, "Rewriting Revolution," 201.

<sup>74</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pioneers; or The Sources of the Susquehanna* (1823), edited with an Introduction and Notes by James D. Wallace (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991; reprint, 1999).

In *Lionel Lincoln* (1826), Cooper returned to the theme of intermarriage between English officers and upper-class American women.<sup>75</sup> Cooper planned the novel as the first of an intended series of books to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, one set in each of the original thirteen colonies during the Revolution. It is surprising, then, that the novel's eponymous hero is a British officer and heir to one of England's most elevated baronetcies. Cooper sets Lionel up as a wavering hero, who, disgusted by the "disorder and abuse" unleashed in Boston by the occupying British army, is tempted to renounce his country and title and join the Patriot cause (15). His Loyalty is further tested when in Boston, the home of the American branch of his "honourable family," he discovers a series of disturbing family secrets – madness, murder, illegitimacy – that have travelled from Britain with previous emigrant Lincolns (31). The novel's Patriots – Lionel's long-lost father and half-brother among them – offer renouncing Britain and embracing America as a way for Lionel to make right the sins of his aristocratic ancestors. The novel's weird, labyrinthine plot concludes, though, with Lionel, still true to the crown, returning to England with his new wife, Cecil, a distant cousin from the American side of the family. In England, we learn, Lionel becomes an eminent politician and is eventually promoted to an "Earldom," while Cecil unexpectedly inherits "large estates" and "an ancient Baronetcy" from an uncle (364).

Cooper later described the novel as a "blunder," abandoned his plans for the series of thirteen Revolutionary novels, and did not return to the War of Independence as a

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<sup>75</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *Lionel Lincoln; or, The Leaguer of Boston* (1825), edited with an Historical Introduction and Explanatory Notes by Donald A. Ringe and Lucy B. Ringe (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984).

main subject for a novel for two decades.<sup>76</sup> Critics have tended to identify as one of the main failures of the novel Cooper's decision to end the story not, as he had apparently planned, with Lionel's conversion to republicanism but by rewarding him and Cecil for their virtue and leadership qualities with inherited wealth and titles.<sup>77</sup>

Arguably, though, Cooper wrote himself into a corner. To keep Lionel and Cecil in America would have had disturbing implications. If Lionel and Cecil, whose own branch of the Lincoln family is tainted by her grandmother's diabolical scheming, remained in America, the new nation would not be rid of what Cooper depicts as the endemic insanity, sexual deviancy and deceit of the English aristocracy. Furthermore, to invest in Lionel and Cecil the leadership of the new republic would raise some unsettling political questions. John P. McWilliams has written that Cooper developed during his early career a distinction between "a 'natural aristocracy' of virtue and talent and an 'artificial aristocracy' of wealth and birth." McWilliams argues:

Until Cooper's very last years, he remained vehemently critical of special political privilege for any class. If Cooper had an aristocratic bias, it was a bias toward Jeffersonian natural aristocracy and not toward [John] Adams's longings for distinctions of title.<sup>78</sup>

Lionel and Cecil, titled aristocrats, both prove themselves during the novel fit in Cooper's terms for social governance of the new republic. However, for Cecil and Lionel to become leaders in the United States would surely risk blurring the line between natural and titled aristocracy; they would here be one and the same. So much

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<sup>76</sup> Cooper, 1832 Preface to Cooper, *Lionel Lincoln*, 6. Cooper's next Revolutionary novel was *Wyandotte* (1843). James Fenimore Cooper, *Wyandotte* (1843; London: George Routledge and Sons, 1868).

<sup>77</sup> John P. McWilliams writes that "no reader to my knowledge has ever been satisfied" with the end of the novel. John P. McWilliams, Jr., *Political Justice in a Republic: James Fenimore Cooper's America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1972), 73. See also: Ian Dennis, "Radical Father, Moderate Son: Cooper's *Lionel Lincoln*," in *American Transcendental Quarterly* 11:2 (1997): 77-92; Samuels, 83-86.

<sup>78</sup> McWilliams, 47.

emphasis does Cooper lay on Lionel and Cecil's qualities being inherited from their ancestors that, even if he had them both renounce their titles before staying in America, one would still be left with the impression that it is their breeding in the supposedly 'artificial' English aristocracy that has made them suitable social leaders.

Indeed, it is sometimes difficult reading Cooper's fiction to understand how his concept of a 'natural' aristocracy differs in practice from an 'artificial' one. Admittedly, he rejects the idea that all members of the social elite are, simply by right of birth, fit to govern; *The Spy*'s Mr. Wharton is an example of Cooper's willingness to depict members of the ruling classes as weak and indecisive. However, in his early novels Cooper never promotes to the ruling elite men of ability from the lower or middle classes; Harvey Birch, *The Pioneers*' Natty Bumppo and in *The Pilot* (1824) John Paul Jones are all excluded from becoming part of the gentry and all either die or have disappeared at the end of their respective novels.<sup>79</sup> In Cooper's version of it, the American Revolution consolidates and fixes the legitimate power of families like the Temples and Wharton-Dunwoodies. It creates a 'natural aristocracy' but one that seems on inspection just as exclusive and as adept at self-perpetuation as the 'artificial aristocracy' it replaces. Perhaps this would have been just too apparent for Cooper's original readers had, as he seems originally to have intended, he put Sir Lionel and Lady Cecil Lincoln at the head of the republic.

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<sup>79</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *The Pilot* (1824), reprinted in Cooper, *Sea Tales* (New York: The Library of America, 1991), 1-422.

## PART ONE

### “A FAIRYLAND SORT OF PLACE”: THE AMERICAN LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE ENGLISH ARISTOCRACY, FROM WASHINGTON IRVING TO *LITTLE WOMEN*.<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

In August 2005 American cable channel W.E. (Women’s Entertainment) Network began broadcast of its new, six-part reality television series *American Princess*.<sup>2</sup> The show saw ten “very average American women,” as the voiceover called the participants, taken to live in an English country mansion, trained to become “proper ladies,” and set to compete against each other in a series of challenges designed to test their mastery of skills such as table etiquette, posture, and polite conversation. Paul Burrell, once Princess Diana’s butler, was among those coaching the women and deciding which would be eliminated from the competition each week and which one would in the end win it. The show’s website proclaimed the triumphant contestant would “make their ultimate fairytale a reality ... by being crowned the first American Princess, complete with the bestowal of a real British title AND \$50,000.”<sup>3</sup> During the show itself, the women also frequently described the experience as a “fairytale.” The series attempted some transatlantic matchmaking; central to the competition were “the beaus,” three handsome, decidedly upper-class young Englishmen, each a “real Prince Charming.” The contestants, all in their late teens and twenties, were often required to impress these “beaus” as part of their weekly tests, and sometimes dates

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<sup>1</sup> Citation: Susan Warner (writing as Elizabeth Wetherell), *Queechy* (1852; London: Ward, Lock and Co., 1898?), 442.

<sup>2</sup> *American Princess*, directed by Leslie Garvin, Granada Television / NBC, 2003; first broadcast: Women’s Entertainment Network, August-October, 2005.

<sup>3</sup> [www.we.tv/uploads/AmericanPrincess/episode\\_guide.html](http://www.we.tv/uploads/AmericanPrincess/episode_guide.html) Accessed: 17 August 2005.

with the men were awarded as prizes for performing well in the challenges. With its innumerable shots of old country houses and 'historic' landmarks, use of sepia tinting, calligraphic captions and classical music, the show offered up for the consumption of U.S. viewers a familiar vision of England: the England of tourist brochures and Hollywood costume dramas, a nation populated, one might believe, almost entirely by aristocrats and their servants.

*American Princess* was broadcast in the immediate wake of a run of popular Hollywood films – *The Princess Diaries* (2001) and *Princess Diaries 2* (2004), *What A Girl Wants* (2003), *The Prince and Me* (2004) – the plots of which all involve young American women joining aristocratic European families, either when they discover they are descendants of the family, or when they marry European princes.<sup>4</sup> “This fairytale is about to get real,” ran the advertising for *The Prince and Me*. W.E.’s version of the “fairytale” proved a ratings-winner and the network followed it in December 2005 by dedicating a whole weekend of programmes to British royalty.<sup>5</sup> The weekend “addresses viewers’ royal fascination,” a press release asserted, also noting, “They seem a world away but the royal families of Europe have been a part of American lives for years.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> *The Princess Diaries*, dir. Garry Marshall, Bottom of the Ninth Productions et al, 2001; *What A Girl Wants*, dir. Dennie Gordon, DiNovi Pictures, 2003; *Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*, dir. Garry Marshall, Brown House Productions and Walt Disney Pictures, 2004; *The Prince and Me*, dir. Martha Coolidge, Lions Gate Films, 2004.

<sup>5</sup> Tim Clark, “‘Not-So-Serious’ Strategy Helps Win Over Women WE Has More Fun at Five With Ratings On the Rise,” 24 April 2006.  
<http://www.multichannel.com/article/CA6326949.html?display=Special+Report>  
Accessed: 16 May 2006.

<sup>6</sup> “WE: Women’s Entertainment To Co-Produce New Original Movie.” Press Release: 3 October 2005.  
[http://www.rainbow-media.com/rainbow/media/release\\_release.jsp?nodeid=4735](http://www.rainbow-media.com/rainbow/media/release_release.jsp?nodeid=4735)  
Accessed: 15 May 2006.

This chapter argues that in the middle decades of the nineteenth century there emerged several key characteristics of American “fascination” with English royalty and aristocracy. I am interested in particular in the “fairytale” of the American woman who becomes a member of the English aristocracy. I contend that Susan Warner’s sentimental novel *Queechy* (1852), a bestseller throughout the 1850s, is the first American story to frame this fairytale as something positive and desirable. Before Warner’s novel, tales written by American writers of American women who marry or seek to marry into English aristocracy are either anxious or ambivalent, as is James Fenimore Cooper’s *Home As Found* (1838), or, like George Lippard’s *Quaker City* (1844), are denunciations of aristocratic ambition among Americans.<sup>7</sup> Both novels suggest such marriages should be considered scandalous betrayals by American women of national loyalty and republican values but, I argue, both ultimately deploy Anglo-American marriage narratives more to reflect on failures in American society than to promote republicanism by comparison with English monarchism. I situate these two narratives in the context of the antagonism that predominated Anglo-American cultural and diplomatic exchanges during the 1830s and early and mid-1840s. I suggest that both stories respond to what Cooper, Lippard and others perceived to be an unhealthy obsession among many Americans with England and its nobility, and as a manifestation of their fears of a re-aristocratisation of the “most privileged” of America’s own “social *caste[s]*.”<sup>8</sup> Warner, I then propose, took advantage of what turned out to be only a temporary relaxation of Anglo-American hostility during the 1850s to offer marriage into the English

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<sup>7</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *Home as Found* (1838; New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1896); George Lippard, *The Quaker City, or The Monks of Monk Hall* (1844), edited with an Introduction by Leslie Fielder (New York: The Odyssey Press, 1970).

<sup>8</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *England: With Sketches of Society in the Metropolis* (London: Richard Bentley, 1837), I.111, I.106.



aristocracy as a relatively welcome fantasy of escape from economic hardships in America.<sup>9</sup>

Having examined *Queechy*, I show how Herman Melville's *Redburn* (1849) might be read as a warning against exactly this kind of fantasy.<sup>10</sup> During these latter sections of the chapter, I trace the evolution during the 1850s of American attitudes towards the English aristocracy, identifying a growing, although by no means universal, regard for the nobility of the 'old country.' I conclude by noting the dramatic crisis in Anglo-American relations provoked by the onset of the American Civil War and considering the impact of this crisis on Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* (1868-69), and its treatment of an Anglo-American love story.<sup>11</sup>

### **The American Love / Hate Affair with the English Aristocracy Before 1850**

"In breaking with Britain," writes historian Howard Temperley, Americans "determined to do away with honours, titles, and everything else associated with hereditary principles."<sup>12</sup> While this may broadly be true of the political system that emerged during the decades after independence, culturally there remained a decided

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<sup>9</sup> Similarly, the majority of the women participating in *American Princess* talk about the competition as an opportunity to escape from mundane, poorly paid jobs and from life in small, low-income towns; one waits tables, one lives in a trailer park, one describes her neighbourhood as resembling "a recycling plant."

<sup>10</sup> Herman Melville, *Redburn*, edited with an Introduction by Harold Beaver (1849; London: Penguin, 1976.)

<sup>11</sup> Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women*, with an Introduction and Notes by Camille Cauti (1868—69; New York: Barnes and Noble Classics, 2004).

<sup>12</sup> Howard Temperley, *Britain and America Since Independence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002) 15.

attraction to the English aristocracy.<sup>13</sup> Americans continued to read British novels populated by dukes, duchesses, lords and ladies. The absence of international copyright restrictions ensured that novels by the likes of Scott and Austen were as readily available in American cities as they were in London.<sup>14</sup> Beginning in 1819 with the publication of his *Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, Washington Irving's tales and travel narratives induced the first of many generations of American sightseers to visit the great aristocratic houses and castles of the Old World. Irving in effect claimed for Americans the right to think of English history as *their* history; he attempted to supply his "native country ... full of youthful promise" with something many foreigners liked to claim its people lacked – shared origins and traditions.<sup>15</sup> In *The Sketch-Book* and *Bracebridge Hall* (1822) Irving presents England less as the abusive parent whose authority America had overthrown, and more as the "paternal home," as Frederick Law Olmsted would later call it, that Americans may have outgrown but to which they could always return.<sup>16</sup> With these books, Irving found enormous success in America, vying with Cooper for the title of the nation's first

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<sup>13</sup> I use the word "broadly" because, while America may have abandoned a hereditary aristocracy as a form of government, other "hereditary principles" that saw children assume the social status of their parents were clearly still enacted in post-Revolutionary U.S. society. These included inheritance laws regarding property and the practice of children being born to slaves also becoming the slaves of their parents' master. See Carole Shammas, Marilyn Salmon, Michel Dahlin, *Inheritance in America from Colonial Times to the Present* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987).

<sup>14</sup> See: James T. Barnes, *Authors, Publishers and Politicians: The Quest for an Anglo-American Copyright Agreement, 1815-1854* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974); Catherine Saville, *Literary Copyright Reform in Early Victorian England: The Framing of the 1842 Copyright Act* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 163-193.

<sup>15</sup> Washington Irving, *The Sketch-Book of Geoffrey Crayon, Gent.*, vol. VII of *The Complete Works* (1819; Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978), 8.

<sup>16</sup> Washington Irving, *Bracebridge Hall*, vol. IX of *The Complete Works* (1822; Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977). Olmsted citation: Frederick Law Olmsted, *Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England* (1852; Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1967), 89-89, quoted in Allison Lockwood, *Passionate Pilgrims: The American Traveler in Great Britain, 1800-1914* (New York: Cornwall Books, 1981), 11.

literary celebrity.<sup>17</sup> It is worth remembering that before Cooper wrote *The Spy*, he too romanticised life on the aristocratic estates of the old country in *Precaution* (1820).<sup>18</sup> American interest in the aristocracy was such that when Queen Victoria acceded to the English throne in 1837, she achieved instant popularity in the United States, honoured by the appearance in American shops of souvenirs ranging from commemorative clocks to jars of Queen Victoria-brand soup. The Baltimore House Hotel in Philadelphia changed its name to the Victoria Hotel.<sup>19</sup>

Certain sections of post-Revolutionary American society had, of course, always retained close ties to the upper reaches of the British social order. In the decades immediately following independence, wealthy and well-established families, especially those with relatives in the old country, continued to intermarry with European aristocracies and to send their sons to the best schools in England.<sup>20</sup> Such connections retained their kudos. In household arrangements, social engagements and day-to-day intercourse, this class continued to live much as they had before Independence. The Revolution was “not marked by a spectacular Declaration of Independence from the dominion of English gentility,” notes historian Paul Langford.<sup>21</sup> Following the War of 1812, however, there was an increasingly

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<sup>17</sup> See: Malcolm Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages. Trans-Atlantic Mythologies and the Novel* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1995; reprint, London: Penguin, 1996), 53-83.

<sup>18</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *Precaution: a Novel* (1820; London: George Routledge and Sons, 1889).

<sup>19</sup> Walter L. Arnstein, “Queen Victoria and the United States,” in *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership*, eds., Fred M. Leventhal & Roland Quinault (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 93.

<sup>20</sup> See R.A. Burchell, “The Role of the Upper Class in the Formation of American Culture, 1780-1840,” in *The End of Anglo-America: Historical Essays in the Study of Cultural Divergence*, ed. R.A. Burchell (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1991), 184-212.

<sup>21</sup> Paul Langford, “Manners and Character in Anglo-American Perceptions, 1750-1850,” in *Anglo-American Attitudes: From Revolution to Partnership*, eds. Fred M. Leventhal and Roland Quinault (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000), 79. Or, as Stephen Birmingham puts it, in his racy, anecdotal history of the America’s elite families: “the American uppermost class has always looked to the British

discernible tension between, on one hand, the growing interest of the wider American public in the English aristocracy, and, on the other, rising nationalist sentiment. If there was a “fascination” with aristocracy among Americans, so there was an equal amount of anxiety about the effects and implications of that fascination. The *Democratic Review*, perhaps the most prominent voice of American nationalism, condemned the U.S. public’s love affair with the new Queen of England, describing it in 1839 as an illness, “Victoria Fever,” and asking, “whether the days of old had not returned, and we were yet bowing beneath the sceptre of England?”<sup>22</sup> Despite Irving’s popularity, many literary critics saw in his admiration of English aristocratic estates a treacherous rejection of American values. Irving had “betrayed his origins;” he “sought distinction by flattering England,” complained the *Democratic Review*.<sup>23</sup> Those who followed Irving’s path to the Old World were equally suspect. Recounting her own tour of 1846, Margaret Fuller said she had come across in Europe many examples of “the servile American” whose primary “object” is “to know some titled persons.”<sup>24</sup> The *New York True Sun* warned “Those fashionable American travellers ... who have sometimes shaken hands with a lord” not to disillusion themselves; “they must not lay the flattering unction to their souls, that they have passed *inspection* by the English aristocracy.”<sup>25</sup> According to the *True Sun*, the English upper classes were as arrogant and hostile as ever, continuing “to sneer at everything American.” Irving

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class system as its most satisfactory model.” Stephen Birmingham, *America’s Secret Aristocracy* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), 6.

<sup>22</sup> Anon., “The Victoria Fever,” *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* no.6, July 1839, 74-76; quoted in Arnstein, 93. From here on, *The United States Magazine and Democratic Review* will be referred to by its commonly used title, the *Democratic Review*.

<sup>23</sup> Bradbury, 55; Anon., “English and American Literature,” *Democratic Review* no.22:117, March 1848), p.208.

<sup>24</sup> Margaret Fuller Ossoli, *At Home and Abroad: or, Things and Thoughts in America and Europe* (Boston: Crosby, Nichols and Company, 1856), 205-251; quoted in Lockwood, 27.

<sup>25</sup> Anon., “English Prejudices,” *New York True Sun*, 22 October 1844; reprinted in *Littell’s Living Age* no.25, 2 November 1844, p.2.

may have helped promote a more sympathetic image of English aristocrats, but this only co-existed with, rather than replaced, that of the haughty, dismissive patrician embodied in *The Spy*'s Colonel Wellmere.<sup>26</sup>

American writers offered a number of ideological objections to hereditary aristocracies. Two particular complaints were made above all others. The first was that hereditary aristocracies concentrated land, wealth, political power and social capital in just a few families, which were, inevitably, chary of relinquishing their resources, status and influence. Only "the threat and apprehension of revolution," commented *The North American Review*, "wrung from the reluctant hands of the English aristocracy the reform legislation of 1832," which included the extension of suffrage.<sup>27</sup> The second objection was that aristocratic families were seldom fitted to the social leadership expected of them; while the initial recipient of the title may (or may not) have been morally and intellectually worthy of the advantages and authority that go with a peerage, it by no means followed that their descendants also were.<sup>28</sup> Furthermore, the English system of primogeniture, by limiting the transmission of title and the majority of assets to the oldest son, reduced the chances of "power and privileges" being passed to a deserving successor.<sup>29</sup> Add to these two charges the anti-Americanism of English aristocrats (who "could not forget the mortification of ...

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<sup>26</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *The Spy; a Tale of the Neutral Ground* (1821), with an Introduction by Wayne Franklin (London: Penguin Books, 1997).

<sup>27</sup> Anon., "British Strictures on Republican Institutions," *North American Review* no.89:194, July 1859, 106.

<sup>28</sup> Herman Melville makes this point in the opening pages of *Pierre* (1852), where he describes aristocratic families as "manufactured." Herman Melville, *Pierre or, the Ambiguities*, edited with an introduction and notes by William C. Spengemann (1852; New York: Penguin, 1996), 4-14. Cooper makes a similar point with his depiction of Mr. Wharton in *The Spy* although, as we see later in this chapter, this is somewhat undermined by Cooper's own desire for the stability of "hereditary principles."

<sup>29</sup> Anon., "British Strictures on Republican Institutions," p.112.

defeats in the American War of Independence,” the *Democratic Review* believed), and American writers could offer a litany of reasons to despise English nobility.<sup>30</sup>

The anxieties of such Americans about the apparently growing regard paid to the English aristocracy by their compatriots were bound up with more general concerns about “the sinister influence,” as Cooper called it, of England on American social, political and cultural life.<sup>31</sup> The second quarter of the nineteenth century was officially a period of peace between Britain and America. A shared awareness of the ever-increasing importance of trade between the two nations – investment by British companies in American agricultural, mining, and transport interests, and American supply of raw materials to Britain – did much to prevent escalating into actual warfare persistent diplomatic tensions over issues such as defining borderlines between the U.S.A. and British Canada, shipping rights, naval impressment, and the two nations’ rival territorial ambitions in the wider Americas.<sup>32</sup> Especially at moments when one or both of the two governments was feeling particularly confrontational, however, that peace seemed brittle. The *True Sun* concluded the article cited above by promising,

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<sup>30</sup> Anon., “*The Edinburgh and Foreign Quarterly on The Oregon*,” *Democratic Review* no.17:89, November 1845, p.328.

<sup>31</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, “A Letter to His Countrymen” (1834), reprinted in Cooper, *England*, III.269.

<sup>32</sup> See: Frank Thistlethwaite, *The Anglo-American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), 1-38; Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1974), 33-95; Philip S. Bagwell and G.E. Mingay, *Britain and America 1850-1939: A Study of Economic Change* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970, reprint, 1987); Kinsley J. Brauer, “The United States and British Imperial Expansion, 1815-1860,” *Diplomatic History* 12:1 (Winter 1988); David Dimbleby and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1988), 14; David Englander, “Introduction” in David Englander, ed. *Britain and America: Studies in Comparative History 1760-1970*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), ix-xv; Howard Jones and Donald A. Rakestraw, *Prologue to Manifest Destiny: Anglo-American Relations in the 1840s* (Wilmington, Delaware: S.R. Books, 1997); Francis M. Carroll, *A Good and Wise Measure: The Search for the Canadian-American Boundary, 1783-1842* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 243-306; Rebecca Berens Matzke, “Britain Gets Its Way: Power and Peace in Anglo-American Relations, 1838-1846,” in *War in History* 8:1 (2001); Temperley, 33-58.

“England is an enemy with whom we shall one day have again to measure swords.”<sup>33</sup> Although brief, the *True Sun*’s article incorporates a number of long-held and widespread American grievances about England. These include the anti-Americanism of British newspapers, the role of the British government and British investors in precipitating the American economic panic of 1837, and the perceived provocation by the British press and politicians alike of sectional unrest in the States, allegedly undertaken in the hope of “see[ing] this glorious Union fall to pieces.” Immediately before its sabre-rattling conclusion, the article calls on Americans to pay less attention to English opinions, especially to English “prejudices” about the inferiority of Americans. “Let us *think for ourselves and act for ourselves*,” the author implores.<sup>34</sup>

This was a common appeal. The predominance in America of English customs, thinking, fashion and literature had not, as the original reviewers of *The Spy* predicted, been stemmed by the outburst of Revolutionary commemoration in the 1820s. Cooper was among those who during the 1830s and 1840s lambasted the penchant of Americans, the middle classes and gentry in particular, for emulating the English, especially the English upper classes, in their reading habits, social ideals, musical tastes and styles of dress, and who lamented the continued reliance of American writers and artists on English models. Lippard, for instance, called for “a more thorough cultivation of an American literature ... a *literature built upon those great deeds of the American Past*” in order to give a “chance for the Mind of America.”<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Anon., “English Prejudices,” p.2.

<sup>34</sup> Anon., “English Prejudices,” p.2.

<sup>35</sup> George Lippard, “English Novels,” *The White Banner* (1851); reprinted in *George Lippard, Prophet of Protest: Writings of an American Radical, 1822-1854*, ed. David S. Reynolds (New York: Peter Lang, 1986), 253-254.

For Cooper, America remained profoundly “imitative” of English society, the old country still “the idol of their political, moral, and literary adoration.”<sup>36</sup> Americans were even beginning to treat the Presidency with the same semi-religious veneration that Britons treated their monarchy; Cooper’s compatriots had internalised the “mystification” of governmental power that the “English aristocracy has so long been innovating.”<sup>37</sup>

In 1845, the *Democratic Review* pinpointed education as the main problem: “Our education, even at this day, to our regret be it spoken, is substantially English. In this, the eighth generation from the settlement of Virginia ... we look to England as the great mother of our learning and our arts. From our youth upward, her books are in our hand and her song on our lips.”<sup>38</sup> Lippard would, characteristically, go even further, bellowing, “‘ENGLISH NOVELS’ do more to corrupt the minds of American children, than any sort of bad literature that ever cursed the world” because they are “anti-American and anti-human.”<sup>39</sup>

In *England*, Cooper’s account of the time he spent in the country in the late 1820s and early 1830s, he identifies a particular danger in the “the deference we pay to English maxims”: Americans are apt to form not only “opinions” but also “habits” based on English strictures, to “promulgate” and to enact the very “set of principles” that the Revolution was supposed to have overturned, i.e. “deference of mere feudal and conventional laws, which have had their origin in force, and are contrived by

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<sup>36</sup> Cooper, *Home As Found*, 50; Cooper, *England*, I.ix.

<sup>37</sup> Cooper, “A Letter to his Countrymen,” 267.

<sup>38</sup> Anon., “*The Edinburgh and Foreign Quarterly on The Oregon*,” p.328.

<sup>39</sup> George Lippard, *The White Banner Volume One* (Philadelphia: George Lippard, 1851), 148; quoted in David S. Reynolds, *George Lippard* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1982), 100.



prejudice and wrong” (III.71; III.71; II.16). He gives as a prime example the popularity in America of the “feudal” fictions of Walter Scott, the writer to whom he was so often likened, and he worries that “until we do enjoy a manly, independent literature of our own, we shall labour under the imputation which all foreigners use against us with more truth than is desirable, that of being but a second-hand reflection of English opinions” (II.18).<sup>40</sup> Cooper pleads for “the mental emancipation which alone can render the nation great” (I.v). In the same year Cooper published *England*, 1837, Emerson made the same point in *The American Scholar*, declaring, “We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe,” and demanding Americans “speak our own minds.”<sup>41</sup>

Emerson’s use of the word “courtly,” like Cooper’s of “feudal,” was significant. If America did have some divine destiny to “lead in a new age” for mankind, as Emerson believed, it could never achieve that destiny if, acting on the influence of English thinking, it replicated the social structures of the Old World.<sup>42</sup> Yet, various writers and politicians feared, that was precisely what was happening in the America of the 1830s and 1840s. The vicious, divisive general election campaign of 1828 had been characterised, by Andrew Jackson’s supporters at least, as a battle between Jacksonian “democracy” and what they named the “lordly purse-proud aristocracy” of John Quincy Adams.<sup>43</sup> Jackson’s victory and his subsequent ‘war against privilege’ may have represented a blow for the common people against both old landed elites

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<sup>40</sup> Scott, a Scot, was perhaps a strange choice for a comment on English literature.

<sup>41</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar” (1837), reprinted in Emerson, *Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1910), 564-572. Citations: 572, 572.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 564.

<sup>43</sup> See Daniel Feller, *The Jacksonian Promise: America, 1815-1840* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 53-75. Citations from: Boyer et al, *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People* 4<sup>th</sup> edition (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 270 (no references given).

and new moneyed ones, but by the mid-late 1830s commentators were again worrying about the unchecked ascendancy of what the *Democratic Review* called in 1839 an “American nobility system.... [T]he most numerous nobility of any country in the world, and perhaps the least respectable.”<sup>44</sup> The same article, entitled “Thoughts on the Times,” asked how, in a country with America’s “boundless ... natural resources,” “hundreds of thousands ... find it impossible to live in comfort?”<sup>45</sup> Why, the article wonders, “is it that the state of society in the United States so nearly resembles its state in Great Britain?” A “principle of artificial inequality has crept in among us,” the piece continues, “which acts as efficiently in producing artificial distinctions in society, as would laws of primogeniture and entail.” America’s “privileged order,” constituted primarily of families made rich in business, enjoys the true key to social power: wealth.<sup>46</sup> This class may not have titles but behaves with the same self-interestedness as European aristocracies, purchasing legal and political privilege, and without even taking on the English nobility’s “redeeming” quality of assuming responsibility for its nation’s moral and cultural leadership and “contribut[ing] something to the refinement of manners.”<sup>47</sup>

The *Democratic Review* blames the situation on the nation’s banking system – created, the author stresses, by Alexander Hamilton, an “Englishman monarchist” – which authorised banks to issue paper money effectively as I.O.U’s for actual coin currency.<sup>48</sup> It accuses banks of protecting their own interests, and those of wealthy investors, above those of ordinary workers, citing in particular the suspension of

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<sup>44</sup> Anon., “Thoughts on the Times,” *Democratic Review* no.6:23, November 1839, p.458.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 462 and 451.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 452-453.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 455.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 458.

specie payments owed to small businesses and individual customers in early 1837, which left tens of thousands with worthless paper money.<sup>49</sup> The action caused widespread bankruptcies among small enterprises, precipitating a seven-year, nationwide economic depression which struck the working classes with greatest impact. It was a period of unprecedented unemployment, homelessness, destitution, and starvation.

Just like a hereditary aristocracy, “the whole operation of our banking-system is to enrich one class of men by impoverishing another,” opined the *Democratic Review*.<sup>50</sup> The system constituted “a loop-hole for aristocracy to creep in” to American society. The nation’s “moneyed corporations” operated in tandem with the banking system, enabling the rich to retain their wealth rather than forcing them to redistribute it, and contributing to a growing inequality between rich and poor in the country.

Other writers acknowledged the existence of an American aristocracy but defined it differently, and more optimistically. Reverend Orville Dewey published in 1836 (and reprinted in 1844) *The Old World and the New*, an account of his and Emerson’s 1833 visit to England and a comparison of American democracy with English aristocracy.<sup>51</sup> Dewey argues that America’s “democratic institutions” had enabled there to rise to prominence since Independence “an aristocracy of *nature* ... of talent, of accomplishments and manners, and of wealth, against which no objection lies” and

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<sup>49</sup> See: David S. Reynolds, “Introduction: George Lippard in his Times,” in Lippard, *George Lippard: Prophet of Protest*, 19-21; Feller, 172-201; Mary Templin, “Panic Fiction: Women’s Responses to Antebellum Economic Crisis,” *Legacy* 21:1 (2004): 2.

<sup>50</sup> Anon., “Thoughts on the Times,” p.457.

<sup>51</sup> Orville Dewey, “The Old World and the New” (1836), printed in Dewey, *The Works of the Reverend Orville Dewey, D.D* (London: Simms and McIntyre, 1844), 593-806.

which is “beneficial to the whole people” in providing leadership by example. Dewey does not name bankers or capitalists or any other specific group as belonging to this aristocracy, and nor does he rule any out; having risen to social prominence seems to be the sole qualification for membership. He contrasts this American aristocracy with England’s “feudal aristocracy, that transmission of hereditary honour, protected property, and actual power,” which is “manifestly unjust,” responsible for much greater inequalities of wealth than found in America.<sup>52</sup>

Both Dewey and the author of the *Democratic Review* article could agree that England’s hereditary aristocracy was, in a post-Enlightenment world, philosophically and practically retrograde. Dewey compares “innovation” and “improvement” in America with “the prevalence in England of long-established ideas and usages” that stifle scientific, political and economic progress.<sup>53</sup> For the *Democratic Review*, “the extent of our natural resources” and “the superiority of our political institutions” should provide Americans with an unprecedented opportunity to take advantage of “all the discoveries in sciences and improvements in the arts” of the modern age, but the increasing predominance of the “paper-money aristocracy” threatened to reverse such progress, placing those advantages in the hands of a self-interested, self-protecting few rather than “the community” as a whole.<sup>54</sup> The international reputation of the United States (a concern that it can seem preoccupied all American writers of the period) was at stake here: only if the nation’s prosperity is “diffused among all,” the article’s final line insisted, will America “excite the world’s admiration.”<sup>55</sup> For

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<sup>52</sup> Dewey, 775.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 770.

<sup>54</sup> Anon., “Thoughts on the Times,” p.451, 462.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p.462.

Dewey, by contrast, the emergence of an American aristocracy was a measure of the nation's progress since independence for, in comparison to Britain's antiquated nobility, notorious for its "abuse" of "political power," America's more just and meritorious aristocracy had obtained wealth and authority not through the accident of birth but through "individual exertion" and "good conduct."<sup>56</sup> It is implicit that for Dewey anyone who belongs to this "aristocracy of *nature*" is, by the very fact of having risen to belong to it, by definition worthy of its privileges. As we will see in both this and the next chapter, tension between these two versions of American aristocracy persisted throughout nineteenth-century fictions in which America's upper classes come into contact and can be held up for comparison with Britain's.

Dewey's was just one of hundreds of transatlantic travel narratives published during the second quarter of the 1800s. There was an apparently insatiable market on both sides of the Atlantic for books by Americans about Britain, and by Britons about America. Like Dewey, the authors of these books customarily sought to discover and evaluate the similarities and differences between the two nations and their respective populations, in everything from political organisation and social manners to working habits and family life. They used the opportunity of writing about another country to reflect either implicitly or explicitly on the successes and inadequacies of their own society, to criticise or celebrate through comparison.<sup>57</sup> These books treated Anglo-

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<sup>56</sup> Dewey, 779, 775.

<sup>57</sup> For further examinations of transatlantic travel literature in the period, see: Martin Crawford, "British Travellers and the Anglo-American Relationship in the 1850s," *Journal of American Studies* 12:2 (1978): 203-219; Peter Conrad, *Imagining America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980); Lockwood, *Passionate Pilgrims*; Roger Haydon, ed., *Upstate Travels: British Views of Nineteenth-Century New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1982; reprint, 1999); Christopher Mulvey, *Anglo-American Landscapes: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Travel Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Christopher Mulvey, *Transatlantic Manners: Social Patterns in Nineteenth-Century Anglo-America Travel Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

American relations as a kind of transnational controlled experiment: having in essence been part of the same state as recently as 1776, one could readily assess the nature of each country in manners, politics, poetry, dress, or whatever else, by measuring the extent of the divergence since 1776 of one nation from the other in that matter.

Perhaps the most famous, or infamous, of the books by British authors about the United States was Frances Trollope's *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832).<sup>58</sup> This unremittingly acerbic attack on American society – “I do not like them,” Trollope wrote. “I do not like their principles, I do not like their manners, I do not like their opinions” (314) – created among Americans a “commotion ... truly inconceivable,” according to one contemporary observer, and turned Trollope into a national figure of hate.<sup>59</sup> In *Domestic Manners* Trollope details and denounces the Americans' “universal deficiency in good manners” and attributes this failing to two main factors (117). The first is the exclusion of women from public life, something Trollope and other English writers, such as Harriet Martineau, believed Americans practiced to a far greater degree than Europeans.<sup>60</sup> (It was a view with which Alexander de Tocqueville and a number of American writers, including Cooper, concurred.)<sup>61</sup> The second factor is the absence of “a court” to act as a role model for

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Press, 1990); Malcolm Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages. Trans-Atlantic Mythologies and the Novel* (London: Martin Secker and Warburg, 1995; reprint, London: Penguin, 1996), 53-158; James C. Simmons, *Star-Spangled Eden: 19<sup>th</sup>-Century America Through The Eyes of Dickens, Wilde, Frances Trollope, Frank Harris, and Other British Travellers* (New York: Carroll and Graf, 2000).

<sup>58</sup> Frances Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Pamela Neville-Sington (London: Penguin, 1997).

<sup>59</sup> E.T. Coke, *A Subaltern's Furlough: Descriptive of Scenes in Various Parts of the United States...During the Summer and Autumn of 1832* (London, 1833), 167-168; quoted in Pamela Neville-Sington, “Introduction,” in Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, vii.

<sup>60</sup> Harriet Martineau, *Society in America* in Three Volumes, (1837; New York: AMS Press, 1966), I.199-207.

<sup>61</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America* (1835, 1840), reprinted in Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America and Two Essays on America* (London: Penguin, 2003), 686-687. Cooper in *Homeward Bound* talks of “the slavery of American female life.” James Fenimore Cooper,

“the great majority of the population” (117-118). If Dewey identified the presence of a “feudal aristocracy” as destructive to English society, it was the absence of just such an aristocracy in the United States, Trollope contended, that permitted the “jarring tumult and universal degradation” of American life (7-8). Having left England “something of a liberal,” Trollope came to believe during her four-year stay in America that democracy did not create equality – there were, she testified, wider economic and social divides than in Britain.<sup>62</sup> Instead, it creates a disordered society in which the “grossest and lowest,” quite simply, do not know their ‘proper’ place and force their company, opinions and practices on their betters (95).

Trollope’s book was published in England in March 1832, just three days before that year’s Reform Bill had its final reading in the House of Commons. The nation was “obsessed” by the fate of the Bill and the “chief object” of *Domestic Manners*, Trollope confessed, was to discredit the “great experiment” of the American political system and, at a moment when the nature and extent of political reform in Britain was about to be decided, to warn the British public of the dangers of American-style democratisation.<sup>63</sup>

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*Homeward Bound: or, the Chase. A Tale of the Sea* (1838; New York: W.A. Townsend and Company, 1860), 11. For comparisons between, and accounts of contemporaneous views on gender relations in Britain and America during the nineteenth century, see: Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989), 10-11, 25; Christine Bolt, *The Women’s Movement in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 1-125; Rosemary O’Day, *The Family and Family Relationships: England, France and the United States of America* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Christine Bolt, *Feminist Ferment: ‘The Woman Question’ in the USA and England, 1870-1940* (London: UCL Press, 1995), 1-5; Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Wife* (London: Pandora, 2001).

<sup>62</sup> Sington in Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, xxxvii.

<sup>63</sup> Information on the publication and reception of *Domestic Manners*: Conrad, *Imagining America*, 30-60; Linda Abess Ellis, *Frances Trollope’s America: Four Novels* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), 1-50; Neville-Sington, “Introduction” to Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, xxvii-xxxiii. Citation: Neville-Sington, xxvii.

Along with Dickens' *American Notes* (1842), *Domestic Manners* is still taken as an archetypal example of nineteenth-century English anti-Americanism.<sup>64</sup> Less well read today is *The Refugee in America*, the novel Trollope published just a few months after her controversial travelogue.<sup>65</sup> The story follows the fortunes of noble, twenty year-old Lord Darcy who, wanted by the police in England for a murder of which he is innocent, escapes to America with the help of two friends, Caroline Gordon and her father, Edward. A clash-of-cultures comedy ensues, in which Darcy and his companions encounter a variety of ill-educated, prejudiced, money-grabbing Americans. It is for Trollope an opportunity to reiterate the long list of complaints about American society unleashed in *Domestic Manners*. The novel is significant here because it includes the first example I have found of the fairytale of the impoverished American woman who marries into English aristocracy. In Trollope's hands this plotline is deployed as a further means of goading Americans.

One of Trollope's criticisms of the American political system is that members of the society's ruling classes, regardless of talent or morality, are particularly vulnerable to loss of money, influence and social status. In *The Refugee*, Darcy falls in love with Emily Williams, the daughter of an eminent American politician; "one of the first among the ephemeral great men of the shifting cabinet" (III.39). First, a change in government, and then her father's death have left Emily and her mother with only a "slender income," and living in a boarding-house (I.114). The lack of permanence in the American social strata condemns the beautiful, moral, deserving Emily to a life of insignificance and relative poverty, from which Trollope has her rescued by the

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<sup>64</sup> Charles Dickens, *American Notes: For General Circulation*, edited with an introduction by Patricia Ingham (1842; London: Penguin, 2000).

<sup>65</sup> Frances Trollope, *The Refugee in America* (London: Whittaker, Treacher and Co., 1832).



English lord who, at the end of the novel, takes Emily back to England to live in finery on his familial estate. Darcy represents a desirably stable social hierarchy. Trollope is willing to acknowledge that the English aristocracy has flaws; Darcy's cousin Oglander is, for example, corrupted by his greed for a title. Ultimately, however, she advocates aristocracy over democracy because it ensures worthwhile men like Darcy can maintain social influence, immune from fickle public opinion.

At the start of *The Refugee*, seventeen-year-old Emily is too young yet to have been indoctrinated into, as Trollope sees it, the American woman's characteristic narrow-mindedness and insufferably blind patriotism, exemplified by Emily's own mother. Emily is "like the pure virgin wax, unmarked either by the grace or deformity of any stamp whatever, and equally capable of receiving any" (I.150). As the novel progresses, it becomes apparent that Emily's intellect, manners and self-confidence are all being improved through her contact with Darcy, Mr. Gordon and, in particular, Caroline, who takes responsibility for giving Emily the kind of education in books, music, etiquette and languages that, Trollope insists, young American women are usually denied. It is this education that, despite his initial concerns about Emily's suitability to be a lord's wife, finally renders her acceptable to Darcy's family. Crucially, also, thanks to the self-confidence and independent thinking instilled in her by Caroline's tuition, Emily is able first to prevent an assassination attempt on Darcy and, then, provide proof of his innocence in the murder case. Trollope embodies in Emily the centuries-old conception of the New World as undeveloped nature – she is a "wild rose," "singing bird," "a delicate flower that they had found in the forest, transplanted and cherished, till it had become fairer than any the garden could offer" –

that requires the intervention of European experience and sophistication for it to grow most beautifully and most fruitfully (I.146, II.100, II.293). Specifically, America needs more, not less, influence of the English aristocracy.

I have not yet ascertained whether Susan Warner read *The Refugee* and had it in mind when writing *Queechy*. Certainly, the earlier novel was still being discussed in America in 1852, the year *Queechy* was published. In an article about Trollope in October 1852, *New Monthly Magazine* described it as “adding insult to [the] injury” caused by *Domestic Manners*.<sup>66</sup> In *Queechy*, whether or not Warner is directly answering Trollope’s novel, one can certainly see her responding to the types of characterisations and criticisms of American society that through the 1830s and 1840s were disseminated by Trollope and many other English visitors to America. (The majority of “English tourists” “indulge a malicious pleasure in pointing out fancied defects” and “make game of American manners,” according to the *Democratic Review* in 1847.)<sup>67</sup> In appropriating *The Refugee*’s lord-meets-girl plot, knowingly or otherwise, Warner attempts to reverse the dynamic of Trollope’s story, to renegotiate its terms so that it can be read as an argument for the democratisation of Britain, rather than for the re-aristocratisation of America. Before we reach Warner, though, I want to consider two other stories of American women falling in love with English aristocrats, Cooper’s *Home As Found* and Lippard’s *Quaker City*. In their own, very different ways, both novels give some idea of how, before the moderation of Anglo-American hostilities in the late 1840s, a U.S. author writing of an American’s fairytale

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<sup>66</sup> Anon., “Mrs Trollope,” reproduced in *Littell’s Living Age* no.35:438, 9 October 1852, p.58.

<sup>67</sup> Anon., “French Critics and Yankee Foibles,” *Democratic Review* no.21:114, December 1847, p.494.

marriage to an English aristocrat might have provoked hostility among compatriot readers.

### **International Nobility and International Mobility: James Fenimore Cooper's *Home As Found*<sup>68</sup>**

Even in celebrating the American Revolution, Cooper's tales of the early-mid 1820s strive to reassert the authority of a pre-Revolutionary ruling elite, dismissing the claims of working and middle classes whose own ambitions to power had been unharnessed by the Revolution. In these novels, Cooper places his faith in an educated upper class to demonstrate its abilities for fair and fruitful leadership, and in the American populace to acknowledge those credentials.

Cooper and his family left the United States in 1826, and spent the next seven years living and travelling in Europe. While away from his home country, Cooper defended it vehemently against European, especially English, criticisms, most notably in *Notions of the Americans* (1828).<sup>69</sup> *Notions* consists of a series of letters, pointedly addressed to the imaginary English aristocrat Sir Edward Waller, Baronet. In these letters, Cooper confidently enumerates the benefits of republicanism and (suitably limited) democracy for the national economy, social welfare, manners, and morals. This is in favourable comparison to the selfishness and wastefulness of the British

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<sup>68</sup> Page references given in parentheses in this section of the chapter are taken from Cooper, *Homeward Bound* (marked *Homeward*) and Cooper, *Home As Found* (marked *Found*).

<sup>69</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *Notions of the Americans Picked Up By A Travelling Bachelor* in Two Volumes (1828; New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1963).

aristocracy.<sup>70</sup> Cooper contends that the American system of “equal rights” does not, as erroneous Europeans believe, “imply a broad, general, and unequivocal equality ... in power,” rather it ensures that self-evidently capable leaders, endorsed by a deferential and industrious electorate, are awarded public office. Cooper insists that America’s democratic institutions are not “leveling,” but “elevating” (II.294). *Notions* is optimistic about the future of the republic, contrasting the country’s “increase and prosperity” with “the snail-paced and unnatural progress of European society” and predicting a complete reversal of the current cultural, political and military relationship of America to England. In fifty years’ time, Cooper imagines, “it will be just as much the desire of England then to be in our fashion, as it was our desire twenty years ago to be in hers” (I.228; I.15; II.128).

When Cooper returned to the United States in 1833, however, he discovered a nation in his opinion much changed; “no country has so much altered for the worse in so short a time,” says one of his mouthpieces in *Home As Found* (224). In *A Letter to His Countrymen* (1834) and *The American Democrat* (1838), works of non-fiction, and in the novels *Homeward Bound* and *Home As Found* (both 1838), Cooper details and satirises the ways in which, he feels, American society has declined in his absence.<sup>71</sup> Even 1837’s *England*, although announced as a critique of the ills the “the mother-country,” is arguably more preoccupied with its commentary on American society; it is, for instance, for Cooper a mark of America’s recent decline that so many

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<sup>70</sup> Cooper points out in *Notions* that – apparently, in his eyes rightfully – suffrage does not extend to “the pauper, nor to females, nor to minors, nor to idiots” (II.266). For a fuller analysis of *Notions*, see: Lance Schachterle, “Cooper’s Attitudes Towards England,” *The Cooper Society Website*, [www.oneonta.edu/~cooper/articles/suny/1982suny-schachterle.html](http://www.oneonta.edu/~cooper/articles/suny/1982suny-schachterle.html) Accessed: 25 April 2006.

<sup>71</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *The American Democrat, or Hints on the Social and Civic Relations of the United States of America*, with an Introduction by H.L. Mencken (1838; New York: Vintage Books, 1956).

Americans now venerate a social elite as corrupt, iniquitous and ineffective as England's (III.71). Notably, this criticism is aimed not at America's highest classes – “the feeling of the real gentry of the country [towards England] is getting to be very much what it ought to be” – nor at “the mass of the American people,” who “care no more for a lord than they care for a wood-chuck,” but at the “class immediately below” the “real gentry,” an aspirant middle class (II.244). This last group constitutes the real danger to Cooper's beloved America.

The paragraphs below concentrate on *Homeward Bound* and, primarily, its sequel *Home As Found*. Cooper originally had intended to write just one volume. This would tell the story of the return to America of the Effinghams – widower Edward Effingham, his daughter Eve and cousin John – after twelve years in Europe. It would begin with a brief account of the family's voyage back to America on the *Montauk*, one of the packet ships then making transatlantic travel ever easier and quicker. On the Effinghams' homecoming, the story would “exhibit the present state of society in the United States, through the agency ... of a set of characters ... who had freshly arrived from Europe, and to whom the distinctive features of the country would be apt to present themselves with greater force.” As he wrote, though, Cooper adhered to the advice of friends who wanted “more ship,” and penned instead several hundred pages of a sea-adventure story, diverting the *Montauk* to the coast of Africa and a violent encounter with a group of “ruthless and predatory,” piratical Arabs (*Homeward*, 273).<sup>72</sup> This tale became *Homeward Bound* and Cooper fulfilled his original project in *Home As Found*.

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<sup>72</sup> Cooper, *Homeward Bound*, preface, v.

The critique of American life that Cooper developed after his return to America has been explored at length elsewhere, but its main points are worth summarising here.<sup>73</sup> Cooper saw political power draining away from the landed gentry whose existence he felt necessary to ensure disinterested government, and towards a rising business class whose obsession with moneymaking appalled him. It was the “paper-money aristocracy” of the *Democratic Review* article winning out over the “aristocracy of nature” described by Dewey. That America had, Cooper writes, rapidly become “a nation torn by adverse [political] factions” was largely due to capitalist politicians who sought power and influence for personal gain rather than common good (*Homeward*, 64). By contrast, in *Homeward Bound* and *Home As Found* the landed gentry is represented by Edward Effingham, whose inheritance of the familial estate enables him to live in “independence of situation,” which, in turn, “rendered him original and just, by simply exempting him from the influence of the [party-political] passions” (*Homeward*, 64-65).

If in *Notions* Cooper had called the American style of democracy “elevating” rather than “leveling,” he now reversed his views. Democracy was established in America by the founding fathers as a means of ensuring a Jeffersonian aristocracy, a ruling elite of men of self-evident natural virtue and talent, rather than a European-style

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<sup>73</sup> Eric J. Sundquist, *Home As Found: Authority and Genealogy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979), 1-40; Mark R Patterson, *Authority, Autonomy, and Representation in American Literature, 1776-1865* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 81-136; Charles Hansford Adams, “*The Guardian of the Law*”: *Authority and Identity in James Fenimore Cooper’s Fiction* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990), 120-134. See also: Donald A. Ringe, *James Fenimore Cooper* (Boston: Twayne, 1988); 53-60; Robert Emmet Long, *James Fenimore Cooper* (New York: Continuum, 1990), 103-110; Donald Darnell, *James Fenimore Cooper: Novelist of Manners* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1993), 68-85.

aristocracy of title and birthright. Now, though, according to Cooper, men of little ability but great ambition were appropriating the political system to further their own careers; usurpers who could never rule through action or decisiveness so achieve power instead through committees and polls. In *Homeward Bound* and *Home As Found*, Cooper focuses much of his fury on one character, the “cowardly, envious, malignant” newspaper editor Steadfast Dodge (*Found*, 222). Dodge is an overblown caricature of the ultra-democrat, whose belief in the primacy of majority rule and “public opinion” is self-serving – it creates an environment in which newspapers and their editors have an elevated influence – and, worse, threatens to deny social leadership to those most able to lead (*Found*, 14). Cooper makes this point most apparent when the *Montauk* needs saving from the Arabs; Dodge’s attempts to organise the ship’s defence through sub-groups and votes appears ridiculous alongside the incisive direction of the ship’s captain, Truck, and Paul Powis (*Homeward*, 389-391). Democracy, as practiced by men like Dodge, threatens to overturn the privileges and authority won legitimately (in Cooper’s eyes) during and immediately after the Revolution by families like the Effinghams, and to create a society of, at best, mediocrity and, at worst, chaos. This was not democracy but what Cooper repeatedly calls “demagoguery.” The promotion by characters such as Dodge of frequent “rotation” in public offices ““has infected the national character, and men get to be impatient of sameness, even though it be useful””; elections are held for their own sake, sometimes forcing men of talent out of position (*Found*, 225).

Most of *Home As Found* is set in 1830s Templeton, the small town established by the Effinghams’ ancestors, *The Pioneers’* Temples and Effinghams. There, the very

forces – commerce, mob rule, indiscriminate democratisation – that in his early novels Cooper sought symbolically to contain are running amok. It was as if the Skinners of *The Spy* and Richard Jones of *The Pioneers* had won out after all. As an alternative, Cooper presents in Powis, with his “modest good sense,” and in the “clear-headed, just-minded, and liberal” Effinghams an idealised American gentry whose leadership could yet redeem the nation (*Homeward*, 148; *Found*, 224). Cooper voices through these characters’ commentary on Templeton his own disgust at the course American society was taking. He argues that their experience of being away from the United States facilitates critical distance – they, presumably like the author himself, have a more accurate and “discriminating” perspective on the country (*Found*, 116). This, Cooper argues, rather than Dodge’s blind praise of all things American, constitutes true love of country.

Cooper was vilified for his depiction of American life by critics who labelled him “aristocratic.”<sup>74</sup> The *New-York Review* argued that “the whole tenor of *Home As Found* is to exalt foreign manners and customs at the expense of our own.”<sup>75</sup> Cooper was pilloried by critics more than anything else for nakedly fictionalising in *Home As Found* his very public, real-life legal dispute with the people of Cooperstown, the settlement established by his father, over ownership of a piece of land. Cooper claimed Three Mile Point (Fishing Point in the novel) as part of his inheritance; the populace of Cooperstown claimed it as public grounds. Cooper won the bitter quarrel,

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<sup>74</sup> See: Allen M. Axelrad, “Cooper, Aristocracy, and Capitalism,” a paper presented at the Cooper Panel of the 1996 Conference of the American Literature Association in San Diego, *The Cooper Society Website*, [www.oneonta.edu/~cooper/articles/ala/1996ala-axelrad.html](http://www.oneonta.edu/~cooper/articles/ala/1996ala-axelrad.html) Accessed: August 17 2005.

<sup>75</sup> Anon., “Cooper’s Last Works, *New-York Review* 4 (January 1839); reprinted in *Fenimore Cooper: The Critical Heritage*, eds. George Dekker and John P. McWilliams (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 187.



but it damaged his public image, cited by detractors as evidence that he had become anti-democratic.<sup>76</sup> In *Home As Found*, the battle over the land is carried out in a series of arguments, public meetings and press articles in which Cooper contrasts the Effinghams' "natural and legal" ownership of the property with the claims of the "law-making, law-breaking" and "trespassing" villagers of Templeton (205, 209). For Cooper, the "natural and legal" right of fathers to transmit property uninterrupted to their children is key to the future of the nation. Cooper's logic is that educated men like Edward Effingham, "independent" because propertied, are most likely to raise sons and daughters morally and practically competent for social leadership, and should be allowed freely to pass on their lands to those children to ensure that they too remain "independent" enough to lead.

In *Home As Found*, Eve Effingham is offered as evidence of this logic. To ensure the continuance beyond her generation of the Effinghams' social status, though, Cooper must find for Eve a worthy, virile husband. As in his early novels, Cooper deploys a marriage narrative as a means of trying to secure for the landed gentry permanence in the face of the erosion of their social influence, and the threat to their very property. He does this most obviously through the union of Eve with the vigorously healthy Paul Powis. With the couple already betrothed, it transpires that Powis, around whose familial and national origins there is mystery for much of the two novels, is actually John Effingham's son, and thus also Eve's own cousin (*Found*, 391-396). Powis and Eve's semi-incestuous marriage now guarantees that the family's wealth and property will remain exclusively within the Effingham family for at least one more

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<sup>76</sup> For more on Cooper's various court cases during the 1830s and the fallout from them, see: Sundquist, *Home As Found*, 3-8; Adams, "The Guardian of the Law," 120-134; Long, *James Fenimore Cooper*, 103-110.

generation.<sup>77</sup> Eve has another suitor, Aristabulus Bragg, a less unpleasant, but equally upstart cohort of Dodge. When Eve turns down his proposal of marriage, he marries her French maid Annette instead (426-430). Annette is the next best thing in Bragg's project of social climbing; he and his sort, Cooper makes it clear, will not be getting their hands on the real objects of desire – sexual, social, economic – in this lifetime.

The second half of *Home As Found* is largely concerned with unravelling the mystery of Powis's identity. Until midway through the novel, no-one, readers included, knows whether Powis is English or American, and Powis himself deliberately perpetuates the confusion. Cooper figures the *Montauk* as a testing ground for debates over national differences, with numerous lengthy conversations between its passengers over “the conflicts between British and American opinions” (*Homeward*, 44). Powis admits he “shall profit by the circumstance [of others not knowing his nationality] to praise and condemn at pleasure, since no one can impeach my candor, or impute either to partialities or prejudices” (*Homeward*, 308). Eve's national identity is, in a different way, equally uncertain. From the opening chapter, other characters and she herself question whether twelve formative years of education in various countries in Europe have made Eve un-American.<sup>78</sup> Eve yearns to be American – she has “a heart full of feeling for the land of my birth” – but feels herself the product of “a congress of nations” (*Homeward*, 11). Powis suggests that she “properly belongs to neither

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<sup>77</sup> Eve will not even have to change her name, for Powis changes his to Effingham when he discovers he is John's son. For more on this theme, see Sundquist, *Home As Found*, 1-40 and Patterson, 81-136. Patterson challenges Sundquist's reading of the novel as a satire as much of the Effinghams as of characters such as Dodge and Bragg.

<sup>78</sup> In Mary Shelley's *Lodore*, a near-contemporary tale of a young woman caught between American and British culture, she uses the phrase “unnationalize” to describe the process of losing one's national affiliations through experiences abroad. Mary Shelley, *Lodore*, edited with an Introduction and Notes by Lisa Vargo (1835; Peterborough, Ontario: Broadview Press, 1997), 86.

[England nor America],” and she is criticised by the gossipmongers of Templeton for her perceived foreignness (*Homeward*, 146; *Found*, 229). She becomes almost fixated by the question of whether or not Powis is American and does not admit her love to him until he divulges that he is American (*Found*, 139, 192). Eve’s own sense of national identity is at stake in her matrimonial choice. She rejects Sir George Templemore’s courtship of her, and states at one point that she cannot ““suppose that any American gentlewoman can deem so paltry a thing as a baronetcy, an inducement to forget her self-respect,”” a sentiment echoed by Powis, who talks of ““the moral courage and self-denial”” of any woman who ““refused to be the wife of an English baronet of a good estate and respectable family”” (*Found*, 339).

The latter passages of *Home As Found* are littered with revelations about Powis’s ancestry. It emerges that he is related to English nobility, and, himself next in line to ““one of those ancient baronies,”” has renounced his own contested claim to the family’s peerage (270). When John points out there are many Americans who ““would cling to the hopes of a British peerage with greater tenacity,”” Powis replies, ““I am born an American, and will die an American; and an American who swaggers about such a claim is like the daw among the peacocks”” (270). We later discover that Powis himself until recently ““was never quite certain ... on which side of the Atlantic I was actually born”” but, even before confirming his American birth, had chosen to serve in the U.S. Navy rather than the British (321). Both Eve and Powis have the opportunity to align themselves with other nationalities but instead choose to be American, Eve through her relationship with Powis, and Powis through his military allegiance and renunciation of English rank.

That Eve and Powis self-consciously construct themselves as American rather than European or English is significant given that one of Cooper's biggest complaints about American society is its continued "miserable mental bondage" to England (*Found*, 269). "British opinions ... weighed ... like an incubus on the national interests of America," he says (*Homeward*, 64). One of Dodge's most striking faults is that, despite his effusive republicanism, he maintains a "secret awe and reverence" for the English nobility, and in introducing the idiotic Anglophile Mr. Howel, Cooper derides Americans who slavishly follow English fashions and beliefs (*Homeward*, 251). Cooper attacks the decadence and corruption engendered by a political system based on hereditary rights, "the accidents, *heureux ou malheureux*, of birth," as Eve calls it, just as he had in *The Spy* and *Lionel Lincoln* and throughout works like *England* (*Found*, 35).<sup>79</sup> That the United States, sixty years after independence and almost twenty after *The Spy*, is still beholden to a nation governed by such a system – the U.S. is "a country for which England does all the thinking" – is one of Cooper's greatest disappointments (*Found*, 178). Eve and Powis, the story implies, can provide leadership that has benefited from Europeanisation, well-spent time abroad facilitating that crucial capacity for "discrimination," but without having made them unpatriotic or un-American. If anything, travelling outside the United States has made them more patriotic and more American than their detractors.

However, while this might be Cooper's ideal reading of *Home As Found*, it becomes more complicated when read in the light of one of novel's other storylines. *Home As*

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<sup>79</sup> In *England*, Cooper accuses the English aristocracy of leading the nation into the Napoleonic Wars solely to divert the likelihood of revolution at home and thus protect themselves. Cooper, *England*, II.83.

*Found* ends with a double wedding: Powis and Eve are married alongside Eve's cousin Grace van Cortlandt and Sir George Templemore, an English aristocrat and fellow passenger on the *Montauk*. In a novel that elsewhere celebrates the "moral courage and self-denial" of American women who refuse marriage to an aristocrat, it perhaps seems strange that we as readers are asked to celebrate this coupling. Cooper might defend himself by saying that, symbolically, much less rests in the novel on Grace and Sir George's marriage than on Powis and Eve's. The two are lesser lights. Sir George is noble, courteous and capable, but is merely a helpmate to Powis when the *Montauk* is in danger; Powis takes control while Templemore "envied the readiness, practical skill, and intelligence, with which his companion, a man of cultivated and polished mind in higher things, performed every requisite act" (*Homeward*, 323). It is immediately after Powis's heroic rescue of the ship that Eve, courted by both men, first admits to herself "the extent and the nature of the interest she took in Paul Powis" (*Homeward*, 441). Eve's choice of Powis over Templemore confirms the American's superiority. Cooper rarely talks about Grace, meanwhile, in any other way than making unfavourable comparison with Eve; Grace is Eve's equal in beauty, but not in intelligence or refinement, and when Sir George transfers his affections from Eve to Grace, one character comments that Grace is "a substitute for Eve Effingham" (*Found*, 31, 47, 181-182, 389). Even Grace admits her own "inferiority" (*Found*, 296). Where Grace fails in particular is that, having been brought up in an American family that maintained "traditions of colonial manners," she has "imbibed in childhood the notions connected with hereditary rank" (*Found*, 181). By contrast, Eve, "had lived ... intimately among the high-born and great ... in so many different countries," so, "by close observation, she knew that arbitrary and

political distinctions made but little difference between men of themselves; and so far from having become the dupe of the glitter of life ... had learned to discriminate between the false and the real” (*Found*, 181-182). Cooper continues that Eve “found Grace actually attaching importance to the ... condition of an English baronet” (*Found*, 182). Again, far from making her un-American, Eve’s travels abroad actually enable her to free herself from her untravelled cousin’s deluded notions of the value of “hereditary rank,” and can thus recognise “the position of an American gentleman ... ought to be, the highest of all human stations” because its status is earned rather than acquired arbitrarily. Having proposed to Grace, Sir George asks John Effingham, Grace’s uncle, for his blessing. John tells Sir George: “As she knows other countries better, she will come to regard her own through more favorable and discriminating eyes” (*Found*, 304). Cooper at least mitigates the contradiction between his Anglo-American courtship plot and his criticism of transatlantic titular marriage by arguing that Grace’s experience of a different culture will make her, like Eve, a better American.

In the cases of both couplings, Cooper makes careful efforts to vindicate his marriage of a desirable American woman to the scion of an aristocratic English family. This feels, though, far from convincing. In developing a marriage plot around Sir George and in unfolding the tortuous history of Powis’s parentage, Cooper goes out of his way to introduce the English nobility into the book. It is, furthermore, an English nobility that has more in common with America’s upper class than America’s upper class has in common with the rest of the American population. Cooper constructs Sir George as clearly more suitable than characters such as Bragg and Dodge to gain

admission into the Effingham family and the American gentry. Even Sir George's very name, Templemore, suggests a synergy with the aristocracy of *Templeton*. Although the novel ostensibly revolves around questions of Eve and Paul's national identity and allegiance, class rather than nation is actually the key determinant for Cooper in *Home As Found*, the most significant dividing line between individuals and groups of people. At the exact moment at which Paul proposes marriage to Eve, set up as an opportunity for each finally to confirm their American-ness, we are repeatedly reminded in a conversation that runs over four pages of Paul's aristocratic English ancestry (347-350). The very act of Cooper marrying not just one, but two "American gentlewomen" into such aristocratic families seems telling for it doubly connects the Effinghams to what, in the light of the rapidly diminishing power of America's landed gentry, on which he dwells at such length in the novels, seems by comparison a more stable form of social hierarchy.

While Cooper may in *Home As Found* at length denounce "hereditary rank" as "artificial" and "false," and celebrate that Jeffersonian notion of a "real" aristocracy of talent and virtue, yet again all those characters worthy of social authority – Edward and John Effingham, Powis, Eve, Sir George, Grace – are ones born into families already possessing wealth and influence (182). The distinction between Jeffersonian and hereditary aristocracy collapses despite Cooper's repeated assertions that the two are fundamentally different. The same argument can be made of *The Spy* and *Lionel Lincoln*. The difference in those novels is that Cooper keeps the English and American gentry clearly separate, preventing Sarah Wharton from marrying Colonel Wellmere and sending Lionel and Cecil back to England. In *Home As Found*, though,

despite Powis's vigorous renouncement of a British title, he has, noticeably, maintained close ties with the Ducies, that part of his family ennobled in his place (268-270). Indeed, it is only by maintaining these ties that Paul is able to prove that he is not of illegitimate birth; he may have extricated himself from England's hereditary aristocracy but he is dependent upon it to legitimise him, literally, and thus render him suitable for marriage to an "American gentlewoman" (348, 339).

Cooper deals with the double wedding itself in just three, brusque paragraphs. Even this indicates the author's swaying towards English models of class. The "bridal train" takes care to arrive at church "unobserved by the eyes of the curious" and then, after a "brief" ceremony, Edward Effingham leads the two brides home "rapidly from the church, for he felt reluctant to suffer the holy feelings that were uppermost in his heart to be the spectacle of rude and obtrusive observers" (432-433). John Gillis has described the changing wedding practices of upper-class English families during the first half of the nineteenth century. During the eighteenth century upper-class weddings were treated as communal happenings, with local people of all classes involved in their celebration. By the mid-nineteenth century, however, such events had become "essentially private legal act[s]."<sup>80</sup> These might involve lower-class celebration, but at a safe distance, for instance in separate fêtes. The introduction of closed carriages enabled discrete arrival at church and a speedy getaway from it, leaving no space for public rituals. The aristocracy and gentry's new type of wedding "served ... to emphasize the social distance between persons of their class and the rest

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<sup>80</sup> John R. Gillis, *For Better, For Worse: British Marriages, 1600 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 142.



of the community.”<sup>81</sup> *Home As Found*’s double wedding resembles the new nuptial practices of the English aristocracy, a group Cooper had studied at length during his stay in England.<sup>82</sup> The wedding purposefully excludes the “rude and obtrusive” population of Templeton, underlining the gulf between them and the village’s principal land-owning family.

Cooper in the 1820s could imagine an American ruling elite independent of England *and* able to contain internal threats to its supremacy. In the following decade, however, seeing a society over which that ruling elite was losing its hold, Cooper in constructing *Home As Found* seems on some level to have felt it necessary to shore up America’s landed gentry through its association with the English aristocracy. He cannot convincingly extricate himself from that “miserable mental bondage” to England that he so despises.

Cooper evidently anticipated that just such charges would be made of the novels. He places towards the end of *Home As Found* the following passage:

[T]he approaching marriages ... had to run the gauntlet, not of the village and county criticisms, but that of the mighty Emporium itself [Manhattan] ... the discussion of marriages being a topic of never-ending interest in that well-regulated social organization, after the subject of dollars, lots, and wines have been duly exhausted. Sir George Templemore was transformed into the Honorable Lord George Templemore, and Paul’s relationship to Lady Dunluce was converted, as usual, into his being the heir-apparent of a duchy of that name; Eve’s preference for a nobleman, as a matter of course, to the aristocratical tastes imbibed during a residence in foreign countries: Eve, the intellectual, feminine, instructed Eve, whose European associations, while they had taught her to prize the refinement, grace,

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<sup>81</sup> Gillis, 138.

<sup>82</sup> Several lengthy sections of *England* are taken up with Cooper’s descriptions of dinner parties and other social events spent in the company of English aristocrats (e.g., I.133-170, I.234-254, II.189-198).

*retenue*, and tone of an advanced condition of society, had also taught her to despise its mere covering and glitter! But as there is no protection against falsehood, so is there no reasoning with ignorance (412).

The paragraph is a pre-emptive strike against those who would over-state the importance of Cooper's tactical deployment of the English aristocracy, reminding us that Templemore is 'only' a Sir and not a Lord, and that Powis is no longer "heir-apparent of a duchy." Cooper may deride as "falsehood" or "ignorance" any reading of the novel that would accuse the author of revealing through the marriage plots "aristocratical tastes imbibed during a residence in foreign countries," but, surely, his very inclusion of such a defence acknowledges how open to such criticism he knew the narrative to be. Instead, the passage merely reminds us again that the Effinghams are now entwined in a world of Sirs, lords, duchies and noblemen. Cooper does not, as in *The Spy*, turn to established American families for suitable marital partners for American women, but to the English aristocracy. He effectively envisages a transatlantic nobility as "a bulwark against ... America's slide into democratic chaos," to borrow a phrase used by Patterson in a different context.<sup>83</sup> He does so reticently and ambivalently. Indeed, in the passage above, he even tries to deny that is what he has done. But the fact remains that he has done it. Cooper takes pains to try to separate Eve and Powis's American, republican aristocracy from Grace and Sir George's English monarchical nobility but, I suggest, ultimately he draws attention to their similarity. In an age of increasing travel between England and America, the separation of the two countries' ruling classes perhaps seemed evermore wishful thinking. Packet ships like the *Montauk* were making travel quicker and easier,

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<sup>83</sup> Patterson, *Authority, Autonomy, and Representation*, 119.

especially for the rich, and in the decade after Cooper published *Home As Found*, the introduction of steamers – something predicted in the novel (438) – enabled still speedier, more luxurious transatlantic travel for those who could afford it, facilitating even more cross-fertilisation between the American and British ruling classes.<sup>84</sup> It is a process *Home As Found* simultaneously enacts and struggles against. Cooper is in the end unable to imagine an American ruling class that he finds desirable *and* that he can construct as independent of England's. As so often with Cooper's works, the very anxieties he attempts to quell with his narratives are, despite his best efforts, their most memorable elements.

There are clues to the path Cooper would take in *Home As Found* in the previous year's *England*, in which he notes admiringly: "between us and England, the latter having prescribed and definite degrees of rank, its upper classes have less jealousy of place, and of intrusion on their rights, than the same classes in America" (105). Cooper found in the English aristocracy an attractive combination of stability and flexibility. As Christopher Mulvey points out, admission into England's highest class was possible – titles could be bestowed upon the worthy and the wealthy, but only to those who could be relied upon to abide by conditions of entry developed over centuries and understood by all.<sup>85</sup> During the nineteenth century the English aristocracy absorbed bankers, industrialists and other *nouveaux riches*; these people did not usurp the ruling class, rather they became part of it, and changed it only very gradually. Offering the possibility of entrance into the upper classes enabled the

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<sup>84</sup> See: George Rogers Taylor, *The Transportation Revolution 1815-1860* (White Plains, N.Y.: M.E. Sharpe Inc, 1951), 145; Stephen Fox, *Transatlantic: Samuel Cunard, Isambard Brunel, and the Great Atlantic Steamships* (London: Harper Collins, 2003), reproduced on [www.wnyc.org/books/18589](http://www.wnyc.org/books/18589) Accessed: 5 September 2005.

<sup>85</sup> Mulvey, *Transatlantic Manners*, 124.

aristocracy to avoid revolution and to retain management over political reform: Britain's increasingly powerful middle and upper-middle classes did not want to overthrow the nobility, for guaranteed power and privilege could instead be gained by being admitted to it. This was what Cooper approvingly refers to in *Homeward Bound* as England's "peaceable revolution" (449). In the America of *Home As Found*, by unpleasant contrast, the lower orders want to secure wealth and privilege on their own terms, not necessarily those set by the existing elite. Although he might never have admitted it, Cooper, Mulvey observes, came to see England as appealingly "positioned between the fluidity of the American and the fixity of the French social systems."<sup>86</sup> Cooper found himself, albeit with enormous reluctance, attracted if not quite to English aristocracy itself, then to the benefits it enjoyed.

Six years after *Homeward Bound* and *Home As Found*, Cooper published another pair of novels involving transatlantic travel and Anglo-American romance. *Afloat and Ashore* and its sequel *Miles Wallingford* (both 1844) are narrated by an ageing sailor, reminiscing about his youthful maritime adventures at the end of the eighteenth century and start of the nineteenth.<sup>87</sup> It is a time before the regular cross-Atlantic packet-ship service and when, significantly, "distinctions [between social classes] were much more marked ... than they are to-day" (*Afloat*, 4). Miles Wallingford comes from a family of "substantial hereditary property" but of a social standing "usually considered to be one or two degrees beneath the highest class." Cooper looks back nostalgically to a period when people knew their place in society so

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<sup>86</sup> Mulvey, *Transatlantic Manners*, 157.

<sup>87</sup> James Fenimore Cooper, *Afloat and Ashore*, edited with an Introduction by Allen Klots Jr. (1844; New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1956); James Fenimore Cooper, *Miles Wallingford* (1844; New York: G.P. Putnam's and Sons, c1896).

precisely. Miles's father dies and the family subsequently loses its property, but Miles is a virtuous hero and, after numerous reversals of fortune, he is rewarded for his integrity by becoming master of his own ship and regaining the family wealth. Importantly, despite the prosperity he enjoys by the end of *Miles Wallingford*, Miles never seeks to promote himself beyond the social position from which he starts.

In *Afloat and Ashore*, Miles sails to England and in London meets the beautiful Emily Merton, who he rescues when she falls into a lake; "I had saved the life of a damsel of seventeen, and had only to fall in love to become the hero of a romance" (*Afloat*, 166). Emily turns out to be worldly, vain and superficial but Miles, an innocent abroad, spends much of the narrative unaware of her faults and wanting to marry her. He has been seduced by the "romance" of the Old World; it is Cooper's caution against the American infatuation with the fairytale of England. Miles eventually realises the error of his feelings for Emily. He marries his childhood sweetheart Lucy, and Emily marries the equally self-interested and ambitious Rupert Hardinge, Miles's childhood friend. Only caddish, self-serving and avaricious Americans like Rupert marry English women; true American heroes like Miles marry "pure of mind, sincere, truthful, placid, and just" American women like Lucy (*Miles*, 453). Emily and Rupert get their comeuppance: we discover at the end of *Miles Wallingford* that Rupert's schemes for social climbing have ultimately failed, leaving the couple in penury (431-432).<sup>88</sup> Set alongside *Homeward Bound* and *Home As Found*, *Afloat and Ashore* and *Miles Wallingford* constitute a nostalgic fantasy, a celebration of a bygone period in

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<sup>88</sup> After Rupert's death, Emily marries again, this time to an older, wealthy American who takes her to live in Italy where, after his death, she becomes "an amply-endowed widow." Although in financial terms she succeeds, Cooper depicts her as a slightly sad and unreformed figure (431-433).

which the social order seemed more fixed, and when Anglo-American marriages were unequivocally undesirable.

**The “Coronet, For Which She Perilled Her Soul”: Aristocratic Marriage in George Lippard’s *Quaker City*<sup>89</sup>**

The focus of *Homeward Bound* and *Home As Found* moves from the upper decks of a New York-bound packet ship, Cooper making only passing references to the steerage passengers below, many of whom, one presumes, are on their way to America to seek work in the rapidly growing cities of the Eastern seaboard; it passes briefly through the *haute-monde* of New York, ignoring the rest of the city’s population, and then to the Effinghams’ country estate, where the family insulates itself from “rude and obtrusive” neighbours. At a time of intensive urbanisation and accelerating immigration in the United States, the novels are, arguably, a retreat from social reality as experienced by most Americans in the post-Jacksonian period. *Afloat and Ashore* and *Miles Wallingford* withdraw even further – into a fading past.

In the same year Cooper published *Afloat and Ashore* and *Miles Wallingford*, George Lippard began serial publication of *Quaker City, or The Monks of Monk Hall*. It is difficult to imagine a more different story from Cooper’s. A “vitriolic novel about secret corruption among respectable Philadelphians” that shifts “between Gothic supernaturalism and urban realism,” *Quaker City* does not just confront the realities of the period, it magnifies them to grotesque proportions.<sup>90</sup> The novel allows the reader

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<sup>89</sup> Citation: Lippard, *The Quaker City*, 490.

<sup>90</sup> Reynolds, *George Lippard*, 1 and 70.

no let-up from scenes of upper-class vice and working-class squalor. Great wealth and terrible poverty collide, both woven into the fabric of America's new urban world, and inextricable from each other, for in *Quaker City* it is the ruthless accumulation of wealth by the rich that guarantees the impoverishment of Philadelphia's working masses.

Lippard, who died aged only 32, was a prolific writer and tireless social activist. In several novels, hundreds of speeches, numerous short stories, and the weekly newspaper he founded, edited and largely wrote, Lippard developed a radical, anticapitalist, proto-Marxist critique of America's class system.<sup>91</sup> As David Reynolds observes, Lippard worked at a time of "dramatic upward distribution of wealth" in America, a period when in Lippard's home city of Philadelphia the share of wealth owned by the richest 1% grew from quarter to half, while the share owned by the poorest 75% plummeted from 30% to below 3%.<sup>92</sup> In writings suffused with righteous anger, Lippard, himself born into poverty, took the side of those "hundreds of thousands [who] find it impossible to live in comfort" described above by the *Democratic Review*. He "identified himself body and soul with the dreams and anxieties of exploited workers," portraying the "upper classes as malevolent exploiters engaged in endless nefarious actions."<sup>93</sup> He involved himself with a number of reform movements and established a nationwide workers' rights association, the

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<sup>91</sup> Lippard probably never read the work of Marx, his direct contemporary, but his conception of historical class struggle strongly resembles the German's, although, as Reynolds notes, "While Marx was a disciplined social scientist... Lippard was an impressionistic, imaginative historian whose vision of the past was colored by religious mysticism and ardent patriotism." Reynolds, *George Lippard*, 63.

<sup>92</sup> Reynolds, "Introduction," in Lippard, *Prophet of Protest*, 12. Information on Lippard in this and following paragraphs from Reynolds, "Introduction," Reynolds, *George Lippard*, and Shelley Streeby, "Opening up the Story Paper: George Lippard and the Construction of Class," in *boundary 2* 24:1 (Spring 1997): 177-203.

<sup>93</sup> Reynolds, "Introduction," in Lippard, *Prophet of Protest*, 23, 16.

Brotherhood of the Union, which called for a shorter workday, electoral reform, and wider-spread education.

In Lippard's series of "Legends of the Revolution," he claimed and memorialised the Revolution not for the gentry, as Cooper had done, but for the lower classes.<sup>94</sup> (Indeed, Lippard, who professed enjoyment of Cooper's early novels, would in the late 1840s criticise the older writer for his evermore paternalistic worldview.)<sup>95</sup> Lippard regarded the War of Independence as continuing a historical process of liberation from tyranny and equalisation of human rights, one in a series of events, including the birth of Christ and French Revolution, that could serve as models for reform in the new urban America.

In Shelley Streeby's words:

Lippard adapted a radical republican language that set 'men and women who work' against the new 'merchant princes,' factory owners, slaveholders, and professional politicians who tried to monopolize economic and political power in the antebellum United States.<sup>96</sup>

Fiction mattered to Lippard as an agent for social change; he asserted: "a literature which does not work practically, for the advancement of social reform, or which is too dignified or too good to picture the wrongs of the great mass of humanity, is just good for nothing at all."<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> Reynolds, *George Lippard*, 67-72.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>96</sup> Streeby, 182.

<sup>97</sup> George Lippard, writing in *Quaker City Weekly* (10 February 1849); reproduced in Lippard, *Prophet of Protest* as "A National Literature," 279-281. Citation: 281.



*Quaker City* was a publishing phenomenon. Its ten instalments, published through late 1844 and early 1845, “sold at a record-breaking pace” and, once published in a single volume, became America’s best-selling novel ever.<sup>98</sup> Its controversial concoction of sex, violence and social satire clearly appealed to a mass audience. The book was, unsurprisingly, denounced as immoral by elite figures and critics representing their views but, after seven years of economic depression in America and growing wealth inequality, other readers seemed to take satisfaction from *Quaker City’s* working-class sympathies, its caustic depiction of upper-class corruption, and the comeuppance it delivers upon its greediest characters.<sup>99</sup>

If in attacking America’s new aristocracy, Cooper had been defending an endangered landed gentry, Lippard did so in support of what he called “the lower million,” society’s poorest.<sup>100</sup> The novel is set against the backdrop of the collapse of the Bank of the United States, to which it refers on several occasions and, at a time when several eminent bankers were being tried for fraud (61, 200, 205, 346, 351, 401). Like the *Democratic Review’s* “Thoughts on the Times” piece, Lippard holds bankers responsible for the country’s growing disparities of wealth. One of *Quaker City’s* most affecting scenes involves a destitute carpenter, who has lost his savings in the collapse of a local bank, and who visits the “aristocratic” mansion of the bank’s “corpulent” president – who despite the bank’s collapse has retained his personal fortune – to beg for the loan of a dollar so he, his wife and child can eat (405). The bank president refuses and, returning home to find his wife and child dead of

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<sup>98</sup> Fiedler, “Introduction” to Lippard, *Quaker City* vii; Reynolds, *George Lippard*, 10; Reynolds, “Introduction,” *Prophet*, 5.

<sup>99</sup> See Reynolds, *George Lippard*, 9-19.

<sup>100</sup> Lippard used the phrase in the title of his book *New York: Its Upper Ten and Lower Million* (Cincinnati: H.M. Rulison, 1853; reprint, Upper Saddle River, N.J.: The Gregg Press, 1970).

starvation, the carpenter commits suicide. Later that night, the bank president also dies, apparently of a heart attack. “God is Just,” proclaims the chapter’s title (402-416).

Lippard extends his attack on America’s upper classes to include not only bankers, but also compassionless corporate bosses, profiteering merchants, corruptible politicians and judges, and clergymen who befriend rather than denounce the wealthy. Lippard’s capitalist elite is thoroughly rotten, able to purchase ecclesiastical endorsement, legal favours and political privilege in order to consolidate its influence and expand its wealth, and in whose interests the wages of the city’s “honest” poor are kept low and their working conditions squalid.

*Quaker City* features a number of criss-crossing storylines that between them involve rape, robbery, drunkenness, blackmail, fraud, incest, seduction, sadistic violence, murder, torture, poisoning and nefarious scheming. The novel attempts a comprehensive account of the matrix of economic and sexual relations that connect individuals and groups in the capitalist city; Lippard wrote in the book’s preface that his aim was to “describe all the phases of a corrupt social system, as manifested in the city of Philadelphia” (2). It is populated by innocent virgins and aristocratic seducers, ruthless pimps and remorseless procuresses, grotesque thugs, immoral capitalists, hypocritical citizens and craven clergymen; a mouldering corpse, prophesising astrologer and cult-leading sorcerer are thrown in for good measure. The storylines are linked not only by reappearing characters but also by location: each starts from or wends its way to Monk Hall, a Philadelphia mansion that “unites in all its details the

house-of-ill-fame, the clubhouse, and the gambling hell” (60). It is a Gothic castle-cum-house-of-horrors, with unnumbered subterranean chambers, a place of “infernal orgies,” where the city’s supposedly most respectable men gather to gamble, drink, and deflower unsuspecting virgins, all presided over by the murderous Devil-Bug, a one-eyed “devil in human shape” with “distorted face and deformed body” (313, 339). It can seem as if each scene is intended to outdo the last for the debauchery it depicts and the horrible inventiveness of its violence. *Quaker City* is an assault on the reader, who is disoriented further by the frequent and sudden shifts backwards and forwards in narrative time.

One of the novel’s interwoven plotlines involves Dora Livingstone, the young, beautiful, and highly sexualised wife of Albert Livingstone, one of Philadelphia’s wealthiest merchants. They live together in the “lavish magnificence” of his “princely mansion” (39, 180). Married less than a year, Dora is already cuckolding her middle-aged husband. She plans to marry Algernon Fitz-Cowles, a handsome conman who is posing as the son of an English earl, using the guise both to seduce Dora and to defraud several companies, including Livingstone’s. Dora is attracted to Fitz-Cowles, who turns out to be “the Bastard of a Creole slave,” by the prospect of becoming “Lady Dalveny of Lyndeswold” on Fitz-Cowles’ succession to his father’s earldom (551, 184).<sup>101</sup> “You never gave me wealth, you never gave me love? Then what is the tie that binds me to you? You have it in your power to grace [me] ... with a *title*,” Dora tells Fitz-Cowles (188). This would fulfil a prophecy made to Dora when

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<sup>101</sup> Clearly, the disparity between who Dora believes Fitz-Cowles to be, and his actual ancestry, heightens the pathos of her situation. There are hints that Fitz-Cowles’ father is, if not an English nobleman, some kind of wealthy, prominent person (553). Even so, as a “bastard son,” he would still never inherit his father’s title or full wealth.

a child that she would ““one day ... wear a coronet, and walk a titled lady among the grandees of a royal court”” (188). She feels ““destined from my birth to rank and station”” (188). Her current marriage is her one obstacle so she plans to murder Livingstone. The “Canker of Ambition, has warmed its way into Dora’s Soul,” Lippard tells us, but ““a coronet,”” she says, is ““worth the peril of a soul to win”” (251, 181). However, Luke Harvey, Livingstone’s business partner and Dora’s former fiancé, discovers Dora and Fitz-Cowles’ affair. Luke takes Livingstone to Monk Hall where they find the adulteress pair asleep in bed, post-coital, Dora muttering in her sleep, ““Algernon – a coronet – wealth and power”” (138). When Dora finds Luke knows about her infidelity, fearing that he will ruin her public reputation and thus prevent her marrying a nobleman, she tries unsuccessfully to have him killed. By now Dora, riddled by guilt and shame, is having terrible dreams and, at Luke’s urging, considers abandoning her plans to kill her husband and marry Fitz-Cowles and choosing ““virtue and Livingstone,”” over ““a coronet and a title”” (466). Before she can make her decision, though, Livingstone drops deadly poison into her coffee. Immediately prior to this scene, we have discovered that Livingstone is descended from a titled English family and has just received news that he has inherited its baronetcy. As Dora undergoes hideously painful death convulsions in front of him, Livingstone reveals ““this joyful intelligence”” to her, condemning her with the cruellest of ironies to die knowing that she would have had her coronet and title had she remained faithful (496). This denouement takes place at Livingstone’s ““country seat”” in New Jersey, to where various other characters have followed (194). Devil-Bug, for little reason other than his own sadism, sets fire to the mansion and Livingstone dies in the resulting blaze. At the very end of the novel, we are told

the noble Luke is now married to one of the story's virtuous virgins, Mabel Pyne, who, it has transpired, is Livingstone's long-lost daughter, and that she and Luke have inherited Livingstone's American fortune and his English title (571).

Throughout the novel Lippard chastises Dora, but her story is not a straightforward one of sin and retribution. Rather, Lippard has us understand Dora's "worldly ambition" in the more complex context of interlocking forces of class, gender, and sex (188). He alerts us to such a reading in the novel's preface, informing us that his "first idea" was to write a novel about "*the seduction of a poor and innocent girl*," "poor" referring to economic status as much as to the word's other meanings (2). Lippard was a vocal advocate of women's rights, publishing in his newspaper articles by feminists such as Lucretia Mott that called for legal equality for women, establishing a female branch of his labour movement, and arguing for the necessity of all workers, men and women, to work together to resist exploitation. He lamented that women earned lower wages than men, had no opportunity for promotion in the workplace, and could be denied both jobs and marriage simply by an imputation of sexual impropriety.<sup>102</sup> Lippard concluded that women not only had to contend with "all the evils of an infernal social system," but also "all the iniquities of infernal special [i.e. gendered] laws," and noted that their poverty can easily lead them into "temptation," i.e. prostitution.<sup>103</sup>

Dora's story exemplifies this critique. Unlike many of the novel's upper-class male characters, Lippard allows us glimpses into Dora's upbringing that render her a more

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<sup>102</sup> See Streeby for more information on Lippard and gender.

<sup>103</sup> Speech delivered 4 March 1850 in Philadelphia; printed in *Quaker City* weekly (9 March 1850); reprinted in Lippard, *Prophet of Protest*, 213-214. Citation, 214.

sympathetic character than she would otherwise be. Her father “died insolvent,” leaving her mother “widowed and friendless” and in “penury” (39, 188). It was with Dora’s mother on her deathbed in their “small and meanly furnished apartment” that Livingstone, once a friend of Dora’s father, visited “the widowed mother and the orphan daughter,” met his future wife for the first time and began his seduction of her (39). In this context, Dora’s decision to enter into a loveless marriage with the wealthy merchant seems understandable, and it is Livingstone who appears the sexual opportunist. In describing Livingstone himself for the first time, just a page before we hear of his first meeting with Dora, Lippard establishes the idea that economic conditions shape a person’s character and actions: “Had this man been poor it is probable that in his attempt to rise, the grim hand of want would have dragged from their lurking places ... dark and fearful elements of his being. But wealth had lapped him at his birth ...” (36-37). Poverty, Lippard makes clear, preparing us for the introduction of Dora, brings out the worst in people, especially in a society in which vast wealth is possible to achieve and is made desirable, for it generates “ambition” and “temptation.”

In *Quaker City*, the poverty that results from systematically iniquitous social organisation usually leads either to starvation or crime. The novel’s other working-class females are, notably, prostitutes and procuresses. Although he never condones Dora’s ruthless social climbing, Lippard nonetheless leaves us in no doubt that she has little in the way of desirable alternatives. He emphasises that Dora’s only means of achieving upward social mobility is through sex and marriage. Dora herself complains about “the cant of the day, which educates young girls, as though they

were intended for any thing else, but wives and mothers” (252-253). Luke, once a relatively poor employee in Livingstone’s merchant house, can secure financial comfort through business acumen, whereas Dora is denied the opportunity to use her evident intelligence to make money independently. She is excluded from direct participation in economic activity; even when she approaches Devil-Bug with an offer “to make a rich man of you” if he will kill Luke, the only “gold” he wants from her is sex: “a kiss from a red lip; a little love ... and a good deal o’fondness” (279, 288). Sex is the only currency in which powerful male characters allow her to trade. Dora’s sexual allure, which Lippard takes every opportunity to reiterate, insistently describing her as “voluptuous” and whenever she appears offering us a “glimpse of her bosom ... heaving and throbbing,” makes her a powerful bargainer (355). Ultimately, however, that she is only permitted to trade openly with one man, her husband, brings her downfall.

Lippard’s profoundly eroticised descriptions of female bodies, an ingredient of almost every chapter of *Quaker City*, no doubt helped to sell copies of the book, but, titillating as they undeniably are, they also make us as readers uncomfortably complicit with the sexually rapacious male characters through whose eyes we view the text’s young women. Even at the moment of Dora’s death, our attention is drawn repeatedly to her “bosom,” discomfitingly reminding us of the fetishistic way in which we have enjoyed previous descriptions of her, and that it is just that fetishism of her by the novel’s male characters that has led to her demise (501). The novel underscores the way in which young women in a society in which they are defined by their sexual attractiveness and marital prospects are never free from sexualised gazes,

always vulnerable to male sexual fantasy, always at risk of seduction and of rape. Unprepared for such realities by an education system that provides them with little practical or worldly knowledge, women are rendered defenceless, especially working-class women for, Lippard notes, society at least treats “the seduction of a rich man’s daughter as an infamous crime” (1).

In the context of women’s limited routes to financial gain and their sexual objectification, Dora’s desire for wealth and her means of achieving it by marrying Livingstone are at least explicable. In seeking a titled marriage, though, for Lippard Dora exceeds a tolerable level of social ambition. She has, after all, a choice between, as Lippard presents it, “virtue and Livingstone” and “a coronet and a title.” Fitz-Cowles’ supposed earldom is “the coronet, for which she perilled her soul,” as the chapter in which Dora dies is titled (490). However, even Lippard’s depiction of Dora’s fixation with achieving English “rank and station” is deployed less to condemn Dora and more as another means of execrating American capitalism. Lippard uses Dora to voice his disgust at America’s new, capitalist aristocracy. She mocks “the tape-and-bobbin nobility of the Quaker City,” and says: “Give me the honest Mechanic at the bench if we must have a nobility, for your true republican nobleman: not the dishonest Bank-Director at the desk” (184). Banks, she argues, involve “the wholesale robbery of the widow and the orphan,” and at least the “Titles and Trappings of an English nobility” do not hide behind a facade of republican equality of opportunity (496). If she married Livingstone, “one of the merchant-princes of the city,” in order to escape her impoverished childhood, she now wants to escape “the first circles of the Aristocracy of Philadelphia,” such is her



“contempt ... too bitter ... of this magnificent Pretension – the Aristocracy of the Quaker City!” (184).

The novel, then, suggests that America’s upper classes have become so abhorrent that the very hereditary aristocracy whose rule in America the Revolution overthrew can seem preferable by comparison. Later in *Quaker City*, it becomes a measure of how far from Revolutionary ideals the nation’s ruling class has strayed that Lippard imagines bank directors and capitalist bosses awarding themselves the titles and privileges of hereditary nobility. In one of the text’s most famous sequences, Devil-Bug has a Book of Revelations-like dream-vision of Philadelphia in 1950, just over a hundred years in the future (372-393). It is a city of utter disparity of wealth, populated only by beggars and rich people. It is the day of the coronation of the country’s first king, the city’s capitalists and bankers having turned themselves into a “new-risen nobility” (374). Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence was signed, has been demolished and a royal palace built in its place; the Stars and Stripes has been replaced by a flag bearing a coronet and a chain, the latter symbolising the now-enslaved working masses. The “patriots” who resisted this *coup d’état* have been imprisoned or executed. “Liberty is buried today,” a bystander says. “This is her funeral!” (387). Devil-Bug then witnesses the city’s destruction in an apocalypse of fire and earthquake. It is portrayed as a moment of divine deliverance for the city’s “Slaves of Capital and Trade,” enacted by a “God of judgment” upon the city’s wealthy and worthy, its judges, clergymen, “the cotton Lord and the factory Prince” (389-390). If Lippard is unapologetically triumphant in imagining this destruction, as he is in describing the death of the bank president in the

episode with the ruined carpenter, he is less so in relating Dora's death. In her final scenes, Lippard continues to describe her in terms such as "beautiful" and "proud and peerless," emphasising the loss involved in her death and underscoring it further with Livingstone's own instant remorse (501). These scenes do not celebrate Dora's comeuppance. If you read *Quaker City* as a Christian morality tale, they are about the grim inevitability of receiving punishment for sin. If you read it as a materialist tragedy, they are about the impossibility of exceeding the limits to which capitalist economics, *man-made* law, cultural norms, and gender relations restrict individuals.

Dora's dream of "a coronet and a title" may end in nightmare and be as far away from a fairytale as one can imagine. However, *Quaker City* does present marriage to an English aristocrat as an explicable, if not acceptable, fantasy for a poor American woman. It may be a betrayal of U.S. national values but, the novel demonstrates, American capitalism forces women into such worldly ambitions. In a strange way, Lippard's porno-Gothic novel foreshadows Susan Warner's polite, sentimental *Queechy* in rendering a title an understandable dream for an American woman seeking secure wealth and status. After all, despite its ferocious opposition to hereditary aristocracies, the story still rewards two of its virtuous characters, Luke and Mabel, with English titles. If in *Home As Found*, Cooper uses the transatlantic titular marriage narrative as a reluctant response to anxieties about class fluidity in the United States, and Lippard's deployment of it in *Quaker City* reveals the denial of upward mobility to women under capitalism, Warner would touch upon both issues in her 1852 novel. I would like to suggest, however, that Warner's transformation of the narrative into something comparatively positive was possible only because of a

reordering in Anglo-American relations in the late 1840s, a shift I want now briefly to describe.

### **From the Brink of War to Concord: The Reordering of Anglo-American Relations in the Late 1840s**

The publication of *Quaker City* in 1844-45 coincided with a period of intensifying Anglophobia in the United States. Built up over decades, American mistrust about British territorial and commercial ambitions in Central and North America, and about the old country's perceived political interference in the United States, was reaching inflammatory levels. Various recent events had given oxygen to this mistrust, including skirmishes between British-Canadian border troops and unofficial American militia, and disagreements over British rights to search American ships suspected of illegally carrying slaves.<sup>104</sup> By 1845, two issues were proving particularly combustible: the annexation of Texas and the settling of the border between America and British-Canada in the Oregon Country. Britain was widely accused of trying to impede American territorial expansion in these areas. During the first eighteen months of the presidency of James K. Polk, who owed his election victory in large part to his stance as an "avowed expansionist," war between the two countries seemed a genuinely possibility, stoked by Polk's confrontational rhetoric.<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Information in this section on Anglo-American relations in the early 1840s is drawn from: Campbell, 33-95; Brauer; Sam Haynes, "Anglophobia and the Annexation of Texas: The Quest for National Security," in *Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansion* eds. Sam W. Haynes and Christopher Morris, (Arlington: Texas A&M University Press, 1997), 115-145. Matke; Temperley, 39-42. Citation: "English Prejudices": 1.

<sup>105</sup> For a fuller examination of this issue, see Haynes. Citation: Haynes, 138.

The dispute over Texas, then an independent republic, pitted Mexico, the territory's former owner, against the United States, and Britain's interventions generated especial hostility among Americans. Polk and his expansionist supporters wanted to incorporate Texas as the twenty-eighth state of the Union. Britain hoped Texas would remain sovereign and had, since the Lone Star republic declared independence from Mexico in 1836, manoeuvred to prevent U.S. annexation. In 1845, in what turned out to be a final gambit, Britain and France encouraged Mexico to recognise Texas as a nation-state and withdraw its ambitions to reincorporate the region, a move that would strengthen Texas' ability to remain independent of the U.S.A. Polk rebuked the two European nations. The argument inspired John L. O'Sullivan, then editor of the *Democratic Review*, to coin in an article about the controversy the phrase "Manifest Destiny" as an expression of the longstanding belief of Americans in the divine right of the democratic United States, rather than meddling, monarchical European powers, to possess and determine the destiny of the North American continent.

Rumours circulated in America's press and political circles about Britain's motivations for interfering in the Texas issue, many of which were alarmist and "unfounded."<sup>106</sup> Nevertheless, the credence with which these stories were treated indicates the extent to which Americans believed Britain had not yet given up hopes of rivalling the United States as the major power in North America. As Sam W. Haynes explains, exactly what Americans believed about Britain's interference depended on their own sectional interests. Many Northerners feared Britain wanted to suppress the industrial growth of the United States. Southerners believed Britain,

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<sup>106</sup> Haynes, 117.

which had abolished its own slave trade in 1833 and was now actively promoting global abolition, planned to give economic support to an independent Texas in return for it remaining slave-free. At this stage, it seemed possible that, should Mexico and the U.S. go to war over Texas, Britain would side with Mexico, preferring its ownership of the region to America's. Even more scare-mongering rumours suggested that Britain would eventually claim Texas for itself, thereby encircling the United States with its territories and "render[ing] the republic virtually defenceless in the event of war between the two countries."<sup>107</sup> Texas was, such stories implied, the first step in British plans to re-colonise North America. More level-headed journalists and politicians argued that in making slavery a central issue in the debate over Texas, Britain was attempting to "sow the seeds of North-South discord," a process that would eventually lead to the fragmentation of the United States, which would in turn "cripple [Britain's] principal economic rival in the Western Hemisphere."<sup>108</sup> Slavery was, of course, a monumentally contentious issue in Anglo-American relations during the 1830s and 1840s. British accusations of American hypocrisy over the peculiar institution had been a commonplace of flame-fanning books such as *Domestic Manners* and *American Notes*. For Trollope, it was *the* determining factor in her opinion of Americans:

I might have respected them, however much my taste might have been offended by their manners and customs. But it is impossible for any mind of common honesty not to be revolted by the contradictions in their principles and practice.... [Y]ou will see them with one hand hoisting the cap of liberty, and with the other flogging their slaves.<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>107</sup> Haynes, 118.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

<sup>109</sup> Trollope, *Domestic Manners*, 168.

With this variety of issues – Oregon, Texas, slavery, territorial rights, commerce, borders – all in play, the *Democratic Review* warned in November 1845 that “Perhaps at no period since the Revolution, with the single exception of the last war” had Anglo-American relations been “more unfriendly than ... at this moment.”<sup>110</sup> However, by the following summer, there had been a turnaround. Despite Polk’s strong public stand on Oregon, behind-the-scenes negotiations enabled compromise to be reached, and the Oregon Treaty was signed in June 1846, settling the borderline and navigation rights in the area. Polk, who was more interested in Texas and by early 1846 was on course for war with Mexico, did not want to be fighting two wars simultaneously. Britain, for its part, was dealing with deteriorating relations with France, domestic controversy over the Corn Laws, the potato famine in Ireland, and imperial expansion in other parts of the globe, such as India.<sup>111</sup> It too could not risk a costly war in Oregon. As for Texas, Britain had never seriously intended to involve itself in the dispute between the United States and Mexico through any means other than diplomacy. Britain could not have afforded to jeopardise its trade with America or to deploy troops and resources for combat. During the eventual U.S.-Mexico War of 1846-48, Britain remained neutral, its non-intervention interpreted in the United States as an act of friendship and as tacit acceptance of America’s continental ambitions – an admission by Britain that it had rescinded any lingering territorial hopes in North America and would no longer seek to contain U.S. expansion on the continent.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Anon., “*The Edinburgh and Foreign Quarterly on The Oregon*,” p.328.

<sup>111</sup> See Campbell, 63-73; Jones and Rakestraw, 225-267.

<sup>112</sup> Indeed, historians Howard Jones and Donald A. Rakestraw have argued that the Oregon Treaty, along with the earlier Webster-Ashburton Treaty, which settled the U.S.-Canada border in Maine, so eased the “British threat to U.S. interests in North America” that it “facilitated the Republic’s expansionist efforts.” Without being freed up by the agreements to concentrate on Texas and, more

By 1850, the tone of the American press towards England was conspicuously friendlier. An apparent decline in anti-Americanism in England no doubt helped. In May and June 1850, for instance, *The Living Age* approvingly reprinted an English article in which the author stressed, “how little jealousy we [the British] entertain of the extension of its [the U.S.A.’s] dominions, and how willing we are to enter into bonds of mutual dependence, in matters of commercial supply.”<sup>113</sup> In April that year, such was the burgeoning Anglo-American rapprochement, that the celebrations at Concord of the seventy-fifth anniversary of ‘the shot heard round the world’ included a conciliatory gesture: the flying of the Union Jack at half-mast in memory of the British soldiers who had died in the Revolutionary War.<sup>114</sup>

William Brock suggests that between the Revolution and the Mexican War, Americans in politics, public debate and literature defined themselves and their country more than anything else by the ways in which they were ‘not English.’ The Declaration of Independence, *The Spy*, the Monroe Doctrine, the ideology of Manifest Destiny: all were assertions of America’s independence from and difference to

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importantly, without the knowledge that Britain, the world’s most powerful nation, would not stand its way in the dispute with Mexico, “the United States might not have fulfilled its territorial ambitions in the Southwest.” The treaties were, Jones and Rakestraw insist, “the necessary prologue to Manifest Destiny.” Jones and Rakestraw, xiii. It is worth noting that the Webster-Ashburton Treaty’s chief English negotiator, Lord Ashburton, was a popular figure in the United States, a fact that helped to ease the passage of the agreement. Ashburton enjoyed good public relations in part because he was married to an American woman, the daughter of a U.S. senator. Ashburton was a member of the Barings family, head of the family firm and fully involved in its activities as the chief British investor in American expansion during the early and mid-nineteenth century. His marriage and his life might be taken as an example of the political and economic interconnectedness of Britain and America during the period. See: Philip Ziegler, *The Sixth Great Power: Barings 1762-1929* (London: Collins, 1988), 61-157; Jones and Rakestraw, 97-150; Carroll, 243-306.

<sup>113</sup> Anon., “Sir Henry Bulwer at Baltimore,” *The Examiner*, 4 May 1850; reprinted in *Littell’s Living Age* no.25:318, 22 June 1850, p.571.

<sup>114</sup> William Brock, “The Image of England and American Nationalism,” *Journal of American Studies* 5:1 (1971): 230.

England. In these and other official and authorised statements and narratives, England was a seemingly inescapable point of reference for American identities. Brock argues, however, that as Americans entered the second half of the nineteenth century, they “had less and less need of the defensive rhetoric of a small nation; to be ‘American’ it was no longer necessary to define oneself as ‘not English.’”<sup>115</sup> Their country was increasing in economic strength, and its victory in the Mexican War evidenced its military capabilities and bolstered its international stature. The discovery of gold in California in 1848, just nine days before the United States assumed official dominion of the territory, seemed to confirm that the U.S.A. was indeed, as Manifest Destiny announced, divinely intended to possess the American continent from east coast to west. Many considered California as America’s golden commercial gateway to Asia.<sup>116</sup> Although in output and revenue, American industry still lagged behind Britain’s during the 1850s, “it was already remarkably ahead in the adoption of mechanization, standardization, and mass production,” and during that decade the nation’s population for the first time exceeded Britain’s.<sup>117</sup> All this promised that the United States would soon surpass Britain as the most prosperous, powerful nation on Earth. As a result, Brock contends, Americans, feeling more self-assured and less threatened by their parent country than ever, could afford to take a more generous attitude towards Britain. Also, arguably, during the 1850s, preoccupied by internal divisions over slavery and mass immigration, Americans simply had less time and energy for international animosities.

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<sup>115</sup> Brock: 236

<sup>116</sup> See: Reginald Horsman, *Race and Manifest Destiny: The Origins of American racial Anglo-Saxonism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1981), 286-290; John Samson, *White Lies: Melville’s Narratives of Facts* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 90; H.W. Brands, *The Age of Gold The California Gold Rush and the New American Dream* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), especially 469-472 for the significance of the gold rush to Britain.

<sup>117</sup> Bagwell & Mingay, 16. See also Martin Crawford, “British Travellers”: 209.



Through the 1850s, there continued to be official disputes between Britain and America, mainly over Central America. The two governments, however, downplayed these disagreements, stressing the need for co-operation in order to protect Anglo-American commerce, which had been further bolstered by the introduction in 1848 of transatlantic steamships, and politicians now solved problems through negotiations rather than threats of war – for instance, the 1850 treaty signed over the Isthmus of Panama. As Martin Crawford points out, a language of “common goals” and “commitment to a community of interest across the North Atlantic” emerged during the 1850s.<sup>118</sup> A third Anglo-American war would, London publisher James Phillippo wrote in 1857, “be a mutual fratricide, dividing the Anglo-Saxon race against itself, whilst its practical results would be disastrous.”<sup>119</sup> When Queen Victoria and President Buchanan exchanged Morse-code messages over the newly laid transatlantic cable the following year, it was to express partnership: “Europe and America are united by telegraph,” they dotted.<sup>120</sup> A *Punch* cartoon depicted John Bull and Brother Jonathan, united by the cable, fighting side-by-side to defeat manifestations of foreign-looking “Despotism”.<sup>121</sup>

A new tone of cultural self-confidence accompanied America’s military, economic and industrial progress. If in 1837, Emerson in “The American Scholar” had still felt the need to demand the start of a process of American intellectual independence, then

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<sup>118</sup> Crawford, “British Travellers”: 207.

<sup>119</sup> James M. Phillippo, *The United States and Cuba* (London, 1857), 390; quoted in Crawford, “British Travellers”: 209

<sup>120</sup> See Daniel Walker Howe, “Victorian Culture in America,” in *Victorian America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1976) ed. Daniel Howe: 3.

<sup>121</sup> See Crawford, “British Travellers”: 211.

Melville in 1850 in “Hawthorne and his Mosses” could proclaim its imminent arrival, promising that “men not very much inferior to Shakespeare are this day being born on the banks of the Ohio,” and pointedly adding, “the day will come when you shall say; who reads a book by an Englishman that is modern.”<sup>122</sup> (In sheer numbers, if nothing else, the proportion of books published in America by Americans, as opposed to reprints of books by English authors, was rising rapidly.)<sup>123</sup> Emerson reiterated Melville’s sense of England’s passing of the creative torch to the United States in *English Traits*, the study of ‘the old country’ he wrote between 1847 and 1856, in which he argued it was America’s destiny to replace an already declining England as the world’s pre-eminent economic and cultural power and as “the seat and centre of the British race.”<sup>124</sup> Emerson stressed not so much difference between America and England as continuity. He contended, as others had before him, that Americans had inherited and upheld ancient English principles of individual liberty and political representation – principles the English themselves, Emerson recalled, had jettisoned in their treatment of colonial America; “England herself was the rebel,” Cooper had similarly argued about the War of Independence.<sup>125</sup> Americans were now successfully aligning those principles with “the prodigious natural advantages” of the New World in order to build a nation of universal prosperity. Eventually, he

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<sup>122</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, “The American Scholar” (1837), reprinted in Emerson, *Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1910), 564-572; Herman Melville, “Hawthorne and His Mosses, by a Virginian Spending July in Vermont,” (1850), reprinted *The Portable Melville*, ed. Jay Leda (New York: The Viking Press, 1952), 400-421. Citations: 414 and 409.

<sup>123</sup> “Statistics show that, from 1830 to 1842, nearly half of the books published in the United States were reprints of English books.... In the first six months of last year (1857), we had 751 new books and editions, but only 102 were reprints of English works and 26 translations.” Anon., “Editor’s Table,” *Harper’s New Monthly Magazine* no.16:94, March 1858, 556.

<sup>124</sup> Ralph Waldo Emerson, *English Traits* (1856), reprinted in *The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson* Volume Five, with a Biographical Introduction and Notes by Edward Waldo Emerson (Boston & New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1903; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1968), 275.

<sup>125</sup> Cooper, *Homeward Bound*, 446.

concluded, “England, an old exhausted island, must one day be contented, like other parents, to be strong only in her children.”<sup>126</sup>

This characterisation of Britain as superannuated and outmoded was, in a sense, nothing new. It was the implicit essence of Irving’s writing about the country thirty years earlier. He overlooked almost all signs of progress in Britain, from factories to political reform to public-health acts, in order to concentrate on the buildings and customs that remained from “a few centuries earlier, when England was itself.”<sup>127</sup> Anything modern was for Irving unrepresentative of England. During the decades in which Britain was a realistic threat to U.S. sovereignty, commerce, and expansionist ambitions, the image of the old country that predominated was that of aggressor – former coloniser and potential re-coloniser. The Irvingesque image of Britain, while undoubtedly popular during this period, had perhaps played second fiddle. In the 1850s it came to fore, and, while other versions of England by no means disappeared, they did recede into the middle-ground. The invention by American writers of what R.J. Spiller has called “the England of the past” had been in process for several decades and was well enough developed and detailed by the 1850s for Americans now to engage fully with it.<sup>128</sup> “The Middle Ages still lurk in the streets of London,” wrote Emerson, summing up both the attraction of Americans to the Old World, and the reason they felt justified in asserting superiority to it.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> Emerson, *English Traits*, 275.

<sup>127</sup> Irving, *The Sketch-Book*, 159.

<sup>128</sup> Robert E. Spiller, *The American in England During the First Half Century of Independence* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1926), 385.

<sup>129</sup> Emerson, *English Traits*, 109.

The political situation in Britain in the late 1840s further enabled Americans to look favourably on the old country and, in doing so, make claims for the ascendancy of their own. There were increasing calls within Britain for the pace of reforms initiated by the 1832 Act to be hastened and the scope of those reforms to be extended.<sup>130</sup> Americans urged the replacement of monarchy with republicanism, and they applauded the prospect of democratisation and, what is more, took credit for it. Whereas once American magazines and newspapers worried about the influence of England on the United States, such publications now celebrated the political influence of America on England. In 1848, when the revival of Chartist activity, coupled with the tumbling of old orders elsewhere in Europe, made revolution in Britain seem possible, the *Democratic Review* wrote that as Americans

have multiplied and become physically great, the national mind has been developed, and its reflex is now working powerfully upon public opinion in the old world, changing the whole character of its literature, as our political progress is hastening the downfall of its aristocracy.<sup>131</sup>

Chartism petered quickly out after 1848 but *Harper's* could still in 1855 tell readers, "Great Britain has undoubtedly reached a crisis in her career ... [A] change seems certainly inevitable and that change so radical that it may well be dignified with the name of a revolution," adding, "No educated Englishman believes in the divine right of kings. American example has stripped democracy of its fabled terrors."<sup>132</sup>

Hawthorne, in his *English Note-Books* likewise wrote:

My ancestor left England in 1630. I return in 1853. I sometimes feel as if I myself had been absent these two hundred and twenty-three

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<sup>130</sup> Derrick Murphy et al, *Britain 1783-1918* (London: Collins, 2003), 108-122; Edward Pearce, *Reform! The Fight for the 1832 Reform Act* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2003); Michael S. Smith, "Parliamentary Reform and the Electorate," in Chris Williams, ed., *A Companion to Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004), 159-173.

<sup>131</sup> Anon., "English and American Literature," *Democratic Review* no. 22:117, March 1848, p.207.

<sup>132</sup> Anon., "Editor's Table," *Harper's New Monthly Magazine* no.11:63, August 1855, 408, p.411.

years, leaving England emerging from the feudal system, and finding it, on my return, on the verge of republicanism.<sup>133</sup>

Although there never materialised a fully-fledged revolution in England, the extent of reform nonetheless persuaded Americans that aristocratic and monarchical power was in decline. This was, again, nothing new. As early as 1828 the *North American Review* had observed, “the political weight of the aristocracy, including the crown, has been regularly decreasing.”<sup>134</sup> Emerson in *English Traits* noted that the 1832 Reform Act had reduced the influence of the nobility and he described aristocrats retiring to the seclusion of their country estates – the withdrawal of the very highest class from public life.<sup>135</sup> Again, Emerson was here reiterating a theme from Irving. Just as Irving’s image of England in general had come to the fore in American perceptions, so his image of English aristocrats – as detached, somewhat other-worldly, relatively benign guardians of English antiquity – overtook, even if it did not entirely supplant, that of the supercilious, sneering English aristocrat.

Emerson, speaking almost fondly of English aristocrats, wrote, “Most of them are only chargeable with idleness.”<sup>136</sup> The *New York Herald*, reporting dismissively on Britain’s planned Great Exhibition of industry and science in 1851, took a less fond view of aristocratic laziness, denouncing “a nest of non-producers in the shape of aristocrats” for “eating away at [the] vitality” and economic strength of Britain, a

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<sup>133</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Our Old Home, and English Note-Books* (1863; London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Company, 1883), 542.

<sup>134</sup> Anon., “Da Stael’s Letters on England,” *North American Review* no.26:58, January 1828, p.190.

<sup>135</sup> Emerson, *English Traits*, 182; see also 192-5.

<sup>136</sup> Emerson, *English Traits*, 193.

nation increasingly unable to “compete with a young, vigorous, athletic republic like the United States.”<sup>137</sup> By contrast, in her account of travels in Britain, *Sunny Memories in Foreign Lands* (1854), Harriet Beecher Stowe defended aristocratic rule as having nurtured Britain’s economic growth and superiority in art and architecture.<sup>138</sup> She characterised aristocrats as benevolent social leaders, overseeing their tenancies like kindly fathers. It was not a popular view in America. *Putnam’s* chastised Stowe’s “inconsistency” in praising the “British aristocrat who derives his wealth, his titles, his privileges, from the unequal operation of the laws” while at the same time denouncing “the Southern slaveholder ... who derives his wealth and privileges from a similar inequality.”<sup>139</sup> The Southern journal *Debow’s Review* more vehemently accused English aristocrats of having only welcomed and celebrated “that vulgar, ill-bred woman, Mrs. Stowe” in order to further their sinister, abolitionist, anti-American plot to stoke sectional unrest in the United States.<sup>140</sup>

More palatable was Emerson’s assessment; he paid the English aristocracy a double-edged compliment, writing of it, “‘Tis a romance adorning English life with a larger horizon; a midway heaven, fulfilling to their sense their fairy tales and poetry.”<sup>141</sup> This may at first glance look like praise but, as Christopher Mulvey has remarked, to call lords “part of ... the fairy tale of English life was to elevate and to diminish them simultaneously,” to appreciate their charm at the same time as suggesting their

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<sup>137</sup> *New York Herald*, 26 November 1850; quoted in Brock, 237.

<sup>138</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe, *Sunny Memories of Foreign Lands* in Two Volumes (Boston: Sampson, 1854).

<sup>139</sup> Anon., “Editorial Notes: Literature,” *Putnam’s Monthly Magazine of American Literature, Science and Art* no.4:21, September 1854, p.340.

<sup>140</sup> Anon., “American Institutions – The Monroe Doctrine,” *Debow’s Review* no.15:6, December 1853, p.586.

<sup>141</sup> Emerson, *English Traits*, 187.

superfluity and even silliness.<sup>142</sup> Clearly, Anglophobia did not disappear among Americans in the late 1840s, and writers and politicians more expedient than Stowe still took great care not to endorse Britain's political organisation. However, it was now possible, as Emerson's assessment of English lords illustrates, at least to talk without reproach about the aristocracy as charming and comparatively harmless.

If the waning of their political sway facilitated a change in American perceptions of English aristocrats, the same was true of the monarch herself. Writing on American responses to Queen Victoria, Michael Sewell suggests that the "decline in the monarch's actual power" enabled Americans during the 1840s and 1850s to regard the young queen more positively than they had her predecessors.<sup>143</sup> The monarchy seemed increasingly "apolitical" and expressing affection for Victoria "as a person and a Queen" was philosophically less problematic for Americans than had been professing admiration for her uncle, William IV, who "interfered in the politics of electoral reform."<sup>144</sup> During a period in which the ideology of female domesticity was becoming evermore pervasive on both sides of the Atlantic, especially in the United States, Victoria became idealised by many Americans as "a role model as wife, widow and mother ... the personification of respectable ideals of womanhood and family life."<sup>145</sup> This was both a cause and an effect of her sustained popularity in America.

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<sup>142</sup> Mulvey, *Transatlantic Manners*, 146.

<sup>143</sup> Michael J. Sewell, "Queen of Our Hearts," in *Victorianism in the United States: Its Era and Legacy* eds. Steve Ickingall and Stephen Mills (Amsterdam: VU University Press, 1992), 208.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*

The impact of Victoria's wedding to her cousin Albert in 1840 gives some idea of her status as a poster-girl for domesticity. Victoria wore a white wedding dress, rather than traditional silver and white, and walked down the aisle to musical accompaniment. The wedding "set a new standard for ceremony in the United States as in Britain," introducing overnight the lavish "white wedding" into the culture of both countries. As Elizabeth Pleck and Stephanie Coontz have demonstrated, the "white wedding" was very quickly enshrined as the expected way for middle-class couples to celebrate marriage.<sup>146</sup> For an aspirant bourgeoisie, the ceremony became a status symbol, thanks to its origins in royalty and its inherent aura of glamour. With its connotations of virginity, furthermore, the "white wedding" became 'evidence' that the bride's passage into wifedom was respectable. Treated as a 'once-in-a-lifetime' event, the big "white wedding," with its sense of mystique and romance, rapidly emerged as an appropriate celebration of the new ideals of 'once-in-a-lifetime,' mystical, romantic love as "the necessary condition for marriage in the American middle class."<sup>147</sup>

Queen Victoria's nuptials introduced the fairytale wedding into American culture in terms of ceremonials. They may also have played at least some part in making more acceptable for Americans the idea that in a true fairytale marriage the husband was a prince, or other nobleman. Marriage to an English aristocrat is what Lippard, writing just four years after Victoria's wedding, has Dora Livingstone fantasise about.

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<sup>146</sup> Elizabeth H. Pleck, *Celebrating the Family: Ethnicity, Consumer Culture, and Family Rituals* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 207-208; Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 166-168.

<sup>147</sup> Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 28.



Dora's, though, is hardly an acceptable fairytale. It still took, I would suggest, the relaxation of Anglo-American hostilities during the late 1840s and early 1850s for Susan Warner in *Queechy* to be able to offer, not without careful qualification, it is true, transatlantic titular marriage as something positive.

### **“A Fairyland Sort of Place”: Susan Warner’s Anglo-American Marriages**

Both Susan Warner’s debut novel, *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), and her second, *Queechy* (1852), have as their central characters young American girls whose genteel families suffer financial failure.<sup>148</sup> Not coincidentally, when Warner was in her teens, her father lost the family’s wealth in the economic Panic of 1837, forcing the family to “give up their fashionable home in New York City” and downscale.<sup>149</sup> Even after Warner and her sister Anna both achieved literary success, the profits of their publishing went to pay for the financially irresponsible Mr. Warner’s “lawsuits, debts, and bad investments,” and “the sisters resigned themselves, although with considerable bitterness ... to a lifetime of hard labor and looking after their father.”<sup>150</sup> The heroines of *The Wide, Wide World* and *Queechy* both become orphaned, as Warner perhaps wished she had been; both eventually marry English husbands, marriages that provide a means of reversing the downward social mobility they have endured, and both encounter British aristocrats. Here I argue that *The Wide, Wide World*, a book that Warner began in 1848, captures the transitional moment in Anglo-

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<sup>148</sup> Susan Warner, *The Wide, Wide World* (1850), with an Afterword by Jane Tompkins (New York: The Feminist Press at The City University of New York, 1987).

<sup>149</sup> Joyce W. Warren, *Women, Money and the Law: Nineteenth-Century Fiction, Gender, and the Courts* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2005), 83.

<sup>150</sup> Nina Baym, *Women’s Fiction: A Guide to Novels By and About Women in America 1820-1870*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (1978; Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 141-142. For more information on Warner’s life see Jane Tompkins, “Afterword” to Warner, *The Wide, Wide World*, 584-592.

American relations of the late 1840s. I will then suggest that *Queechy* embodies a new set of American perceptions about Britain and, in particular, its aristocracy.

*The Wide, Wide World* enjoyed instant and phenomenal success on both sides of the Atlantic, outsold in America during the early 1850s only by the Bible and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.<sup>151</sup> The novel's final few chapters see its young heroine, Ellen Montgomery, sent from her humble home in rural America to live in a "luxuriously furnished" mansion in Edinburgh with the Lindsays – wealthy, aristocratic relatives of her late mother (501). There, Ellen steadfastly resists her new family's attempts to have her "forget that you were American" and "have no nationality but" British (510, 505). In response to one relative's description of Americans as "a parcel of rebels who have broken loose from all loyalty and fealty," she defends the Revolution and praises Washington (506). (Although Scottish, the Lindsays are associated more with the English monarchs for whom they proclaim support than with rebellious Scots such as Robert the Bruce, who Ellen says she likes for being among "England's enemies" and "because they would be free" [515]). Upset by the

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<sup>151</sup> Tompkins, "Afterword" in Warner, *The Wide, Wide World*, 584. Ignored by critics for much of the twentieth century, the book has received renewed interest since the 1980s. Critics such as Jane Tompkins have held it up as an exemplar of the kind of novel, popular and influential in its own day, that was overlooked for much of the twentieth century by a literary and educational establishment biased towards male-authored, supposedly more 'artistic' works. *The Wide, Wide World* has consequently become something of a canonical example of a non-canonical text. It has been of particular interest to critics interested in representations of domesticity and separate-sphere ideology in sentimental literature and wider American culture. Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction 1790-1860* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 3-39, 138-185. See also: Susan K. Harris, *19<sup>th</sup>-Century American Women's Novels: Interpretative Strategies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 78-107; Shirley Foster and Judy Simmons, *What Katy Read: Feminist Re-Readings of 'Classic' Stories for Girls* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1995), 36-61; Lucinda L. Damon-Bach, "To Be a 'Parlor Soldier': Susan Warner's Answer to Emerson's 'Self-Reliance,'" in Monika M. Elbert, ed., *Separate Spheres No More: Gender Convergence in American Literature, 1830-1930* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2000), 29-49.

frankness of her ideological stance, the Lindsays require Ellen to replace “‘stubbornness’” with “‘gentleness and mildness’” (508).<sup>152</sup>

The Lindsays’ assault on Ellen’s identity extends beyond nationality. They believe she is “‘too sober’” and try to relax her sense of religious devotion (508). They encourage her to drink wine, sing songs other than hymns, and read frivolous novels. They demand she changes her surname to Lindsay and regard them as her only family. Mr. Lindsay’s treatment of Ellen – cuddling her “‘with great affection,” kissing her face and whispering in her ear as he does, “‘you are my own child now ... you belong to me entirely’” – hints at sexual abuse (504).<sup>153</sup> Authoritarian, decadent, morally lax, possibly sexually exploitative, the Lindsays are very much the reviled English aristocracy of the earlier nineteenth-century American imagination.

Ellen ultimately rejects the Lindsays and returns to America, simultaneously asserting her national, religious and familial identity. Ellen chooses her adopted network of friends and neighbours in America over her biological family in Scotland. Ellen’s choice is for a family constituted of contractual, consensual relationships – the conception of the family that had from the Revolution underpinned American law –

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<sup>152</sup> In *American Princess*, not dissimilarly, contestants are warned by their coaches not to discuss either “‘religion or politics’” with either the beaus or the competition judges. As one contestant unhappily observes, the objective is to become a “‘soft-spoken, quaint, dainty girl.’” However, several contestants repeatedly voice a determination, reminiscent of both Ellen’s efforts to resist Anglicisation, to remain “‘who I am’” or to be “‘true to myself’” in the face of their coaches’ attempts to change the way they walk, talk, eat and dress. While the conditions of the competition might require submissiveness from the participants, the show actually celebrates those women who reject Old-World forms of behaviour. The winner, the show suggests, is the contestant most able to be maintain her American-ness at the same time as becoming a princess.

<sup>153</sup> I am grateful to Professor Richard J. Ellis for pointing out to me the incestuous and, given Ellen’s age, borderline paedophilic undertone in Mr. Lindsay’s behaviour.

over older, European requirements of lifelong commitment to blood relatives and obedience to the male head of the extended family.<sup>154</sup>

Warner celebrates Ellen's preference for the republican model of family over European values. However, up until the Scottish-set section of the novel, European culture plays a positive part in Ellen's upbringing. At the start, following her father's financial ruin and her mother's illness, Ellen is sent from her genteel home in New York to live in rural Massachusetts with Miss Emerson Fortune, her father's severe, mean-spirited sister. At Miss Fortune's farm, Ellen's life is one of hard manual labour, to which, to her aunt's disgust, she is initially ill-adapted. Miss Fortune is scathing about her brother's choice of "a Scotch woman." "A Yankee would have brought up his child to be worth something," she scolds (158). Aunt Fortune is relentlessly practical, forever cooking, making or mending. She does not attend church and is unwilling to allow Ellen to go to school; such things bring no tangible benefit to the farm. Ellen's spiritual and intellectual development, the primary theme of the text, is threatened until she meets Alice and John Humphreys, the young-adult children of the local minister. The brother and sister assume responsibility for Ellen's education, teaching her everything from history to drawing, and instilling in her Christian values of piety and stoicism. After Alice's death, John becomes virtually the sole guiding force in Ellen's life and is constructed by Warner as an ideal mentor, both strict and nurturing. Warner depicts Ellen's work on Miss Fortune's farm – or, at least, Ellen's forbearance of it – as edifying, forcing her to develop "discipline of character," but she also makes it clear that practical work alone does not bring

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<sup>154</sup> For a fuller examination of this aspect of the novel, see: Cindy Weinstein, *Family, Kinship, and Sympathy in Nineteenth-Century American Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 130-158.

fulfilment; it must be complemented by a cultural education, and can only be truly useful if one has religious instruction enough to understand the place that human labour has in God's divine plan (336). In *The Wide, Wide World*, the sources of such elevation are almost entirely European. Miss Fortune's farm and the nearby village of Thirlwall might be rural outposts but, as Cindy Weinstein points out, the area is "surprisingly cosmopolitan."<sup>155</sup> Alice and John are both English, having come to America when Alice was eleven and John slightly older; their friends the Marshmans also are English, and it is from George Marshman that Ellen receives her crucial first lessons in Bible-reading and Christian self-restraint; Mrs. Vawse, from whom Ellen learns French, is Swiss; finally, much of Ellen's reading at the Humphreys house is about England and its empire – Captain Cook, India and Lord Nelson – and John has her study "English periodicals" (468). The unlikely internationalism of Thirlwell provides Ellen with access to the texts and philosophical ideals that seem for Warner to constitute an ideal education.

The final chapter has Ellen, now married to John, move into his family home, a place that "bespoke easy circumstances and refined habits ... the appliances of comfort and ease and literary and studious wants, - no luxury or parade" (574).<sup>156</sup> As Tompkins observes, "John has raised Ellen to be his wife – he educates her, molds her mind, prescribes her behavior," and the couple's marriage seems to mark the desired achievement of Ellen's spiritual development; she is now worthy to marry John.<sup>157</sup> It also fulfils what for Warner must have been a preoccupying fantasy of financial

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<sup>155</sup> Weinstein, 149.

<sup>156</sup> This chapter was originally excised by Warner's publisher on the grounds that the novel was already too long. See Tompkins, "A Note on the Text," in Warner, *The Wide, Wide World*, 8.

<sup>157</sup> Tompkins, "Afterword," *Ibid.*, 600.

security. In their new home, John has prepared for Ellen a “private room – your study” (572). Warner describes at length this “roomful of things” (582). It has more “elegance” and “wealth” than the rest of the house but, Warner tells us, “luxury was not its characteristic; or if, it was the luxury of the mind” (575). Among the profusion of objects it contains are items John “picked up in the course of my wanderings, in France, Switzerland, and Italy” (582). John outlines to Ellen her domestic duties; he hands her the household’s cash – “[a] drawer, well lined with gold and silver pieces and bank bills” – and tells her, “I shall never ask you how you spend it.... You are to be my steward in all that concerns the interior arrangements of the household.... Margery is to keep the house – but you must keep both house and housekeeper” (582). If the house and Ellen’s room in particular seem intended to represent a contrast to the frothy opulence of the Lindsays’ Edinburgh townhouse, then Ellen’s managerial role in the household is a contrast with the menial drudgery of life at Miss Fortune’s. Ellen has been restored to what the novel implies is the appropriate economic station of a well-bred young woman: not so poor she has to toil, not so rich she will be idle. This is achieved by finding a comfortably bourgeois middle ground between the extremes of Miss Fortune’s manic but unthinking “Yankee” work ethic and the Lindsays’ decadent, aristocratic lifestyle.

That John is English might be significant in achieving the particular balance of the final chapter. In *Lodore* (1835), another mid-nineteenth-century tale of Anglo-American marriage, Mary Shelley notes that, unlike married American women, “an English wife is usually the cashier – the sole controller of the disbursements of her

family.”<sup>158</sup> *The Wide, Wide World* is often faulted by contemporary critics for the way in which Ellen, having been willing to challenge the authority of Miss Fortune and the Lindsays, is so submissive to John.<sup>159</sup> Indeed, even in handing the household cash to Ellen, one can see a power imbalance: Ellen’s new financial independence is contingent on her behaviour for, although John assures her that he leaves monetary decisions “‘entirely to you,’” he also tells her that he will be monitoring her expenditure; “‘If I see you going very far out of the way in anything I will let you know’” (582). He can, presumably, withdraw his delegation of financial decision-making at any moment. Nonetheless, were John more fully Americanised, it is possible that he would not grant even this measure of determination to Ellen.

The novel embodies a shift in American perceptions of Anglo-American dynamics. Ellen’s time with the Lindsays resembles an abusive parent-child relationship, recalling the way in which since the Revolutionary generation Americans had characterised the English government’s treatment of the American colonies and, later, the fledgling American republic. Her marriage to John, however, is more of a consensual partnership, suggesting that new sense of relative equality, “common goals” and “commitment to a community of interest.”

The marriage blends John’s Anglophilia and love of European art – his own English heritage, the “English periodicals,” the objects “‘picked up in the course of my

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<sup>158</sup> Shelley, 330.

<sup>159</sup> Joyce Warren, for example, accuses Warner of having “advocated acquiescence” (Warren, 89) while Jana L. Aspersinger notes that “Many readers of Warner’s unexpected bestseller, from its first appearance through much of the twentieth century, have regarded it, above all, as a religious book, one that wholeheartedly embraces the values of piety, self-discipline, and (female) submission to the revivalistic Protestantism that dominated the antebellum era.” Jana L. Aspersinger, “Family Embraces: The Unholy Kiss and Authorial Relations in *The Wide, Wide World*,” *American Literature* 2:74 (June 2002): 252.

wanderings, in France, Switzerland, and Italy” – with Ellen’s American patriotism. *The Wide, Wide World* integrates European culture into republican society. It is noteworthy that the text itself does not seem to find this integration either particularly remarkable or problematic. On British soil, it is true, Ellen strenuously asserts her American-ness in rejection of the Lindsays’ attempted Anglicisation of her. In America, however, she can be educated through English texts, marry an Englishman, and look forward to a future in a home full of European art, apparently without having compromised her stated desire to “be an American” (494). By the very absence of anxiety about this deployment of English culture, *The Wide, Wide World* registers a new, more relaxed tone in American feelings about the ‘parent’ country. The novel, note, was published in 1850, the same year that the Union Jack flew respectfully at half-mast over Concord.

In *Queechy*, the novel Warner published two years after *The Wide, Wide World* and which sold in almost as enormous numbers as its predecessor, Warner’s American heroine does not just marry an Englishman, she marries an English nobleman.<sup>160</sup> The novel revolves around Fleda Ringgan’s relationship with Guy Carleton, a rich gentleman “related to the nobility,” from “one of the best families in England” (53, 247). As the novel begins, Fleda is a girl “of ten or eleven years old,” an orphan who lives and works with her elderly grandfather on the family’s farm in the village of Queechy (1). Her great-grandfather, we discover, was a Revolutionary hero; her late father is famous for his unspecified part in fighting America’s “Indians,” military action from which he returned fatally “sick,” and later in the novel her cousin

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<sup>160</sup> Foster and Simmons, 39.



Rossitur leaves to fight in the Mexican War (33, 200-202). Fleda's family history tells a patriotic and self-sacrificial narrative of American national progress. Fleda herself is of what her grandfather calls "the true Yankee blood" (49). When Carleton first meets Fleda he instantly recognises that she speaks with "the keynote of patriotism"; she is an emblematically nationalistic figure (36). When Fleda and her grandfather are threatened with eviction because Mr. Ringgan owes money to his unscrupulous landlord, Carleton, who is touring the U.S. and who visits the farm with his friend Rossitur, secretly settles the debt and saves them from penury. Almost immediately, however, Mr. Ringgan dies, and Fleda is taken by Carleton to Paris to live with her wealthy aunt and uncle. By now, Carleton and Fleda are close friends, Carleton fascinated by Fleda's enthusiastic and energising Christian faith. Carleton, while noble and good-natured, is restless and undirected. Most importantly, he "was an unbeliever" (74). On their voyage across the Atlantic, Carleton and Fleda engage in a lengthy discussion about the nature of faith and evidence of God's will, at the end of which, "His unbelief was shaken" (94). Fleda has become Carleton's "good angel" and her influence on him gives him renewed "purpose" (115, 119). He leaves "the gay and great world" of Paris to embark on a journey of spiritual and ideological development that eventually turns him into a true believer (114, 407).

Just before Carleton leaves Paris, Fleda makes a gift to him of the bible that had belonged to her father, the American military hero, and that is still "filled with his marks" (122); Carleton's religious education is inscribed by the "marks" of American nationalism. This is significant for the novel's treatment of the English political system. Before Carleton's spiritual transformation we are told that he "had a very

large tenantry around him and depending upon him, in bettering whose conditions, if he had but known it, all energies might have found full play. It never entered his head.” (78). The end of the novel, set a few years later, sees Fleda and Carleton recently married and living in Carleton’s ancestral home. Here, “‘ameliorating the conditions of the poorer classes on his estates’” has now for some time been Carleton’s prime concern, and he “‘has changed the face of things, mentally and morally ... with his adult schools, and agricultural systems’” (441). Carleton attributes his efforts to Fleda’s influence and says, more specifically, that, “‘Your little Bible was my invaluable help’” (407).

Carleton’s family, especially his uncle Lord Peterborough, tell Fleda when she arrives on the familial estate that they want to “‘make an Englishwoman of her’” (447). Although the Carletons are more affable than the Lindsays, teasing rather than assaulting their new in-law with attempted Anglicisation, the novel nonetheless raises the possibility that Fleda’s national identity, invested as it is with American patriotic heritage, is in jeopardy. It is worth noting that since 1844 British law had automatically defined as British any foreign woman marrying a British subject, whether or not she wanted to relinquish her native citizenship and its particular protections and entitlements.<sup>161</sup> Fleda has already, then, in marrying Carleton had to

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<sup>161</sup> Dual citizenship was not an option. A woman like Fleda could resume her U.S. citizenship only after divorce or the death of her husband and her return to America. Even this was not straightforward. For a start, there was no general divorce law in England until 1857, after which it still remained a problematic, traumatic and reputation-risking action. Secondly, the position of American women who were or had been married to foreigners was not codified in American law until 1907; until then, the procedure for a woman to resume citizenship was unclear and this in certain cases lead to women becoming effectively stateless.

Information on U.K. citizenship law: Ann Dummett and Andrew Nicol, *Subjects, Citizens, Aliens, and Others: Nationality and Immigration Law* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1990), 82-91; Mary Page Baldwin, “Subject to Empire: Married Women and the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act,” *The Journal of British Studies* 40:4 (October 2001): 524-526. Information on U.S.

surrender her formal national identity. This perhaps contributes to her distraught and “downcast” response to her new relatives’ cheerful threat to her national loyalty, to which she responds by asserting that she will ““always keep a rag of the stars and stripes flying somewhere”” (446). Carleton, who throughout the novel is cautiously sympathetic to American republicanism (e.g., 54), intervenes and argues that, as ““the flags are friendly,”” the Stars and Stripes should fly alongside St. George’s cross on the estate (446). He thus ensures that the American influence on the English aristocracy will continue – symbolically, at least.

Crucially, Fleda is determined not to allow herself to become an unproductive member of a decadent upper class. ““You’ll be sot up like a princess, and never have nothing to do no more,”” one of her American friends warns Fleda before she marries, to which she replies, ““Oh no.... I expect to have a great deal to do; if I don’t find it I shall make it”” (434). Indeed, Carleton frequently proclaims his indifference to high society and his preference for “the simplicity of practical life,” and one of Fleda’s attractions for him is that she is unimpressed by his wealth and title (53). During the novel’s New York scenes, where the fashionable set is ““topsy-turvy about him [Carleton]; the mothers are dying with anxiety and the daughters with admiration,”” Fleda alone judges Carleton on personality rather than position (246). She tells a love-struck and title-blinded friend, ““any man may wear a fur cloak – the thing is, what is inside of it?”” (247). There is an echo here of the anti-aristocratic rhetoric of the 1830s and 1840s as Warner simultaneously rejects England’s hereditary

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marriage and citizenship from: Candice Lewis Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own: Women, Marriage, and the Law on Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Nancy F. Cott, “Marriage and Women’s Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1914,” *The American Historical Review* 103:5 (December 1998), 1440-1474; Ann Marie Nicolosi, “We Do Not Want Our Girls To Marry Foreigners’: Gender, Race, and American Citizenship,” *NWSA Journal* 13:3 (Fall 2001): 1-21.

aristocracy and the adulation of it by Americans. This is one way in which Warner strives to make Fleda's eventual marriage to Carleton seem, whatever its implications, a union made on patriotic American terms. If one accepts Warner's efforts, the novel can be read as a fairly straightforward parable of the potential benefits of Americanisation on the English social order: thanks to Fleda's education of Carleton in Christian republicanism, Carleton re-energises his estate and improves the lives of his tenants.

However, Warner stops short of recommending a complete overhaul of the English hierarchy. Having become engaged to each other in New York, Carleton suddenly announces he must return to England. "There are disturbances among the people and my own are infected," he tells Fleda. "Political disturbances?" asks Fleda. "Somewhat of that nature, but partly local," Carleton replies (427). *Queechy* takes place between 1840 and 1848 and Warner perhaps had in mind here the Chartist activity of the 1840s during which, as noted above, sections of the American press optimistically believed the "downfall of [Britain's] aristocracy" a genuine possibility. In 1848 in particular, with revolutions occurring across Europe, it seemed briefly that such radical action might spread to England. The American minister to London, George Bancroft, wrote to President Buchanan in June 1848, "England may at no very distant day, be a Republic."<sup>162</sup> However, by the time Fleda joins Carleton in England to marry him, he has somehow quelled the potential uprising (we are not given details), just as the aristocracy as a whole managed to avert revolution. Emerson, writing just a few years later in *English Traits*, suggested that the aristocracy had

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<sup>162</sup> M.A. De Wolfe Howe, *The Life and Letters of George Bancroft* (New York and London, 1908), Bancroft to Buchanan (30 June 1848); quoted in Brock: 240.

survived because of the “predilection of the patricians for residence of the country, combined with the degree of liberty possessed by the peasant.”<sup>163</sup> For Emerson, aristocrats generate most loyalty from their tenants and are most secure when, just like Carleton, they are *in situ* and when they permit their tenants a “degree of liberty.” The “disturbances” dealt with, Fleda is told by one of Carleton’s employees that Carleton now “has the hearts of his people completely.... [H]e deserves it – he has done a great deal for them” (441).

*Queechy* seems to advocate not American-style revolution, a possibility it seemingly raises only quickly to dismiss, but instead the reform of English society from the top downwards, managed by men like Carleton. This is the image of aristocratic rule in England that Stowe would in *Sunny Memories* present admiringly just two years later. *Queechy* perhaps avoided the censure that Stowe received because it attributes such benevolent and effective aristocratic management to American influence. An “American who goes to England, should go as a democrat and a Christian, if he would be true to his country and his religion,” *Putnam’s* had said in rebuke of Stowe.<sup>164</sup> Given Warner’s promotion of Christianity and her defence of the American political system in *Queechy*, voiced repeatedly and at length through Fleda (e.g. 285-288), Warner was less vulnerable to such accusations. Indeed, American critics commended the novel for its patriotism. *The Living Age*, for instance, described it as “truly national.”<sup>165</sup> *Chamber’s* cited *Queechy*, along with *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and *The Wide, Wide World*, as evidence that “the tables were rapidly turning” in favour of

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<sup>163</sup> Emerson, *English Traits*, 180.

<sup>164</sup> Anon., “Editorial Notes: Literature,” p.341.

<sup>165</sup> Anon., “Letters of Lord Byron – *Queechy*,” *Littell’s Living Age* no.34:425, 10 July 1852, p.57.

American literature, asserting that “many of the most popular books of the day” on both sides of the Atlantic “are the production of American authors.”<sup>166</sup> In a lengthy piece in *Harper’s* about “American influence,” which details the impact on Europe of the country’s innovations in science, literature, engineering, industry and politics on other nations, and which ends proclaiming that “If we are faithful to our principles and position, true to ourselves and to Christianity, we shall ... send forth a constant stream of blessing to the Old World,” the author names *Queechy* as one of a number of American novels whose “extensive sale” in England has helped not only to diminish “English prejudices” about Americans but also to change the morality and political mindset of the British.<sup>167</sup> “One of the freshest and strongest influences now being exerted on [the] British mind is through American sentiments,” ends the paragraph in which *Queechy* features.<sup>168</sup> For both *The Living Age* and *Harper’s*, the positive value of Americanisation was visible not only within the text of *Queechy*, but also in the novel’s extratextual impact on its English readers.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Anon., “Henry Wadsworth Longfellow,” *Chamber’s Journal*; reprinted in *Littell’s Living Age* no.43: 551, 16 December 1854, p.522.

<sup>167</sup> Anon., “Editor’s Table” (1858), p.551, p.556, p.554.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid.*, p.554.

<sup>169</sup> Perhaps bearing out the point, the story of the American, often the American woman, who acts as a morally and practically regenerative influence on the English upper class would become a popular motif of later Victorian and Edwardian English fiction, including Wilkie Collins’ *Hide and Seek* (1854), Thackeray’s *The Virginians* (1859), Anthony Trollope’s *The Duke’s Children* (1880) and numerous popular novels. Wilkie Collins, *Hide and Seek*, edited with an introduction and notes by Catherine Peters (1854/1861; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, reprint, 1999); William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Virginians* (1859; London: Collins, 1923[?]); Anthony Trollope, *The Duke’s Children* (1880), edited with an introduction by Hermione Lee (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982; reprint, 1992).

Arguably, the same motif is present in Susanna Rowson’s *Lucy Temple* (1828), the sequel to *Charlotte Temple* (1794), in which we discover that the ruthless seducer of the original novel, the Englishman Montraville, has been reformed by his marriage to the American Julia Franklin. (Susanna Rowson, *Charlotte Temple and Lucy Temple*, edited with an Introduction by Ann Douglas [1794 and 1828; New York: Penguin, 1991]). In Trollope’s *The Refugee* also, Lord Darcy, forlorn until he meets Emily, is rejuvenated by his relationship with the American woman.

All this said, *Queechy* cannot fully integrate Fleda's democratic republicanism into the un-revolutionised England of its ending. Towards the end, there is a brief but telling exchange between Carleton and Fleda. Carleton tells Fleda he hopes that once in England she "will be contented to carry on the standard of Christianity, without that of republicanism." "But Christianity tends directly to republicanism," Fleda responds. "I know that... But the leaven of truth is one thing, and the powder train of the innovator is another" (407). The subject is then dropped, as if the novel is admitting that reform rather than revolution is the only plausible means of social progress in England. In the light of the rapid decline of Chartism and the increasing improbability of revolution after 1848, that a novel written in 1852 should reach such a conclusion is not surprising.<sup>170</sup> One should also mention that Warner seems to design the tale with her sizeable English audience in mind: in Carleton she presents a model of an English aristocracy progressive enough to satisfy most supporters of reform, but without recommending anything drastic enough to unsettle conservatives.

However, that *Queechy* avoids advocating more radical change in England seems to me more than simply a matter of credibility and of keeping English audiences happy. Not long after Carleton leaves Paris, Fleda's uncle Rolf Rossitur takes the family back to America to deal with financial problems in the family business. Rossitur's efforts are not enough to save him from bankruptcy and the family loses its house, wealth and possessions (133). They return to Queechy to run the old family farm but Rolf's incompetence leaves the family near the breadline, and they are only saved when Fleda takes over management of the farm. She oversees the farmhouse, its garden and

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<sup>170</sup> Information on Chartism and its decline from: K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 129-131; Murphy et al, *Britain 1783-1918*, 152-164.

the farm itself, including its financial running, as well as cooking, fruit-picking and even writing poetry to maintain the family income (224-225). Fleda eventually makes the farm profitable and displays impressive man-management skills in her dealings with the farm labourers, earning the respect of her own workers and other farmers in the village. These are qualities we are presumably meant to understand she will later transfer to Carleton's English estate. Despite her success with the farm, much of the family's money disappears with Rolf as he heads to Michigan for yet another doomed business speculation (213, 253, 319). (Warner here seems to have been working through her frustrations with her own financially irresponsible father.) As in *The Wide, Wide World*, Warner depicts hard, menial labour as edifying – “my work does me good,” says Fleda – but simultaneously makes it clear that we as readers should want a different kind of life for her heroine (208). She has, for instance, the likeable Mrs. Evelyn say of Fleda: “... education, advantages, and everything given up ... [N]ot the kind of people she ought to have been brought up among” (254).

The Rossiturs' poverty reaches a moment of crisis when it transpires that Rolf owes the sinister Mr. Thorn \$4000. Thorn offers to cancel the debt if Mrs. Rossitur will allow him to court and propose marriage to Fleda (337). The matter is only resolved when Fleda, searching for the runaway Rolf in New York, fortuitously bumps into Carleton in the street (356). She reveals her problems, and he pays off the debt (376-381). Just as at the start of the novel, Carleton's wealth salvages Fleda's family from destitution, and here Fleda herself from Thorn's effective blackmail. Carleton's subsequent proposal to Fleda and his installation of her on his ancestral estate, rescues her forever from the strife and labour of the farm, and from potential sexual and



economic exploitation. In this sense, the novel might be read as a fantasy in which the heroine is saved from the vicissitudes of the American marketplace by the stability ensured by the inherited wealth of the English aristocracy. Revolution in England would jeopardise that fantasy.

Warner reminds us in the final chapters that we should understand the story to be just that: a fantasy. As Fleda arrives on Carleton's English estate, she experiences its expansive grounds as if in some kind of fairytale; "the witchery of the long shadows ... charmed Fleda's eye and mind," she feels "lost in a kind of enchanted open woodland," and, finally, feels that, "It was a fairyland sort of place" (439, 442, 442). The estate's groves and woodlands are in "perfect condition"—highly managed and well cultivated but verdant and showing "the least possible appearance of design" (442). Warner's depiction here is similar to Irving's in *The Sketch-Book* and *Bracebridge Hall*, where he describes the great aristocratic estate as a picturesque, harmonious and "healthful" locale, its landscape ordered and its human population content, the surrounding landscape one of "calm and settled security."<sup>171</sup> Irving and his immediate successors, though, never imagined themselves as anything other than visitors to these "little paradise[s]."<sup>172</sup> They did not on the whole fantasise about actually becoming a part of the English aristocracy. In the 1820s, 1830s, and early-mid 1840s, such a move would, surely, have been too blatant a betrayal of republican principles, even for a writer as enchanted by England as Irving. Irving remained, he said, a "Stranger and sojourner" among the aristocracy.<sup>173</sup> For Warner, writing post-Oregon Treaty, post-Mexican War, and, importantly, presenting her narrative as a

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<sup>171</sup> Irving, *The Sketch-Book*, 52.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 152.

moral lesson in Americanisation, joining the aristocracy was a less controversial tale to tell. The *North American Review* even praised Warner for the scenes in *Queechy* set among the aristocracy for their potentially elevating effect on the manners of Americans: “As good republicans,” the magazine’s review admitted, “we ought to thank her for indicating the basis whereon we may build, even in this land of equality and fluctuation, a politeness more gentle, delicate and consistent ...”<sup>174</sup> Here, imitating the “politeness” of the English aristocracy will aid Americans to be “good republicans.” The superiority of English manners was something that even Cooper had conceded in *England* and at which Emerson marvelled in *English Traits*.<sup>175</sup> For the *North American Review*, though, the appeal of *Queechy*’s deployment of English aristocracy is not so much to do with etiquette, education or behaviour, but economics. Like Warner herself, the reviewer seems to yearn for something more stable than the “fluctuation” of American life. The idea of leaving America for an English “fairylane” of secure wealth and permanent social status must have held considerable appeal for those, including Warner, whose fortunes were tied to a notoriously unreliable and, following the Panic of 1837, increasingly unforgiving financial system.<sup>176</sup>

In *Quaker City*, Dora’s attempt to escape that financial system for “a coronet – wealth and power” ends in death and disgrace. What Dora fails to achieve through sex and

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<sup>174</sup> Anon., “Novels and Novelists,” *North American Review* no.76:158, January 1853, p.119.

<sup>175</sup> The superiority of English manners was something that Cooper had conceded in *England*, where he talks appreciatively of the way in which the “lower” classes learn “superior elevation and training” from the example of the “patrician” class (I.104-123) and in *English Traits* Emerson too describes the way in which the manners, “*le talent de bien faire*,” of the English upper classes surround them with an air of “beneficent power ... a majesty that cannot be concealed or resisted” (186).

<sup>176</sup> For information on the American economy around the 1837 Panic, see Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America 1815-1846* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 332-363.

murder, Fleda manages through virtue, Christian faith and hard work. One imagines that if Lippard ever read *Queechy*, he must have hated it. Throughout his writing he attacks the popular sentimental literature of the day for its insipidity and inutility. In *Quaker City*, he mocks the “pervading vein of Lollypop-itude” and characterises the genre as “Twaddle-dom” (306). Reynolds argues that if in sentimental fiction domestic spaces are sites of familial security and “hearthside bliss,” “Monk Hall is the hellish opposite of the home of domestic fiction, a place where a father tries to rape his daughter under the pretense of consoling her.”<sup>177</sup> Worse, Reynolds points out, worldly male characters in the novel use the language of sentimental literature to dupe innocent, young women into sham weddings and, in turn, the ‘illegitimate’ loss of their virginity. Reynolds reads as an exemplar of Lippard’s critique of sentimental fiction a scene in *Quaker City* in which Byrnewood Arlington finds himself in a chamber of Monk Hall which, with its table laid for dinner and its “cheerful furnace,” resembles “a comfortable scene from a domestic novel.” Devil-Bug, however, has drugged Byrnewood’s wine with opium and, when Monk Hall’s monstrous overseer trips a switch connected to one of the mansion’s innumerable trapdoors, “half of the Chamber was changed into one black and yawning chasm” (121). It is, Reynolds concludes, “a quintessentially homelike scene that turns out to be one more illusion in a domain of false appearances.”<sup>178</sup> For Lippard, sentimental literature acts as a sedative, focusing its readers’ attentions and efforts on achieving empty dreams of secure and “cheerful” domesticity, while all the time they walk on a trapdoor, an economic system that could open up under them any moment and become, as in 1837, a “black and yawning chasm,” a disaster for which they are

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<sup>177</sup> Reynolds, *George Lippard*, 114.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

unprepared because they have been educated in “Twaddle-dom” rather than political economics. Lippard, I presume, would have condemned Warner’s fantasy ending of transatlantic titular marriage as a diversion from dealing more usefully with the economic issues that threaten Fleda, such as ruthless landlords and unregulated business speculation.

Lippard might have been interested by Joyce Warren’s recent study of novels written by American women between 1850 and 1855. Warren notes that although sentimental novels are most famous for their romance plots and Christian didacticism, “economic matters” frequently are “the moving force behind the action”:

... even though the female characters do not control the economic framework, they feel its impact. Culturally constructed as powerless and dependent, with proscriptions against entering the marketplace, the female character finds herself in dire economic straits.... [The authors] differ in their solutions and attitudes to the problem, but they all call attention to the big lie that constructed women as outside the money economy yet made them equally vulnerable to economic shifts of fortune.<sup>179</sup>

Warren persuasively contends that *The Wide, Wide World* reveals “the big lie.” It displays Ellen’s vulnerability to “economic shifts of fortune.” However, for Warren, Warner does not depict realistic consequences to this vulnerability – which for Lippard would have meant prostitution, destitution, or inevitably doomed attempts at social climbing. Warner “solved economic problems with fantasy,” awarding Ellen marriage into the local gentry and a comfortable marital home. Warren finds such an ending deeply problematic. The legal system of the 1850s was still grounded in coverture, conceiving of married women not as self-determining individuals but instead subsuming the political and economic identity of a wife into her husband’s.

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<sup>179</sup> Warren, 79, 81, 81-82. Also, see Templin.

For example, despite the passing of women's property rights acts in most states in the late 1840s, the law in its default position still awarded a husband control of his wife's property, only transferring control to the wife when it could be demonstrated in court that the husband was unfit for such responsibility, for instance because of drunkenness or mental disability.<sup>180</sup> Warner in *The Wide, Wide World* not only has Ellen enter into marriage and coverture, but into marriage with a man who has trained her out of her childhood pluck and rebelliousness, and into relative submissiveness and passivity. "Warner," Warren complains, "advocated acquiescence" as a means of reaching financial security: it is only by becoming a docile and malleable wife, as John educates her to be, that Ellen is worthy in John's eyes (and by extension the implied reader's) of being granted management of the household's money.<sup>181</sup> There were, Warren notes in further rebuke of Warner, alternative strategies for female authors and Warren sees in works by E.D.E.N. Southworth and Fanny Fern, among others, texts that "urged women to take control of their own economic destinies" through developing professional careers and/or resisting the legal constraints placed upon women by marriage.<sup>182</sup>

While Warren's criticism of Warner may be justified by *The Wide, Wide World*, it requires some modification for *Queechy*. In *Fleda*, Warner develops an assertive female character who is more proficient in manual labour, economic management and intellectual endeavour than many of the novel's male characters. *Fleda* demonstrates the capability of women to move beyond their culturally proscribed sphere and

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<sup>180</sup> See Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 52-54.

<sup>181</sup> Warren, 89.

<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*

engage successfully with economic realities. Furthermore, whereas John has raised Ellen to be his wife, it is Fleda who trains Carleton to be her husband.<sup>183</sup> Admittedly, though, for all Fleda's independent achievements, success in the text's own terms is still a fairytale marriage. The novel in this sense fulfils Jan Cohn's definition of popular romance fiction, which:

tells the story of how a modern, young woman succeeds in marrying a handsome, desirable, and wealthy man ... [T]he story of how the heroine simply *succeeds*, for in conventional, which is to say politically conservative, terms, her only possible success in our society comes from marrying happily and marrying well.<sup>184</sup>

Towards the end of *Queechy*, Fleda tells Carleton she is ““afraid you will find me wanting [as a wife]”” and Carleton responds by promising to be ““your master in the arts of riding and drawing, and in any other art or acquisition you may take a fancy to.”” The scene and the chapter end with the short sentence “and Fleda was quiet” (416). In reading this exchange, Susan K. Harris has suggested that Fleda's position has now “shifted from independence to dependence.... Fleda is silent – in her choice to marry Carleton she has in effect silenced herself forever.”<sup>185</sup> Certainly, the narrative seems to embody and endorse the prevailing cultural ideals about the development of women from childhood through adolescence to adulthood, in which, as Warren has pointed out, wage-earning work was to be considered merely a temporary stage between a childhood of dependence on one's father, economic and otherwise, and an adult life of dependence upon one's husband.<sup>186</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> For a fuller reading along these lines, see Damon-Bach.

<sup>184</sup> Jan Cohn, *Romance and the Erotics of Property: Mass-Market Fiction for Women* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1988), 3.

<sup>185</sup> Harris, 102.

<sup>186</sup> Warren, 71.

However, both Warren's and Harris's attacks on Warner seem unjust when one considers the novel's closing pages. Here, Lord Peterborough expresses his desire that Fleda will quickly become Anglicised and leave behind the "rebellious disposition" of Americans towards the English. Having being rebuffed on that point, he next challenges Fleda for her opinion on women's claims to "stand more on that independent footing from which lordly monopoly has excluded them," claims about which he seems jovially dismissive. Fleda is silent and Lord Peterborough rephrases his question, this time framing it as a more general, philosophical query: "Don't you think that the rights of the weak ought to be on a perfect equality with those of the strong?" Fleda's response – "The rights of the weak *as such* – yes, my lord" – is somewhat elliptical, but I read it as Fleda asserting "the rights of the weak" while simultaneously questioning Peterborough's definition of women necessarily as weak (446).

The scene neatly conflates Fleda's functions as nationalist "standard-bearer," as Peterborough calls her, and as role model for non-submissive womanhood, at least by comparison with the Ellen Montgomery of the end of *The Wide, Wide World* (446). Similarly, in an earlier scene, Warner uses Fleda simultaneously to advance an argument about gender and to defend the United States from familiar English criticisms. In analysing this section of the novel, it is useful to place *Queechy* alongside Frances Trollope's writing about America. The scene involves the visit of an English author, Mr. Stackpole, to New York. Stackpole smugly delivers "a long dissertation upon the affairs of America, past, present, and future" (285). A clear caricature of the unimpressed English travel writer of the Trollope/Dickens school,

Stackpole attacks American manners, American democracy (“a rickety experiment”) and, in particular, slavery. He holds up Britain by comparison as a more just society. A few pages earlier, Stackpole expresses his amazement that Fleda, as an American girl, is capable of doing anything practical outside the domestic sphere (in this instance, the “masculine employment” of gardening). He mocks “the delicacy of American ladies,” implying that their education and experience (or lack thereof) renders them unfit to make any serious contribution to society outside the home (276).

Stackpole echoes one of Trollope’s recurrent criticisms. Trollope describes the married life of American women as one of “uniform dullness,” given over entirely to homemaking and serving a husband. American women are condemned early to such “household drudgery” by the nation’s “custom” of teenaged marriage (*Domestic Manners*, 118; *Refugee*, III.40). Trollope draws attention in *The Refugee* to the paucity of formal education for American women. She presents in the novel a cast of “silly” American women, as she repeatedly calls them, all of whom are uneducated, bigoted, tedious and simply parrot their husbands’ ill-informed opinions. All compare unfavourably with the story’s educated, articulate and independently minded English women, Lady Darcy and Caroline Gordon. The superiority of English women over American women, indeed over American men, is confirmed in *The Refugee* when Caroline comfortably wins an argument with an American lawyer over the failure of democracy to ensure decent working conditions for labourers. With comically poor grammar, the lawyer responds by moaning to himself, “How absurd the English are, to learn their girls to speak like members of congress” (I.156). The cultural conditioning of American women into ignorance on such issues is, according to



Trollope, consolidated by the extent to which there is a “separation of the sexes ... necessary to the delicacy of the American ladies, or the comfort of American gentlemen” (*Domestic Manners*, 138) (Note here the similarity of Trollope’s language to Stackpole’s.) Among America’s middle and upper classes, Trollope sardonically tells us in *Domestic Manners*, women and men are kept apart for almost everything other than dancing. As far as American men are concerned, American women “were made for no other purpose than to fabricate sweetmeats and gingerbread, construct shirts, darn stockings, and become mothers of possible presidents” (217).

For Trollope, the restricted education of American women, along with their premature entry into married domesticity, keeps them incapable of forming useful opinions on issues on which they might otherwise have a beneficial influence, such as the condition of the working classes and slavery. This argument is made most clearly in *The Barnabys In America* (1843), Trollope’s second novel of Anglo-American marriage.<sup>187</sup> The story continues Trollope’s attack on New World womanhood and allies it with a sustained examination of American slavery. As in *The Refugee*, Trollope presents an array of dim-witted, bigoted American women. The only “individual exception” is Annie Beauchamp, the daughter of Louisiana plantation owners Colonel and Mrs. Beauchamp (III.121). Intelligent, beautiful and mature beyond her seventeen years, Annie secretly educates herself, having “discovered, that during the time others had been engaged in teaching her, she had learnt nothing” (II.173). She meets Frederic Egerton, a young English lord, who is travelling through

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<sup>187</sup> Frances Trollope, *The Barnabys in America; or, the Adventures of the Widow Wedded in Three Volumes* (London: Henry Colburn, 1843).

the United States to study its politics and society. Annie is a committed “patriot ... [who] carefully nourished ... pretty considerable prejudices and dislike” of the English and Egerton is equally committed a monarchist and anti-American. Annie and Egerton argue frequently and vehemently, each utterly convinced of the rightness of their belief in, respectively, democracy and aristocracy as the better form of government (I.160). Comically, however, their avowed mutual antipathy masks a growing mutual attraction.

Set mainly in slave-holding states and featuring several lengthy discussions about slavery, Trollope throughout the novel undermines her American characters’ defences of the plantation system as ennobling to the master and beneficial to the slave (e.g. I.268-270, I.282-288, II.15, II.187). Egerton only acknowledges to himself and professes to Annie his love for her when he discovers she shares his “abhorrence” of slavery. Annie’s friend Mrs. Whitlaw tells him it has been impossible for Annie to admit her anti-slavery views because to do so would alienate her from her parents and because ““all the great landholders round ... would burn her alive as soon as look at her” (II.208). For Egerton, the “impassable barrier” to his love for Annie “had been removed” (II.209).

There is, however, soon another obstacle to Egerton and Annie’s burgeoning relationship: he is wrongly accused by her parents of fermenting a ““rebellion amongst the slaves”” on their plantation (III.267). He leaves Louisiana to secure proof of his innocence. When he returns, it is to discover a genuine slave uprising on the Beauchamps’ land, during which both Colonel Beauchamp and fellow plantation

owner Judge Johnson, the novel's most despicably ardent advocate of slavery, are killed. Trollope noticeably withholds any criticism of the slaves' actions; there is a sense in which the slave-holders have received their comeuppance. The novel ends with Egerton taking Annie, now free to determine her own matrimonial choice, to his family's vast ancestral estate in England to marry. As in *The Refugee*, Trollope arranges for aristocratic England rather than democratic America to appear the appropriate home for a woman as intelligent, independent and morally correct as Annie. As long as such women are unable to speak freely in America, Trollope implies, the cruel and unjust system of slavery will remain.

Trollope was just one of many British writers and public figures who in the decades leading up to the American Civil War reproached the slave-holding states. Pressure from Britain on the United States for abolition increased after emancipation across the British Empire in 1833.<sup>188</sup> Trollope has Americans in *The Refugee* and *The Barnabys* make what were common justifications for maintaining slavery, with characters like Mrs. Beauchamp and Judge Johnson arguing the moral and intellectual inferiority of black people. In both novels and in *Domestic Manners* Trollope takes a certain, grimly triumphal pleasure, as did many other British commentators on America, in pointing out the contradiction between legalised slavery and the doctrine of universal equality expressed in the U.S. Constitution and Declaration of Independence (1776-1777). "The effect produced upon English people by the sight of slavery in every direction is very new, and not very agreeable" she writes in *Domestic Manners*, "and

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<sup>188</sup> For more on slavery and the Anglo-American relationship, see: Campbell, 58-59; Mulvey, *Transatlantic Manners*, 76-102; Jones and Rakestraw, 71-96.

it is not the less painfully felt from hearing upon every breeze the mocking words, ‘All men are born free and equal’” (188).

Both Trollope and *Queechy*'s Stackpole project an image of American women as submissive – excluded from, and incapable of engaging with, the public sphere. However, in *Queechy* Fleda passionately, methodically and effectively rebuts Stackpole's argument over slavery (286-289). Drawing on a knowledge of British and American history evidently superior to Stackpole's, she points out that British policies in the colonies introduced and maintained slavery in America, that despite abolition of its own slave trade Britain effectively keeps enslaved people elsewhere in its empire, such as India, and that at home British policymakers are “unwilling to have the condition of their own factory slaves ameliorated” (287). These were common defences against British accusations of American hypocrisy and inhumanity. The scene simultaneously asserts the learning and intelligence of “American ladies,” and undermines the high moral stance taken by British pro-abolitionists in the debate over what Trollope called “the great transatlantic subject of negro slavery” (*Barnabys*, I.205). Whether or not Warner had Trollope specifically in mind while writing *Queechy*, she was clearly responding to the kind of views the English author expressed.

Fleda's defeat of the confident, authoritative Stackpole impresses Carleton and the episode adds to her attractiveness. It is the fact that Fleda is, Carleton says, “an exception to most rules” that makes her so appealing to him (276). Ironically, though, given the apparent nationalist intent behind this demonstration of Fleda's non-

submissiveness, it is England rather than America that holds most promise for women's rights – it is only at the end of the novel, when Lord Peterborough describes to Fleda Lady Peterborough's belief in women's "independent footing," that there is any mention of female equality (446). This perhaps reveals a reason why in both *The Wide, Wide World* and *Queechy*, Warner marries her heroines to English men. Although it is difficult to generalise across different communities in different regions of the United States, today's historians seem to validate Trollope's view of American women. From their assessments, it becomes apparent that, while so-called domestic ideology emerged roughly simultaneously in both Britain and America during the first half of the nineteenth century, it was a more pervasive cultural influence in the United States, and that, while most American states theoretically offered greater legal freedom and protection than English law provided for married women, American wives in reality endured less opportunity for self-determination than their English counterparts.<sup>189</sup> Many contemporaneous commentators did, however, note that at least in the short period between childhood and marriage, young American women enjoyed greater freedom than English women. Cooper, for instance, wrote in *Notions of the Americans*:

In no other country, is the same freedom of intercourse between the unmarried of the two sexes, permitted, as in America. In no other Christian country, is the more restraint imposed on the communications between the married; in this particular, we reverse the usage of other civilized nations (I.27).

In this regard, Warner gives Fleda the best of both worlds: the greater freedom of an American upbringing, followed by the greater freedom of an English marriage.

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<sup>189</sup> See: Joan Perkin, *Women and Marriage in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989), 10-11, 25; Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movement in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 1-125; Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships: England, France and the United States of America* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994); Christine Bolt, *Feminist Ferment*, 1-5; Yalom, 191-195.

In another sense too, *Queechy* makes an implicit concession in its seeming nationalist project. It is only through Carleton's financial investment first in the Ringgans' farm, saving it from repossession, and then in Fleda herself, rescuing her from Thorn, that Fleda is able to make the farm productive and profitable. This mirrors the reality that it was investment in American agriculture, industry and transport by British firms – many of which, such as Barings, were headed by aristocrats – that enabled the territorial expansion and economic growth of the United States. The salve, as represented in *Queechy*, is that, having benefited from such English investment, America was now enjoying a reverse influence on the parent country, embodied in Fleda's religious education of Carleton and his subsequent reform of his estate. It was a point made in the *Harper's* article of 1858 cited earlier: the piece acknowledges the need there once was for such one-sided "commerce with England," but goes on to talk about an emergent relationship involving "a system of commercial interchange ... that has no parallel in the history of trade" and which is based on "reciprocal communities."<sup>190</sup> Such a relationship enables America to "exert no small influence on the mind" of Europe in "legislation, enterprise, business ... intellectual and moral intercourse" and will lead to that "constant stream of blessing to the Old World."<sup>191</sup> Just as *The Wide, Wide World* marks a transitional moment in Anglo-American exchanges, so *Queechy* captures the new phase of those relations. Warner took advantage of the growing amity in Anglo-American relations to offer joining the English aristocracy as a relatively unproblematic daydream of escape from America's unstable economy, the insecurity of social status that went with that economy, and

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<sup>190</sup> Anon., "Editor's Table" (1858), p.552.

<sup>191</sup> *Ibid.*, p.552, 556.

from women's place within American society. There was a process of negotiation involved in this – one imagines that American reviewers would have been far less sympathetic to *Queechy* had Warner not included the narrative of Carleton's education in Christian republicanism – but the novel nonetheless provides the “fairyland” of the English aristocracy as a desirable and acceptable fantasy for American readers.

During the 1850s, novels such as *Queechy* and *The Wide, Wide World* were consumed largely by a middle- and upper-class readership. Both stories respond comfortingly to economic uncertainty by restoring their bourgeois-born heroines to the wealth and status forfeited by their parents. In the 1870s, as the industrialisation of post-bellum America accelerated, a new group of readers emerged: young women who worked in the shops and factories of the country's growing cities. These women were better educated and enjoyed more disposable income than their working-class predecessors. Publishers aimed a new type of popular fiction at this ever-increasing audience: the women's dime novel – inexpensive, mass-produced, formulaic.<sup>192</sup> The working girl who marries a foreign gentleman or aristocrat became a commonplace storyline of such fiction. (If these were rags-to-riches tales, Warner's were riches-to-rags-to-riches tales.) In his account of the genre, Michael Denning reports the comment of a New York garment worker about her reading during the late nineteenth century of

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<sup>192</sup> Information on women's dime novels, and the difference between their readership and that of sentimental fiction: Michael Denning, *Mechanic Accents: Dime Novels and Working-Class Culture in America* (London: Verso, 1987), 185-200. See also Felicia L. Carr, *The American Women's Dime Novel Website* at: <http://chnm.gmu.edu/dimenovels/intro.html> Accessed: 6 May 2006.

women's dime novels: "“You feel as if you were the poor girl yourself going to get married to a rich duke.””<sup>193</sup>

Such ‘Cinderella’ narratives were frowned upon by some commentators, who argued that class compatibility, along with religious and racial compatibility, was a prerequisite of a harmonious and successful marriage. Many advice manuals for young people warned that such marriages might on the part of the poorer partner be motivated not by love but by social ambition. However, according to Sondra Herman, “In spite of the pleas for class compatibility, the Cinderella ideal remained as popular as ever.”<sup>194</sup> “Writers,” Herman points out, “usually sought a formula to prove that Cinderella was not a fortune-hunter.”<sup>195</sup> Both dime-novel authors and advice-manual writers could agree that, “chastity and virtuous courtship would win rewards – both spiritual and practical.”<sup>196</sup> Warner’s offering of a “fairylane” of English aristocracy as a “reward” for “chastity” and virtue would, then, become enshrined in later American fiction, and be passed down to today’s generation of *American Princess*, in which, noticeably, the judges often allude to the perceived sexual as well as moral and social propriety of the contestants.

### **Home and Homo-Eroticism As Found: Herman Melville’s *Redburn***

A year before Warner published her debut novel, Herman Melville sent out into the wide, wide world *Redburn* (1849). The story is not dissimilar to Cooper’s *Afloat and*

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<sup>193</sup> Denning, 199.

<sup>194</sup> Sondra R. Herman, “Loving Courtship or the Marriage Market? The Ideal and its Critics 1871-1911,” *American Quarterly* 25:2 (May 1973): 241

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.



*Ashore* and *Miles Wallingford*, at least to begin with. Both are narrated by sailors reviewing their early careers, and in both the teenage son of a genteel family, now facing financial difficulty after the death of his father, takes to sea with the hope of restoring the family's fortunes. However, whereas Miles becomes a ship's captain, discovers lost treasure and succeeds in turning rags back into riches, Wellingborough Redburn on his voyage from New York to Liverpool and back again enjoys no such luck. I want to suggest that *Redburn* might be read not only as a commentary upon Cooper's proto-Horatio Alger-esque fantasy, but also as a revealingly different version of the kind of Anglo-American love story dealt with by Warner in *Queechy* and Cooper in *Home As Found*.

As Marvin Fisher notes, until recently scholars generally have followed Melville's own assessment of *Redburn* as "trash" and unworthy of attention.<sup>197</sup> Over the last two decades, however, as new academic discourses about class, gender, sexuality, race, imperialism, and nationalism have emerged, critics have found the novel a rich source of material.<sup>198</sup> Among those, Malcolm Bradbury, Fisher and Jonathan A. Cook have

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<sup>197</sup> Marvin Fisher, "The American Character, the American Imagination, and the Test of International Travel in *Redburn*," in Sanford E. Marovitz and A.C. Christodoulou, eds., *Melville Among the Nations: Proceedings of an International Conference: Volos, Greece, July 2-6, 1997* (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2001), 49. Melville denounced of the novel as "trash" in Herman Melville, *Journal of a Visit to London and the Continent* ed. Eleanor Melville Metcalf (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1948), 23; quoted in James E. Miller Jr., 'Redburn and White Jacket: Initiation and Baptism', *Nineteenth Century Fiction* 13:4 (March 1959), 274.

<sup>198</sup> John Samson, Nicholas K. Bromell and Sheila Post-Lauria have, for instance, interrogated the novel's engagement with contemporaneous theories of wealth distribution. Robert K. Martin and Joyce A. Rowe are among those who have looked into the novel's treatment of the cultural construction of masculinity. Michael Paul Rogin, Laurence Buell and Paul Giles have placed *Redburn* in the context of the politics of America's territorial expansion. Samson, 87-127; Nicholas K. Bromell, *By The Sweat of the Brow: Literature and Labor in Antebellum America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 61-79; Sheila Post-Lauria, *Correspondent Colorings: Melville in the Marketplace* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1996), 80-100. Robert K. Martin, *Hero, Captain and Stranger: Male Friendship, Social Critique, and Literary Form in the Sea Novels of Herman Melville* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986), 41-58; Joyce A. Rowe, "Social History and the Politics of Manhood in Melville's *Redburn*," *Mosaic* 26:1 (Winter 1993), 53-68. Michael Paul

all demonstrated how Redburn's experiences in England disillusion him of the notions of the Old World that he has acquired from his family's library of sentimental travel literature and the hopelessly out-of-date guidebook to Liverpool inherited from his father.<sup>199</sup> As Bradbury states, what Redburn discovers in Liverpool is not "the Irvingesque myth.... England, not as reassuring rural past but as [America's] threatening industrial and urban future."<sup>200</sup> He finds that the "thoroughfares and courts of old" of his father's visit to Liverpool have been replaced by more utilitarian structures, the busy but charming mercantile port town lost in a heartless, modern industrial city (225). He is entirely disabused of the Irvingesque idea that England simply represents the past; "This boasted England is no older than the State of New York," he says, regretfully (227). Whereas the guidebook records a "peaceful" town, Redburn encounters in Liverpool desperate poverty and a "Gomorrhah" of prostitution and drinking dens (252-265, 226). In his *Sketch-Book* Irving concentrates on relatively untouched rural landscapes and provincial towns. He argues that to "form a correct opinion of the English character" the American visitor must "go forth into the country; he must sojourn in villages and hamlets; he must visit castles, villas, farm houses, cottages...." (50). He spends time in cities, notably London, but tells us about the city's history rather than present. In "The Boar's Head Tavern" sketch, for instance, he visits the "Shakesperian" tavern purposefully to experience the

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Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy: The Politics and Art of Herman Melville*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1983), 63-70; Lawrence Buell, "Melville and the Question of American Decolonization," *American Literature* 64:2 (June 1992), 215-237; Paul Giles, "'Bewildering Intertanglement': Melville's Engagement with British Culture," in *The Cambridge Companion to Herman Melville*, ed. Robert S. Levine (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 224-249.

<sup>199</sup> For fuller readings of this theme, see: Bradbury, *Dangerous Pilgrimages*, 80-81; Fisher, 50-52; Jonathan A. Cook, "The Historical and Literary Sources of Redburn's 'Mysterious Night in London,'" *Leviathan: A Journal of Melville Studies* 6:1 (March 2004): 24-33.

<sup>200</sup> Bradbury, 139.

“Ghost[s]” of Elizabethan London.<sup>201</sup> Irving deals with his journey to the hostelry through London in one, brief paragraph, in which he tells us he endured “perils ... in Cateton Street and Old Jewry” and observed “the terror of all unlucky urchins.”<sup>202</sup> It is a hint of the kind of experience Redburn has in Liverpool. Irving says of his London excursion, however, “I forebear to treat of the various adventures and wonders I encountered in my travels,” and he moves hastily on to the next paragraph: “Let it suffice to say, that I arrived at length at merry East cheap, that ancient region of wit and wassail.”<sup>203</sup> Irving’s is an insistently selective version of England in which anything that is not “ancient” is silenced. It is a selectivity Melville pointedly resists in *Redburn*, having his young narrator’s attempts to follow his father’s guidebook always end with him encountering yet more evidence of modernity and “melancholy,” as if such experiences are unavoidable for any visitor to England who keeps their eyes open (228). Melville reclaims England as a place of social inequality – “poverty, poverty, poverty, in almost endless vistas” – and of social conflict (277). In Liverpool Redburn runs across an “inflammatory-looking” Chartist speaker whose crowd of would-be revolutionaries is dispersed by intimidating police officers (282). Irving, by contrast, chooses to see harmony between the classes, searching in English rural life for evidence of how “the nobility and gentry are more popular among the inferior orders in England than ... in any other country,” and talking of the way in which aristocratic benevolence works to “bring men more and more together.”<sup>204</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Irving, *The Sketch-Book*, 95.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*, 92.

<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, 53.

Redburn's most horrifying realisation is that American cities are, or very soon will be, "similar to England, in essentials" (366). Just as the Old World is demystified in *Redburn*, so is the New. The hundreds of Irish emigrants that Redburn's ship, the *Highlander*, carries in cramped and squalid conditions back to New York will not find an Eden of limitless opportunity, merely another city like Liverpool, in which they face uncertain and impoverished futures (318-324, 373-383). These passengers are, for the ship's ruthless owners, important only as commodities – "a cargo more remunerative than crates and bales" (322). Redburn uncovers numerous similarities between Britain and America; he finds two nations not separated by the Atlantic, but connected by the trade in people and goods across it (189-90, 227, 306, 366). As Frank Thistlethwaite memorably pointed out, Britain and America were united in a "single, Atlantic economy" during the nineteenth century.<sup>205</sup> At the centre of this economy were sailors. In Redburn's "young inland imagination" a sailor's life is one of adventure and romance, but the reality he meets with is one of hardship and economic exploitation (44). Sailors are "the *primum mobile* of all commerce," necessary for the success of "importers and exporters ... missionaries, ambassadors, opera-singers, armies, merchants, tourists, scholars," but they are paid little and cheated out of their wages by unscrupulous and profit-hungry masters like the *Highlander's* Captain Riga (204, 396-401).

Redburn's downward mobility gives him access to this world of sailors, luckless emigrants, and urban poverty. Had his family not lost its wealth, and he not set to sea, he might have remained comfortably deluded by travel narratives. If he ever

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<sup>205</sup> Frank Thistlethwaite, *The Anglo-American Connection in the Early Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), 3.

travelled, it would have been among the “aristocracy” of cabin passengers on board a ship like the *Highlander* – from whom the emigrants are sedulously and strictly kept apart by “the most arbitrary measures” (323). This is presumably how Redburn’s late father, a wealthy “importer in Broad-street” before he “became a bankrupt,” had traveled on his trips across “the Atlantic on business affairs” (45, 82).

When Redburn meets the enigmatic English aristocrat Harry Bolton, it seems momentarily that he, like Fleda Ringgan, will be rescued from penury. Redburn daydreams of Harry transporting him into a world of “stately and storied” old homes, “coffee and card-rooms, and billiard saloons” (295-296). But Harry, like Redburn, is penniless, perhaps not even an aristocrat at all, and he transports the young American only as far as London, through its “boisterous pavements” and “roar,” which make Redburn’s “eyes ache,” and to a sinister gambling den, Aladdin’s Palace (306, 306-317). By contrast, in his account of the metropolis in the *Sketch-Book*, when Irving finds himself “buffeting ... against the current of population setting through Fleet Street” where the “warm weather had unstrung my nerves and made me sensitive to every jar and jostle and discordant sound,” he turns, as if with a homing instinct for peaceful vestiges of the past, “into a bye lane” and passes through “several obscure nooks and angles and emerged into a quaint and quiet court.”<sup>206</sup> It is the “gothic” chapel of the Knights Templars – “another of these reliques of a ‘foregone world’ locked up in the heart of the city” with an “air of monastic quiet and seclusion.”<sup>207</sup> Redburn finds in London not this “picturesque remnant of old times” (*Sketch-Book*, 195) but Harry Bolton’s “Babylon” (*Redburn*, 309). Nor does Redburn ever find in

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<sup>206</sup> Irving, *The Sketch-Book*, 192.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, 193.

England a “fairyland” like Carleton’s estate in *Queechy*, although that is what his meeting with Harry at first seems to promise. It is a warning about the dangers of mistaking aristocratic manners and “courtly” appearances for the real thing (*Redburn*, 294). Waiting for your prince will get you nowhere.

There has been much recent critical debate about Harry and Redburn’s encounter, and whether one should understand it as a homosexual relationship or as an example of the kind of “romantic – even passionate – friendships between men” that, as E. Anthony Rotundo points out, were both common and socially acceptable in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>208</sup> Undeniably, Melville uses erotically charged language to describe Redburn’s feelings for Harry, dwelling from the start on the physical “beauty” of his “curling hair and silken muscles” (294). I would like to suggest, though, that the exact nature of Harry and Redburn’s relationship is perhaps not the point. Whether homosexual, homoerotic, homosocial, or a combination of all three, it is significant because of what it is *not*: the kind of heterosexual marriage that we see rescuing the American heroines of both Trollope and Warner’s stories and of

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<sup>208</sup> E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993), 7.

Most recently, for example, Jonathan A. Cook has challenged Robert K. Martin’s assumption that Aladdin’s Palace is not only a gambling den, but also a male brothel, and considered the implications of such a revision for our understanding of the novel’s interest in sexuality. A key point in Cook’s argument is whether one understands Harry’s “effeminacy of appearance” (*Redburn*, 341) as referring to the earlier nineteenth-century idea of the dandy – effeminate but heterosexual – or the “stereotypical portrait of the homosexual” that emerged during the second half of the century, the primary characteristic of which, as described by Foucault, was “the feminine morphology of his whole body.” Nicholas Bromell has concentrated on reading the novel in the light of the mid-nineteenth century’s physical and ideological separation of the all-male workplace from the female domestic environment. In the workplace, he argues, there was a fine and permeable line between male friendship and male love; “men who work together with and through their bodies seem to stand on the threshold of a marvelous possibility,” he says, and suggests that Harry and Redburn’s relationship treads that tightrope. Cook, “Historical and Literary Sources,” 27-31; Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality* Volume One, translated by Robert Hurley (Paris: Editions Gallimard, 1976; London, Allen Lane, 1978), 18. Martin, *Hero, Captain and Stranger*, 77.

women's dime novels, and, however ambivalently, stabilising Cooper's American gentry.

In the chapter immediately before Melville introduces Harry, Redburn "takes a delightful ramble into the country" and is invited to an evening meal in a picturesque country cottage (290-292). Briefly, Redburn can enter the kind of pleasantly bucolic world that his family's sentimental travel literature had led him to believe would constitute England. His host has three daughters, "three charmers," who Redburn attempts to win over by speaking in "Addisonian English" (290, 291):

And there they sat – the charmers, I mean – eating these buttered muffins in plain sight. I wish I was a buttered muffin myself. Every minute they grew handsomer and handsomer; and I could not help thinking what a fine thing it would be to carry home a beautiful English wife! how my friends would stare! a lady from England! (292).

The scene is both comic and pathetic, not only because of the adolescent's absurd erotic fantasy of being a "buttered muffin," but also because of the discrepancy between his affected air of social refinement and his appearance. Redburn's efforts at seduction are undercut by his evident impoverishment; "I ... ere long could see very plainly that my polished phrases were making a surprising impression, though that miserable shooting-jacket of mine [a symbol throughout the novel of Redburn's lack of money] was a perpetual drawback to my claims of gentility" (291). The hopes Redburn has of improving his social status by taking back to America an English "lady" are ruined by the jacket. One of the daughters, Matilda, is sent by her father to the cottage's dairy to get for Redburn a bowl of milk (291). When she hands him the milk, Redburn wonders if she has "fallen in love at first sight" but decides, "that was out of the question; for what a looking suitor was Wellingborough?" and soon leaves

(292). Redburn may in his imagination transform the country cottage into a place of “gentility” appropriate for “Addisonian English” and Matilda the milkmaid into an “English lady,” but the reality of his shabby shooting-jacket quickly reasserts itself, and proves more powerful than romantic fantasy. Irving, in England to deal with difficulties in his family’s transatlantic import-export business, began writing his idyllic accounts of the old country both as an imaginative escape from his family’s financial problems and a pragmatic solution to them.<sup>209</sup> Irving’s “sojourn[s]” in the English countryside formed the basis of a lucrative publishing career. Redburn, however, following his idyllic “sojourn,” must return to Liverpool and his ship, Melville forcing him and us again to confront urban hardship as the essence of modern life. Redburn enjoys no Irvingesque reversal of financial fortune as a result of his pastoral interlude: he ends his voyage no richer than he began it, defrauded of almost all his wages by Captain Riga.<sup>210</sup>

At the end of the chapter in which Redburn the young sailor meets the English girls, Redburn the older narrator tells us, “to this day I live a bachelor on account of those ravishing charmers” (293). The younger Redburn goes to sleep that night, “dreaming of red cheeks and roses” (293). It is the next day, at the start of the next chapter, that Redburn meets Harry (who, if their relationship *is* a sexual one, might be more responsible than the red-cheeked charmers for Redburn’s lifelong bachelorhood). It is as if Melville has – and wants us to be aware that he has – rerouted Redburn’s fantasy

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<sup>209</sup> See Bradbury, 62-83.

<sup>210</sup> Although, ironically, and much to his own disgust, Melville himself wrote *Redburn* to cash in on the popularity of sea stories and travel narratives and to offset the commercial failure of his previous novel, *Mardi* [1849]. (See Beaver, “Introduction” in Melville, *Redburn*, 7-8.) One can see in scenes such as Redburn’s reading of his father’s guidebook Melville’s attempts to sabotage and subvert the very genres through association with which he intended his book to be a financial success.



of heterosexual Anglo-American courtship into an Anglo-American relationship that, if sexual, cannot be fully acknowledged and, self-evidently, cannot lead to marriage and reproduction. Melville, in other words, denies Redburn what Trollope grants Emily Williams in *The Refugee*, and Warner bestows upon both Ellen Montgomery and Fleda Ringan: the opportunity to escape the pressures of America's perilous market economy and ever-shifting social strata by 'marrying up' and into the fixity of the English gentry. Redburn never gets near enough to an English gentlewoman to find out if one of them might rescue him as Emily, Ellen and Fleda are elevated by their English suitors. Comically, tragically, the nearest he gets is first Matilda, and then "womanly" Harry (294). There will be no "fairytale" marriage here, no comforting resolution to this tale. Harry makes "various but enigmatical allusions to a certain Lady Georgiana Theresa" and Redburn dreams of meeting her, maybe with marriage in mind, but, as the veracity of Harry's claims of aristocracy becomes more doubtful, Redburn must let go even of that scrap of fantasy (300, 367-368). (Gender is, of course, key here: it is possible for a penniless American woman to 'marry up' because men like Darcy and Carleton have the privilege of marrying down without sacrificing their social status, something much less accepted for an aristocratic woman.)

In *Home As Found*, through Eve's marriage to Powis the Effinghams at least delay the effects on the American gentry of the shift in power towards the newer, industrial-capitalist, urban elite of Jacksonian and post-Jacksonian America. In *Afloat and Ashore* and *Miles Wallingford*, written just five years before *Redburn* but set at least thirty years earlier, Miles's success as a mercantile sea captain enables him to

maintain his family's place in the late eighteenth / early nineteenth-century social order. That, however, is the world of Redburn's merchant father, who was unable to survive the transition to the new economy and who, "shaken by many storms of adversity," "at last died a bankrupt" (221). The redundancy in the modern world of Redburn Sr.'s guidebook underlines the transformation in the economic and social organisation of public life by the time Redburn Jr. is thrust into it. The world Melville depicts in *Redburn* is that of the 1830s and 1840s, of capitalism and industrial cities, and for the Redburns it is too late to reverse their downward mobility. We discover at the end of the novel that the older Redburn who narrates the story is still a sailor (405). Redburn cannot restore to the family the standing they had in the days of his great-uncle "Senator Wellingborough, who had died a member of Congress in the days of the old Constitution and after whom I had the honor of being named" (48). In this new world, status and prosperity are, Melville implies, as fragile as the glass ship kept in the Redburns' sitting-room and that Redburn as a child feels "an insane sort of desire" to smash (49). By contrast, Fleda Ringgan leaves behind her the labour and poverty of farm-life, and the Effinghams consolidate through marriage their social position and wealth against the clamorous representatives of the new economy.

I do not want to suggest that in *Redburn* Melville was systematically rewriting Cooper's narratives, although Michael Paul Rogin has demonstrated how he was around that time reading and responding to other of Cooper's works, but Melville does seem self-consciously to be adapting the Anglo-American marriage narrative in a way that is illuminating for our reading of *Homeward Bound* and *Home As Found* and, indeed, other stories of Anglo-American marriage, such as the ones Warner

would produce in the three years after *Redburn*.<sup>211</sup> *Redburn* implies that such fantasies deflect attention away from the kind of harsh social realities that the young sailor uncovers on his voyage from America to England and back. By not allowing Redburn a romance of Anglo-American marriage, by not allowing him any means of escaping his own downward mobility, he remains in and we as readers are forced to confront the world of urban destitution, mass emigration and economic exploitation. Whereas the endings of Cooper, Warner and Trollope's books all focus on the stability and safety achieved through the marriages of their heroes and heroines, the final few pages of *Redburn* deal with Harry Bolton's failure to find a successful new life in America. Redburn enlists a friend to help Harry find a job in New York but the English aristocrat fares badly in competition with the "multitudes of young men ... seeking employment in counting-houses" and disappears (404-405). Harry's failure in the new American economy is even more extreme than Redburn's own. Just as the Old World is no succour to Redburn nor does the New regenerate Harry.

The ambiguous final paragraphs of *Redburn* have elicited considerable critical head-scratching. Redburn as narrator tells us that, a few years after he and Harry separate in New York, he is on a whaling ship. Encountering another whaler, Redburn gets into conversation with a sailor who tells him of an English "gentleman's son" who died falling overboard that vessel. "What was his name," asks Redburn, "trembling with expectation." "Harry Bolton was not your brother?" replies the other sailor (406). The question goes unanswered. Joyce A. Rowe argues that "Melville's ending establishes Harry as a continuously mourned absence" – when Harry dies, so do

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<sup>211</sup> Rogin, *Subversive Genealogy*, 3-11.

Redburn's hopes of his own family recuperating their "aristocratic" lifestyle.<sup>212</sup> Robert K. Martin suggests the final lines are an echo of "God's question to Cain, 'Where is Abel thy brother.'" Martin contends that it is a rebuke to Redburn for effectively having abandoned Harry in New York.<sup>213</sup>

I would like to offer a different interpretation of "'Harry Bolton was not your brother?'" In almost all of the other novels considered in this chapter, the Anglo-American marriages and the stories' happy endings are facilitated by coincidences. From Lord Darcy's rescue in Devon by his mother's long-lost lover, to Emily Williams's fortuitous discovery of witnesses to Darcy's innocence, *The Refugee in America* is littered with moments of good luck. The discovery of Paul Powis's real identity in *Home As Found* rests on an unlikely storyline involving two identical lockets. The plot of *Afloat and Ashore* and *Miles Wallingford* is driven by coincidences, and Fleda Ringgan is only saved from the clutches of Mr. Thorn because she bumps into Carleton in the street by chance. The plot of Mary Shelley's *Lodore* likewise depends upon some transatlantic kismet in order to save its heroine, Ethel, and her husband, Villiers, from prison and the poorhouse.<sup>214</sup> "'Harry Bolton was not your brother?'" is *Redburn's* last chance to become a novel that unfolds a similarly incredible tale in which fortune, providence and the appearance of long-lost relatives and friends intervene in a timely way to save fallen members of the upper classes. As soon as the possibility that Harry might be Redburn's brother is raised,

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<sup>212</sup> Rowe, "Social History and the Politics of Manhood in Melville's *Redburn*," 66.

<sup>213</sup> Martin, *Hero, Captain and Stranger*, 58.

<sup>214</sup> Trollope, *The Refugee in America*, I.20, III.286; Cooper, *Home As Found*, 390-394; Cooper, *Miles Wallingford*, 19-34; Warner, *Queechy*, 356; Shelley, *Lodore*, 138-148. It is only because Fanny Derham, the daughter of *Lodore's* (yet again) long-lost childhood best friend, pops up in New York at exactly the same time *Lodore* and Ethel are there that Ethel and Villiers can eventually be saved from either prison or the poorhouse.

however, the novel ends. It is no possibility at all. Just as Melville denies Redburn the salvation of an Anglo-American marriage, so he denies the novelistic device of serendipity to give Harry and Redburn at very least some kind of consolation. Of course, the other novels deal with the *haute-monde*, a community in which constant travel and frequent inter-marriages perhaps make such coincidences a greater possibility. Redburn, now his family is no longer part of the elite, is excluded once and for all from a social world small enough for lucky coincidences to occur.

Four years after the publication of *Redburn*, Melville's friend Nathaniel Hawthorne took up his post at the American consulate in Liverpool, Redburn's destination of disillusionment. Recalling the seven years he spent in the city from 1853 to 1860, Hawthorne in *Our Old Home* (1863) recounts his meetings with a series of Americans who visit England with vain hopes of proving themselves "rightful heirs of a rich English estate," their "wild dreams" encouraged by mere scraps of circumstantial evidence of some tenuous connection with English aristocracy (30, 34).<sup>215</sup> He describes such people with words like "booby," "donkey," "peculiar insanity" and "foolery" (30-34). "I might fill many pages with instances of this diseased American appetite for English soil," he sighs, and meditates on why Americans of the mid-nineteenth century retain such a fascination for England and its monarchy (35). It is, Hawthorne decides, the lingering effect of the origins in England of many Americans that gives rise to such "deep-rooted sympathies" (34). Only, he says, the "boorishness" and "contemptuous jealousy" of the English towards the United States since Independence has encouraged Americans to be "a great nation in its own right"

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<sup>215</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Our Old Home, and English Note-Books* (1863; London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Company, 1883).

rather than remaining a dependent of Britain (33). Like Redburn's meeting with Harry, Hawthorne's anecdotes of would-be American claimants warn "honest Republican[s]" against being seduced by the prospect of a title and an aristocratic life (34).

Hawthorne attempted to use the story of an American who is, or at least appears to be, the "rightful heir" to an English title as the basis of a novel but never completed the work before his death in 1864. His outlines and drafts have since been printed together as the "American Claimant Manuscripts."<sup>216</sup> Hawthorne's premise was that an American, whose aristocratic ancestor left England because of a family dispute during its civil war, visits 'the old country' to trace his kinfolk. Hawthorne wrote his early drafts as America's own civil war was looming and later ones while it was underway. The manuscripts deal with the centuries-long effects of civil wars – family members separated from each other, grievances bequeathed from one generation to the next. In one of the several initial "studies" Hawthorne made for his planned novel, he writes that the "great gist of the story ought to be the natural hatred of men – and the particular hatred of Americans – to an aristocracy" (475). He continues that his American hero, a devout "Democrat," "must make amends to the reader's feelings by marrying an Englishwoman, with every prospect of happiness," the Englishwoman being the daughter of the "present nobleman," but then adds, "How'll that do?...I don't make this out" (475, 476). Like Melville, Hawthorne cannot bring himself to end such a story with a comforting "fairytale" of Anglo-American marriage. As a man in remunerative public office, he perhaps had less need than Warner of dealing in

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<sup>216</sup> Nathaniel Hawthorne, 'The Ancestral Footstep,' 'Etherege,' 'Grimshawe,' in *The American Claimant Manuscripts*, vol. XII of *The Centenary Edition of the Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne*, ed. Edward H. Davidson et al (Ohio State University Press, 1977).

such fantasy and, one might argue, a more consistent writer than the Cooper of *Home As Found*, he would not allow himself to set down a plot evidently at odds with his stated anti-aristocratism.

### **From a Royal Visit in 1860 to *Little Women* (1866), and the Civil War In-Between**

Hawthorne probably wrote the “study” to which I refer above in the late 1850s. After a decade of Anglo-American amity, even if Hawthorne could not in the end bring himself to plot a marriage between an American democrat and an English aristocrat, he could at least contemplate it and acknowledge that such a story would likely please his readers. By this time, Queen Victoria’s popularity in America was well established, consolidated during the 1850s by her involvement in moments that expressed the new Anglo-American harmoniousness, such as the inauguration of the Atlantic Cable. In 1860, Victoria sent her son, Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, to tour Canada and the United States with the aim of cementing the new transatlantic friendship. Wherever he went, Albert Edward was greeted by enormous, enthusiastic crowds. In New York, between 200,000 and 500,000 people “lined Broadway to greet the prince.”<sup>217</sup> The general public and public dignitaries alike seemed eager to please their royal visitor. “A Fourth of July could hardly be more universally celebrated,” proclaimed the *New York Daily Tribune* – a statement that would have been unimaginable fifteen years earlier.<sup>218</sup> Indeed, the American press was as

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<sup>217</sup> Ian Radforth, *Royal Spectacle: The 1860 Visit of the Prince of Wales to Canada and the United States* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 317. Information in this paragraph about Albert Edward’s tour is taken from Radforth, and Arnstein, 96.

<sup>218</sup> Radforth, 319.

welcoming of the Prince as the public.<sup>219</sup> Several newspapers encouraged the idea that one purpose of Albert Edward's visit was to find an American bride. This suggestion apparently prompted a frenzy of high-society mothers shamelessly to thrust their eligible daughters at the Prince whenever at public functions there was an opportunity, a phenomenon anticipated in *Queechy* by Carleton's reception among the matrimonially obsessed matriarchs of New York.<sup>220</sup> If in previous decades the marriage of an American woman to an English aristocrat had been regarded with suspicion by many Americans, it now seemed that almost the entire nation was willing just such an event.

Just a few months after the Prince's rapturous reception in the United States, the American Civil War started. The war strained Anglo-American relations to near breaking point, in effect undoing a decade of growing mutual trust.<sup>221</sup> In 1861, it briefly seemed as if Britain might actually be "sucked into the conflict" when a Northern warship intercepted the British steamer *Trent*, which was carrying two Confederate envoys on their way to Europe to solicit support for the South.<sup>222</sup> After an ominously furious reaction from the British government, President Lincoln, unwilling to fight both the British and the Confederacy at the same time, released the envoys. After the *Trent* affair, Britain's official policy was non-intervention.

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<sup>219</sup> Only the country's Irish-American journalists, angry at England's continued mistreatment of Ireland, raised objections, asking whether their fellow Americans had forgotten their supposed ideological antipathy to "unearned rank and title." Citation from the *Irish-American*; Radforth, 347.

<sup>220</sup> Radforth, 331-332.

<sup>221</sup> Information in Britain and the Civil War in this and following paragraphs is drawn from: H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952)* (New York: St Martin's Press Inc, 1955), 452-517; Campbell, 95-110; H.G. Nicholas, *The United States and Great Britain* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), 33-42; Martin Crawford, *The Anglo-American Crisis of the Mid-Nineteenth Century: The Times and America, 1850-1862* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1987); R.J.M. Blackett, *Divided Hearts: Britain and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001); Temperley, 50-58.

<sup>222</sup> Temperley, 57.



However, the building in British shipyards of Confederate vessels, most notoriously the *Alabama*, which was responsible for the destruction of 64 Union vessels, generated enormous resentment among Northerners, their anger intensified by the manning of many such vessels by British seamen. Pro-Unionists took this as evidence that aristocratic Britain was siding with the self-styled aristocratic South and “conniving with the rebels in seeking to dismember the United States.”<sup>223</sup> It did not help that Prime Minister Lord Palmerston was considered by Northerners, not without some justification, to be an anti-democratic, pro-Southern, aristocratic snob who was opposed to the idea of a united America.<sup>224</sup> In reality, British public and political opinion about the war was fragmented and constantly shifting, not even breaking down along class or geographical lines as might be imagined: while many workers in Britain’s factory towns supported the industrial North, some did not; while some aristocrats supported the South, many did not. This lack of any consensus was one of several reasons that Britain never formally entered the war. According to R.J.M. Blackett, Britons were united only in their agreement that the war proved “a constitutionalism centered on Parliament and the monarchy” a preferable system of government than republican democracy, which had, many argued, got the United States into this bloody mess.<sup>225</sup> Following the decline of Chartism after 1848, Britain had been moving away from the possibility of republicanism; the American Civil War helped nudge it even further in that direction.

In 1863, Lincoln having issued his Emancipation Proclamation and with the North apparently heading for victory, any lingering thought in Britain that Palmerston’s

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<sup>223</sup> Temperley, 57.

<sup>224</sup> Murphy et al, 217-218.

<sup>225</sup> Blackett, 36.

administration might intervene in the conflict on behalf of the South disappeared. No government would risk backing a loser, and no post-abolition British government would support a slaveholding state against a nation that was, following Lincoln's Proclamation, finally and definitively committed to ending slavery. (Even Palmerston was anti-slavery.) Nevertheless, in the years immediately following the Civil War, "anger against Great Britain was intense throughout the victorious North" where, it was believed, Britain's practical support and perceived sympathy for the South had contributed to the protraction of the war, the deaths of tens of thousands of soldiers, and the debts the post-bellum nation now faced.<sup>226</sup>

This reversal in American feelings about England, merely a few years after the Prince of Wales's successful tour, is gently registered in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and its handling of a putative Anglo-American romance. Like *Queechy* and *The Wide, Wide World*, a novel read by characters in *Little Women* (112), Alcott begins her novel with young women living in impoverished gentility. Famously, the four March daughters will be spending "Christmas without any presents" (11). Unlike Ellen's father in *The Wide, Wide World* and Rolf Rossitur in *Queechy*, however, Mr. March's "reverses of fortune" are a consequence not of rash business speculation, but of his altruism: he "lost his property in trying to help an unfortunate friend" (94, 43).

Set during the Civil War, for most of the first volume of the story, Mr. March is away fighting for the North, his absence from the family home compounding its economic

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<sup>226</sup> Campbell, 111.

difficulties.<sup>227</sup> The novel's opening paragraphs establish the coming narrative in the context of the war, Mrs. March deciding that, aside from the family's lack of money, there will be no Christmas presents because "she thinks we ought not to spend money for pleasure, when our men are suffering so in the army" (11). The near-fatal injury that Mr. March receives during the war underlines this "suffering" and its disruptive impact on American life.

During the second volume of *Little Women*, which opens three years after the close of the first, the youngest March daughter, Amy, enjoys proposals of marriage from two suitors, the Marchs's next-door neighbour, Laurie Laurence, and his English friend, Fred Vaughn. Laurie's family home, "a stately stone mansion, plainly betokening every sort of comfort and luxury" is throughout the story a reminder of the lifestyle from which the Marchs have been excluded by their "reverses of fortune" (52). Like Guy Carleton's estate, it is to the March women "a kind of enchanted palace," a "fairylike" place – a fantasy of wealth and security (53, 60). It is here that, as adolescents, the Marchs first meet Fred Vaughn, "a true John Bull," and his family (134). The Marchs, Laurie and the English contingent play a game of croquet. "The English played well, but the Americans played better, and contested every inch of ground as if the spirit of '76 inspired them," Alcott's commentary tells us (127). The over-competitive Fred cheats, but Jo March still wins the game for her team, barely suppressing her triumphalism when she tells Fred, "Yankees have a trick of being of being generous to their enemies" (128). It is a pleasant, amusing interlude in the novel. Nonetheless, the croquet scene, with its sneaky "John Bull" English boy

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<sup>227</sup> *Little Women* as usually published today is actually a compendium of Alcott's two original volumes, *Little Women* (1868) and *Good Wives* (1869). Mr. March returns to the family home towards the end of the first volume (215).

playing croquet against honest “Yankees” stirred by “the spirit of ’76,” might be read as a pointed reminder to readers of past English wrongdoings against America and, by implication, of more recent connivances during the Civil War.

Amy encounters Fred again when she is taken on a tour of Europe by an aunt. The letter home she writes from England during this tour has a familiarly Irvingesque feel in its wilfully partial reporting. “We only stopped at Liverpool a few hours,” she tells her sisters. “It’s a dirty, noisy place, and I was glad to leave it” (304). This is all we see of modern, urban Britain. From here on, Amy’s visit is of stately homes with “powdered coachmen” and “lovely landscapes ... farmhouses ... with thatched roofs, ivy up to the eaves” (306, 304). Even in London, Amy’s view of city street life is obscured – “there was nothing to be seen but fog and umbrellas” – before she retreats first into a fancy-goods shop and then to her plush hotel (305). It is from the hotel she writes, ending her letter by saying, “I *must* stop. I really feel like a dissipated London fine lady, writing here so late, with my room full of pretty things, and my head a jumble of parks, theaters, new gowns ...” (307).

Of all the March daughters, Amy is the most susceptible to aristocracy:

... in spite of her American birth and breeding, she possessed that reverence for titles which haunts the best of us – that unacknowledged loyalty to the early faith in kings which set the most democratic nation under the sun in a ferment at the coming of a royal yellow-haired laddie, some years ago ... (287-288).

The reference at the end of this passage seems to be to Albert Edward’s 1860 visit and the novel suggests that, just as American “reverence for titles” persisted after the

Revolution, so it will withstand the current crisis in Anglo-American relations for it is based in a kind of primitive “faith in kings.”

When in France Amy again meets Fred, it seems as if the socially ambitious Amy’s regard for the English class system might be enough to persuade her to marry him. She does not love Fred but it is in favour of marrying him, she tells Laurie, because ““He’s a rich gentleman and has delightful manners”” (392). ““I understand. Queens of society can’t get on without money, so you mean to make a good match,”” Laurie replies. Amy feels “a little ashamed of herself” for considering a marriage not based in love and, when Fred does propose, “she found that something more than money and position was needed to satisfy the new longing that filled her heart ...” (410-411). This “new longing” is her and Laurie’s developing mutual love and, just a few pages later, Amy joyfully accepts his proposal.

The novel celebrates romantic love as the necessary basis for an emotionally fulfilling married life: it is the foundation of Mr. and Mrs. March’s relationship and, later, the happy and fruitful marriages of Amy’s sisters Meg and Jo. As Camille Cauti notes, Alcott wrote the second volume of *Little Women* as a result of the phenomenal success of the first and in response to the numerous letters she received from readers who “begged ... for more information about their beloved girls’ future.”<sup>228</sup> Alcott “catered to popular taste by consenting to marry off her heroines” and, in a novel that advocates romantic love, that she has Amy marry for love rather than “money and position” is no surprise.<sup>229</sup> It is also a novel that advocates thrift, honesty,

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<sup>228</sup> Cauti, “Notes” in Alcott, *Little Women*, 474.

<sup>229</sup> The exception, of course, is Beth, who dies.

industriousness, and self-sacrifice, and that often presents these virtues as particularly American qualities. Given this, it also is no surprise that Alcott has Amy fall in love with the American Laurie rather than Fred, as whose wife there is the possibility that Amy will become “a dissipated London fine lady.”

Like Warner, Alcott restores to her heroine the wealth and status lost in her family’s “reverses of fortune,” and, like Warner, Alcott provides for her heroine an “enchanted,” “fairylike” place – Laurie’s familial “mansion” – as an escape from economic hardships. However, whereas in *Queechy*, Fleda Ringgan’s “fairyland” is in England, in *Little Women*, Amy March finds her “enchanted palace” in America, right next door to her own home. With grievances about Britain’s behaviour during the Civil War still embittering many Americans, Alcott’s decision in the late 1860s to have Amy marry Laurie rather than Fred might be interpreted as a withdrawal of Warner’s earlier offer of the hands of American literary heroines in marriage to English suitors. However, in the 1870s, as I explain in the next chapter, a proliferation of high-profile, real-life Anglo-American weddings would compel numerous writers to deal once again with the implications of transatlantic marriage.

## PART TWO

### “DO YOU THINK IT IS UNPATRIOTIC?”: TRANSATLANTIC

#### MARRIAGE, 1870-1914<sup>1</sup>

##### Introduction

Between 1870 and 1914 more than 450 American women, many the daughters of newly minted millionaire capitalists and industrialists, married European noblemen. More than a quarter of the aristocrats involved in these marriages were English; the ‘old country’ provided more grooms for American heiress brides than any other European nation.<sup>2</sup>

There had been a trickle of such marriages throughout the nineteenth century, but between the end of America’s Civil War and World War I, transatlantic title-heiress marriages – or “international marriages,” as they were also commonly called – turned into a much-written-about social phenomenon. Numerous short stories, ‘popular’ novels and ‘serious’ literary texts were produced with flirtations, courtships or

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<sup>1</sup> Citation: Mary E.W. Sherwood, *A Transplanted Rose* (1882; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1900), 273.

<sup>2</sup> For popular histories of the title-heiress marriage phenomenon, see: Elizabeth Eliot, *Heiresses and Coronets: The Story of Lovely Ladies and Noble Men* (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959); Ruth Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980); Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord: The Victorian and Edwardian Experience* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1989); Elizabeth Kehoe, *The Titled Americans: Three American Sisters and the British Aristocratic World into Which They Married* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 2004).

For academic accounts, see: Maureen E. Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages 1870-1914* (London: Routledge, 1989); Richard W. Davis, “‘We Are All Americans Now!’ Anglo-American Marriages in the Later Nineteenth Century,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 135:2 (June 1991), 140-199; Jean Clark Du Bro, “Purchasing Power: Transatlantic Marriage Novels in American Literature” (Ph.D diss., The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2004), 1-41. See Brandon 1, Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 249-295, and Davis for analyses of the statistics of title-heiress marriages.

marriages between wealthy American women and European aristocrats at their centres.

It is difficult to overstate the level of media interest on both sides of the Atlantic, and particularly in the United States, in title-heiress marriages. During the 1890s especially, when such unions reached their numerical peak, American newspapers speculated at length about potential matches, dedicated multiple-page ‘spreads’ to describing grandiose wedding ceremonies, analysed the financial details of marriage settlements, regularly updated readers on the social successes of the brides in European court society, and offered tantalising glimpses inside the ancestral castles and mansions that were now the homes of these titled American women, the majority of whom relocated to Europe with their new husbands. The newspapers also provided post-mortems when, as with several of the highest-profile marriages, the stories ended in separation or divorce. Editorialists spun innumerable column inches around the reasons they believed so many title-heiress marriages failed, and they debated inexhaustibly the ideological implications of American women marrying ennobled foreigners. With America’s post-bellum print media expanding in scale and significance, savvy editors made the roller-coaster business affairs, spectacular social activities, and sometimes scandalous personal lives of the nation’s emerging plutocracy a mainstay of their newspapers’ front and inside pages. Title-heiress marriages were a jewel in the crown of this coverage. Newspapers sometimes celebrated and sometimes condemned the excesses of the financial and social elite; as with title-heiress marriages, often they seemed to do both simultaneously.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See: Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 122-127; Maureen E. Montgomery, *Displaying Women:*



Historians of the title-heiress marriage phenomenon usually date its beginning to the wedding in April 1874 of Lord Randolph Churchill and Jennie Jerome, the daughter of a New York stockbroker. Although not the first such marriage of the 1870s, the Churchill-Jerome wedding was the event that to observers indicated the emergence of a significant trend. By 1880 there had crystallised in the pages of newspapers and periodicals the stereotypical image that came to define public discourse about title-heiress marriages. The titled European was a cash-strapped young man, needing money either for the upkeep of a crumbling familial estate or to service debts accumulated during years of fashionable debauchery. “It is admitted, we believe, that an Englishman of rank seldom seeks the hand of an American girl in marriage unless his prudent eye has measured the proportion of her dowry,” noted the *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1878.<sup>4</sup> According to American newspapers, the heiress bride was one of two things. Either she was a “title-hunter,” eager to marry not for love but for the social kudos of a hereditary appellation and introduction into a European court, and willing to offer herself and her sizeable dowry in return. Or, she was the victim of her family’s ruthless social climbing; *The Washington Post* complained of “parents who seek to market their daughters among the nobility of Europe” in order to achieve prestige among America’s own “snobbish, monarchist ... ‘upper circles.’”<sup>5</sup> Newly wealthy families were accused in particular of seeking a titled son-in-law as a strategy for securing acceptance into America’s established elite. “The American bride in

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*Spectacles of Leisure in Edith Wharton’s New York* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 1-16; Kevin G. Barnhurst, *The Form of News: A History* (New York: Guildford Press, 2001), 68-218; David Paul Nord, *Communities of Journalism: A History of American Newspapers and Their Readers* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 133-151.

<sup>4</sup> Anon., “Anglo-American Marriages,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 4 August 1878, p.16. It should be noted that Jennie Jerome and Randolph Churchill, from all accounts, married for love. See Kehoe.

<sup>5</sup> Anon., “American Fools,” *The Washington Post*, 31 August 1880, 2.

nearly every famous international marriage has been the daughter of a ‘new’ family, even as we in America reckon such things,” according to the *Post*.<sup>6</sup> At a time when the ‘old’ families of cities such as New York and Philadelphia were working hard to regulate the entry of ‘new’ families into their social sphere, having a daughter presented at the court of a European monarch, especially the ever-popular Queen Victoria’s, “could open doors previously barred” in Gilded-Age society.<sup>7</sup> Some newspapers actually abetted both aristocratic fortune-seekers and American title-hunters, carrying classified advertisements from impoverished noblemen seeking heiress brides.<sup>8</sup> From 1890, there even existed an annual New York publication, *Titled Americans*, which not only detailed existing international marriages but also marketed available European noblemen to the city’s elite<sup>9</sup> *Lippincott’s Magazine* in 1880 summed up the popular perception of international marriages: “the common exchange of money on one side and title on the other.”<sup>10</sup> In Europe, aristocratic families had ignored the emerging bourgeois culture of romantic love and continued to arrange socially and financially advantageous marriages for their offspring.<sup>11</sup> Now, American commentators feared their country’s leading families were following suit.

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<sup>6</sup> Dexter Marshall, “Uncle Sam’s Charming Daughters Who Have Won Titles and Social Standing in the International Marriage Lottery,” *Washington Post*, 22 October 1905, sec. S, p.5.

<sup>7</sup> Michael J. Sewell, “Queen of Our Hearts,” in Steve Ickingall and Stephen Mills ed., *Victorianism in the United States: Its Era and Legacy* (Amsterdam: V.U. University Press, 1992), 215. Hermione Lee describes this period as one in which “a highly regulated society fighting a rearguard action against changes which it was, at the same time, assimilating. The more threatened the upper class was by the influx of new money and new names in the 1880s and 1890s, the more it tried to protect itself through strict, formulaic codes of the acceptable.” Hermione Lee, *Edith Wharton* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2007), 51.

<sup>8</sup> See Brandon, 1-7.

<sup>9</sup> Similarly, one newspaper, perhaps with tongue in cheek, published “for the information of American heiresses” a list of bachelor noblemen, accompanied by an explanation of the relative importance of their titles. *The New York World*, 22 September 1907; quoted in Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 161. For a similar article, see: Anon., “Plums Among Peers: Plenty Yet to be Picked by American Heiresses,” *The Washington Post*, 11 September 1904, sec. B, p.6.

<sup>10</sup> Alain Gore, “Americans Abroad,” *Lippincott’s Magazine of Popular Literature and Science* no.,26, October 1880, p.469.

<sup>11</sup> Marilyn Yalom, *A History of the Wife* (London: Pandora, 2001), xvi.

In Mary Sherwood's *A Transplanted Rose* (1882), one of many of the period's title-heiress novels, it is at first uncertain whether Sir Leyton Leycester is interested in beautiful Californian heiress Rose Chadwick for love or money. A cynical observer comments that the baronet "is only looking after the ten millions...Englishmen are so mercenary," and Lytton himself admits he has debts (88, 151). However, by the end of the novel, it is beyond doubt that they are "head over ears in love" (112). When they become engaged, though, the "truly, purely American" Rose questions the propriety of their betrothal (66). She asks: "Surely it is not wrong to love you, as I do, with all my heart and soul. Do you think it is unpatriotic?" (273). Quick on his feet, Lytton reassures Rose their marriage will be "Yorktown over again," telling her, "what can be better than that America should reconquer England in this way once more?" (273-274). Just as Warner depicts Fleda's marriage to Carleton in *Queechy* as a victory for Americanisation, so Sherwood tries to configure her love story so there can be no accusations of a passive United States submitting to a dominant, aristocratic England. Indeed, the exchange is immediately followed by Rose and Lytton arguing over where the wedding should be held – in California, where she wants to marry, or at Lytton's baronial pile, his choice of venue. Rose wins the argument and the chapter ends, "America held her own" (277).

Within Sherwood's novel, Rose's dilemma – whether it is unpatriotic for an American woman to love and marry a foreigner, especially an English aristocrat – appears comfortably settled. The question, however, continued to echo through the literature of title-heiress marriages, both fiction and non-fiction. A contributor to Chicago's

*Daily Tribune* wrote in 1885 that international marriages brought into “doubt the patriotism as well as the good sense of many of our so-called ‘best citizens.’”<sup>12</sup> Three years later, by contrast, G.W. Smalley, London correspondent of the *New York Tribune*, in a series of articles celebrated the physical and intellectual superiority of young American women to their English counterparts and congratulated titled American brides for achieving an “American conquest in England.”<sup>13</sup> Other articles proudly praised title-heiress wives for “Americanizing” and “modernizing” European aristocracies.<sup>14</sup> Some regarded the acceptance of American women into prestigious aristocracies as the apotheosis of America’s progress, symbolic of its success in becoming a civilised nation. This kind of patriotic rhetoric became, however, increasingly overshadowed by more critical opinion. In 1890 *The Independent* protested, “the American girl who sells her hand for a title” “commits treason against a great organic principle of society in the New World.”<sup>15</sup> The same year Mary Sherwood admitted that “to the republican” titled American heiresses look “unworthy, unpatriotic, and un-American.”<sup>16</sup> In 1897 *The Washington Post* printed a typically irate reader’s letter regarding transatlantic marriages under the headline “IS PATRIOTISM DYING?” and, by the first decade of the twentieth century, a period that saw an intensification of anti-international-marriage sentiment, preachers, pundits

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<sup>12</sup> Herbert Mayson, “American Girls Chasing After Foreign Titles,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 22 February 1885, p.14.

<sup>13</sup> George Smalley, “The American Girl in London: Some Secrets of Her Success Abroad and Some of the Results,” *New York Tribune* 24 November 1888, reprinted in George W. Smalley, *London Letters and Some Others* Volume II (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), 127.

<sup>14</sup> M. Davis, “Blenheim and Americanism,” *Los Angeles Times* October 31 1897: 19. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1904 predicted that the Anglo-American offspring of title-heiress marriages would, “thanks to the influence of their American mothers, impart a certain amount of bracing Yankee atmosphere to the upper chamber of the parliament of the immense British empire,” and that across Europe “young nobles ... who are half American” would “prove useful friends to the United States.” ‘Ex-Attache,’ “American Blood Felt in Europe,” *Chicago Daily Tribune* 17 July 1904: 4.

<sup>15</sup> Goldwin Smith, “The New Glory of the Republic,” *The Independent*, 3 July 1890, p.42.

<sup>16</sup> Mrs. John Sherwood, “American Girls in Europe,” *North American Review* no.150:403, June 1890, 685.

and politicians, including Theodore Roosevelt, were denouncing international marriage as a derogation of what the president called “the duties of American women.”<sup>17</sup>

In this chapter, I consider a number of novels and short stories that invoke the title-heiress-marriage phenomenon and that debate the patriotism of the women involved. The great age of international marriages coincided with a reinvigoration and re-imagination of patriotism in America, the result of a well-documented combination of factors that includes the fallout from the Civil War; the politics of Reconstruction; the Centennial celebrations of 1876; the unprecedented speed of industrialisation, incorporation and capitalisation; urbanisation; nationalisation of the economy; the emergence of the modern federal state; increased immigration; and U.S. overseas imperialism in, among other places, Cuba, Panama, and the Philippines.<sup>18</sup> “America’s age of patriotism,” as historian Cecilia O’Leary calls this period, saw the creation of influential organisations such as the Grand Army of the Republic, the Sons of the

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<sup>17</sup> Emma Washburn, “Is Patriotism Dying?” *The Washington Post*, 18 January 1897, p.7; John Callan O’Laughlin, “Roosevelt Censures Foreign Marriages,” *New York Times*, 3 May 1908, p.18. Montgomery comments on the hardening of American attitudes to title-heiress marriages (160-184). See also: Anon., “Titles and Money,” *Massachusetts Ploughman and New England Journal of Agriculture*, 23 July 1904, p.63; Anon., “Mixed Marriages,” *New York Times*, 4 February 1906, p.6; George Barr Baker, “Dollars vs. Pedigree: The Truth About International Marriages,” *Everybody’s Magazine* no.16:2, Feb 1907, 167-176; Anon., “Can’t Be Yankee Peeress,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 February 1907, p.7; Anon., “Says Our Women Influence Europe: Rev. Dr. MacArthur Talks of Good and Bad Features of International Marriages,” *New York Times*, 20 January 1908, p.6; Anon., “500 Married Titles,” *The Washington Post*, 28 January 1908, 11; Anon., “American Women of Title Scorned,” *New York Times*, 29 January 1908, p.3; Anon., “Denounces Titled Matches,” *New York Times*, 23 November 1908, p.8; Anon., “Our Ideals Not Democratic,” *New York Times*, 2 March 1910, p.1.

<sup>18</sup> I draw in this paragraph from the following texts: Michael Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991); John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); John Bodnar ed., *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define Their Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996); Cecilia Elizabeth O’Leary, *To Die For: The Paradox of American Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); Francesca Morgan, *Women and Patriotism in Jim Crow America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

American Revolution, and the Women's Relief Corps, all dedicated to what they considered patriotic activity. It also witnessed the inauguration of various memorials, symbols and rituals, many of which were sooner or later adopted by the state as 'official' expressions of nationalist sentiment.<sup>19</sup> These include the elevation in the early 1880s of Memorial Day to a national day of remembrance, and the writing in 1890 of the Pledge of Allegiance.<sup>20</sup>

The prominent roles women's organisations played in this "sudden onslaught of patriotic agitation," along with the growing visibility of female-rights campaigns during the same period, gave rise to "a constant debate" over what exactly constituted the patriotic "duties of American women."<sup>21</sup> Alfred Habegger calls the period "a time when the air was thick with theory and controversy about women."<sup>22</sup> In public discourse and in legislative terms there was a reconsideration of the relationship of women to the nation. Participants in this debate, men and women, sought to delineate the 'proper' role of the female American citizen in a dramatically changing society. While this process in some respects seemed to empower women, such as the introduction of female suffrage in several U.S. states, in others it consolidated traditionally unequal gender relations.<sup>23</sup> In 1907, as mentioned in my Introduction,

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<sup>19</sup> O'Leary, 48.

<sup>20</sup> O'Leary, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Stuart McConnell, "Reading the Flag: A Reconsideration of the Patriotic Cults of the 1890s," in John Bodnar ed., *Bonds of Affection: Americans Define Their Patriotism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 102; E.L. Godkin, "The Other Side of the Question," *The Nation* no.7, 17 October 1867, pp.316-317, quoted in Alfred Habegger, *Henry James and the 'Woman Business'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 9; O'Laughlin, 18.

<sup>22</sup> Habegger, 9.

<sup>23</sup> Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 167-181; Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 148-152; Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 77-155.

Congressmen introduced a new law that stripped any American woman who married a foreigner of her U.S. citizenship, even if the couple remained resident in the United States. This rendered women's membership of the nation-state conditional – contingent on the perceived patriotism of their marital choices.<sup>24</sup> The law applied only to women who married foreigners, and not to men; it was just the latest in a series of legislative manoeuvres that denied married women a legal identity independent of their husbands.<sup>25</sup> Title-heiress marriages were cited in the debate that followed the passage of the law as one type of undesirable marriage the law would help restrict. Long before 1907, commentators queried whether marriage to a foreign

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<sup>24</sup> Information on the 1907 Expatriation Act, from: Virginia Sapiro, "Women, Citizenship, and Nationality: Immigration and Naturalization Policies in the United States," in *Politics and Society* 13:1 (1984): 1-26; Linda Kerber, "A Constitutional Right to be Treated Like American Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship," in Kerber et al eds., *US History as Women's History: New Feminist Essays* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1995): 17-35; Candice Lewis Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own: Women, Marriage, and the Law on Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 45-79; Marian L. Smith, "'Any woman who is now or hereafter may be married...': Women and Naturalization, ca.1802-1940," *Prologue (Magazine of the U.S. National Archives and Records Administration)* 30:2 (Summer, 1998), reproduced at <http://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1998/summer/women-and-naturalization.html> (Accessed: 14 July 2006); Nancy F. Cott, "Marriage and Women's Citizenship in the United States, 1830-1914," *The American Historical Review* 103:5 (December 1998), 1440-1474; Jacqueline Stevens, *Reproducing the State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 135-137; Ann Marie Nicolosi, "'We Do Not Want Our Girls To Marry Foreigners': Gender, Race, and American Citizenship," *NWSA Journal* 13:3 (Fall 2001): 1-21.

<sup>25</sup> As a further example, one might note legislation surrounding married women's property. By 1855, the passage over the previous three decades of Married Women's Property Acts in certain U.S. states had, by enabling married women to retain some independent control over money and material goods, helped set in process the decline of coverture; not that people at the time necessarily thought about it in those teleological terms. As Cott points out, though, states passed such laws not as part of any widespread and forward-looking ideological programme to empower women, but to protect households from financial uncertainty in what was becoming under capitalisation an increasingly unstable economy; family property demarked as belonging to the wife could not be requisitioned by her husband's creditors should he become bankrupt. Cott and others have demonstrated that, far from redefining women as fully independent citizens, Property Acts tended instead to assert the importance of protecting the traditional household, governed by the male breadwinner. See: Cott, 48-105, and Phillip Mallett, "Woman and Marriage in Victorian Society," in *Marriage and Property*, edited by Elizabeth M. Craik (Aberdeen: Aberdeen University Press, 1984), 159-189; Virginia Sapiro, "Women, Citizenship, and Nationality: Immigration and Naturalization Policies in the United States," in *Politics and Society* 13:1 (1984): 1-26; Michael Grossberg, *Governing the Hearth: Law and the Family in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 1-83; Christine Bolt, *The Women's Movements in the United States and Britain from the 1790s to the 1920s* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 159-189; Carole Shammas, "Anglo-American Household Government in Comparative Perspective," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52:1 (January 1995), 104-144; John Witte, Jr., *From Sacrament to Contract: Marriage, Religion, and Law in the Western Tradition* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 205, 207; Du Bro, 94.

aristocrat, to use the words of one journalist, rendered an American woman effectively, if not officially, “expatriated and denationalized.”<sup>26</sup>

Below, I discuss how the debate over title-heiress marriages became a focal point for emerging American anxieties over marriage, gender, class, race and immigration. I move on to explore how these connected issues play out in stories of Anglo-American courtships and marriages. I suggest that in the 1870s and 1880s especially, Henry James uses stories of international marriage to undermine male-centric notions of patriotism and to investigate alternative, female constructions of national identity. I then briefly analyse several popular texts published in the 1890s and early 1900s. These works explicitly critique international marriages and, mirroring the wider public discourse of the day, attack in particular title-heiress brides for their lack of patriotism. Nonetheless, they contrive ‘happy endings’ in which a couple brought together by mutual greed find themselves deeply in love and remain together. In this way, the stories keep alive that “fairytale” of the American woman who marries into English aristocracy. I then place Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) and *The Shuttle* (1907) in the context of the Anglo-American political rapprochement of the late nineteenth century, which was underpinned by theories about the racial kinship of Britain and America and the supposed superiority of the ‘Anglo-Saxon’ race, beliefs that infuse and motivate Burnett’s texts.<sup>27</sup> Finally, I consider three novels – Jack London’s *Adventure* (1911), Edgar Rice Burroughs’ *Tarzan of the Apes* (1912) and *The Return of Tarzan* (1913) – which use the further frontiers of Anglo-American imperialism – Pacific islands and Africa respectively –

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<sup>26</sup> Goldwin Smith, p.42.

<sup>27</sup> Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886; London: Penguin, 1994); Frances Hodgson Burnett, *The Shuttle* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1907).



to test and assert the abilities, morality, and mutual interests of white Britons and Americans.<sup>28</sup> Along the way, where they shed light on key texts, I make briefer mention of several stories of Euro-American (as opposed to Anglo-American) title-heiress marriages.

### **Love or a Coronet: Heiresses, Marriage, and American Patriotism**

American journalists offered several explanations for the post-bellum increase in title-heiress marriages. Many believed it simply an inevitability of growing contact between America and Europe's social elites. Continuing improvements in the speed and comfort of transatlantic steamships had facilitated greater leisure travel for those who could afford it. The 'grand tour' of Europe became the must-have holiday for wealthy American families, and more and more European aristocrats were exploring the cities, scenery and hunting grounds of the New World.<sup>29</sup> There were also increasing business connections between America and Europe. British financiers continued to invest in American enterprises, especially railroads. Thanks to new mass-production and distribution techniques, America was exporting to Europe a dramatically increasing number of manufactured goods. Several U.S. companies established offices and factories in the Old World. In Britain, there was talk of an

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<sup>28</sup> Jack London, *Adventure: A Novel* (1911; London: T. Nelson & Sons, undated); Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*, with an Introduction by John Taliaferro (1912; New York: The Modern Library, 2003); Edgar Rice Burroughs, *The Return of Tarzan* (1913; New York: Del Rey / Random House, 1990).

<sup>29</sup> For an account of American tourism in Europe, see: James Buzard, *The Beaten Track: European Tourism, Literature, and the Ways to Culture, 1800-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993). Information in the rest of this paragraph is taken from: Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1974), 191-204; Kees van der Pijl, *The Making of an Atlantic Ruling Class* (London: Verso, 1984; reprint, [www.theglobalsite.co.uk/atlanticrulingclass.2004](http://www.theglobalsite.co.uk/atlanticrulingclass.2004)), Chapter Two; Howard Temperley, *Britain and America Since Independence* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), 59-88.

“invasion” of American products. These business links necessitated transatlantic travel, and in turn generated further opportunities for young men from one side of the Atlantic to mingle with young women from the other. They also provided a motivation for intermarriage. In Europe aristocrats dominated politics and were still prominent in business, and more than one international marriage, it was thought, had been made for strategic reasons – so that an American business family could benefit from having influential in-laws in Europe, or so that a European family could extend its commercial interests in America. In *A Transplanted Rose*, the emotional bond between Rose and Lytton is mirrored by their economic interdependence – by the end, they are partners in the silver-mine established by Rose’s father.<sup>30</sup>

Special circumstances fostered the unequalled frequency of Anglo-American heiress marriages. Anglo-American political relations, although still uneasy after the Civil War, had been improved by the settlement in 1872 of American demands for reparation for the British building of Confederate warships and by the election in both countries of governments favourable to developing a transatlantic friendship.<sup>31</sup> Politically, the 1870s—1890s was a period of relative peace (although one punctuated by flashpoints over Atlantic fishing rights, Ireland, and the sovereignty of Central-

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<sup>30</sup> Anna Katharine Green’s 1878 genre-pioneering detective novel *The Leavenworth Case* also features a marriage between an American heiress and English nobleman in which business interests are key. Mary Leavenworth’s marriage to Henry Clavering, along with her sister Eleanore’s to the lawyer Mr. Raymond, promises to ensure the safe upkeep of the business interests of murdered business millionaire Mr. Leavenworth, the sisters’ uncle and guardian. These interests include trade links to China, the novel endorsing an Anglo-American alliance that can manage and profit from globalised commerce. Anna Katharine Green, *The Leavenworth Case* (1878; London: Milner and Company, undated).

<sup>31</sup> H.C. Allen, *Great Britain and the United States: A History of Anglo-American Relations (1783-1952)* (New York: St Martin’s Press Inc, 1955), 518-545; Charles S. Campbell, *From Revolution to Rapprochement: The United States and Great Britain, 1783-1900* (New York: John Wiley and Sons Inc., 1974), 111-173; David Dumbleby and David Reynolds, *An Ocean Apart: The Relationship Between Britain and America in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Random House, 1988), 28-32; Temperley, 59-88.

American states) that culminated in a full-scale rapprochement in 1895, to which I return below.

More significantly in terms of title-heiress marriages, in London the Prince of Wales invited into in his ultra-fashionable circle of friends many American women, his notorious fondness for whom was seemingly a legacy of his 1860 American tour.<sup>32</sup> Just as there was talk of an “invasion” of U.S. products, so there was talk of an “invasion” by American women of London’s highest social circles. Smalley was one of a number of writers, American and English, to contend that upper-class “American girls” outshone English women in attractiveness and wit, as well as perceived, if not actual, wealth, making them “the most formidable of competitors in the English marriage market.”<sup>33</sup>

Smalley was also not alone in arguing that upper-class English and European men were particularly appealing to American women because, less preoccupied with business than American men, they made more attentive husbands.<sup>34</sup> He, Sherwood, and others argued that American women found public life in Europe an attractive alternative to the domesticity forced upon them by American society, with its rigid insistence on ‘separate spheres.’ Unmarried American women were, famously, afforded greater freedoms than their transatlantic counterparts. Once married, though, positions were reversed: it was British and European women who supposedly enjoyed

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<sup>32</sup> MacColl and Wallace, 15-25; Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 21-24, 69-78, 178-183; Alex Zwerdling, *Improvised Europeans: American Literary Expatriates and the Siege of London* (New York: Basic Books, 1998), 142-143.

<sup>33</sup> George W. Smalley, “The American Girl in England: What Our English Friends Have Lately Been Saying About Her and Her English Husband,” *New York Tribune* 16 February 1889, reprinted in Smalley, *London Letters and Some Others* Volume II (London: Macmillan and Co., 1890), 131.

<sup>34</sup> Anon., “An Anglo-American Marriage,” *New York Times*, 30 July 1878, p.4; Gore, p.470.

greater scope for moving between public and private circles. American women sought out European husbands in order to enjoy the larger roles and responsibilities available to them in the Old World – to make decisions about household expenditure, interact with men as well as women, and comment on social and political matters.<sup>35</sup> “Naturally, one of the chief reasons why American women have so great a liking for European society is to be found in the fact of the far more important position that married ladies occupy in that society than they do with us,” commented *Lippincott’s*.<sup>36</sup>

By far the most common explanation offered by American newspapers and magazines, however, was, as noted, the “common exchange of money on one side and title on the other.” There was a degree of truth in this cliché. In Britain, certainly, as competition from imported foodstuffs plunged domestic agriculture into depression, major landowners suffered significant falls in income, forcing at least some land-rich but cash-poor aristocrats to turn to marriage with the daughters of wealthy industrialists and capitalists, both compatriot and American, as a means of securing income for their ancestral estates.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, the British system of primogeniture ensured a constant supply of portionless aristocratic younger sons pursuing financially beneficial matches to fund fashionable lifestyles. On the American side, too, the stereotype contained some veracity. From their research into the letters and diaries of titled American women, Maureen Montgomery and Richard W. Davis have been keen

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<sup>35</sup> Mrs. John Sherwood, “American Girls in Europe,” p.685

<sup>36</sup> Gore, p.470.

<sup>37</sup> On the ‘plight’ of the British aristocracy in the nineteenth century, see: David Cannadine, *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1990); K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation 1846-1886* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998); 1-30; Derrick Murphy et al, *Britain 1783-1918* (London: Collins, 2003), 284-301.

to point out that many heiress brides were in love with their aristocratic grooms, and that many grooms had no need of marrying for money. However, they also have unearthed evidence that numerous marriages were indeed motivated by the empty purses of the aristocratic husbands and by what *The Washington Post* called upper-class Americans' "continuing hankering after Old World titles."<sup>38</sup>

American newspapers were preoccupied with determining whether each new title-heiress marriage was a "love match" or "wholly and solely a business transaction."<sup>39</sup> Elizabeth Eliot notes, "The newspapers delighted in asking such questions as 'love or a coronet?'"<sup>40</sup> As eagerly as journalists described as "fairy tales" title-heiress marriages that seemed to involve genuine "mutual inclination," they condemned any marriage they suspected was motivated by money and ambition.<sup>41</sup> For many, transactional or "mercenary" marriages constituted further proof that America's wealthiest families were in effect attempting to establish themselves as a permanent hereditary aristocracy. In New York especially, there was perceived to be an unhealthy Europeanisation and aristocratisation of high society, of which the penchant of the city's rich for building chateau-style mansions on Fifth Avenue, decorated inside with European art and antiques, was just the most visible evidence. One might also note the establishment in the 1870s by jewellers Tiffany's of its own heraldry department to service increasing demand for coats-of-arms; the creation by Mrs. Astor of the famed "Four Hundred," the list of who did and did not rank in New York society; and the tactlessly timed and much-criticised \$370,000 fancy-dress ball thrown

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<sup>38</sup> Anon., "American Fools," p.2.

<sup>39</sup> Anon., "The Vultures of Paris," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 March 1890, p.16.

<sup>40</sup> Eliot, 36.

<sup>41</sup> Gore, p.466.

by the Bradley-Martin family during the social ‘season’ of 1897-98: in the midst of a particularly harsh winter of unemployment in New York, party guests spent up to \$10,000 each to costume themselves as European monarchs.<sup>42</sup>

Such events made clear the aristocratic fantasies and aspirations of the city’s *haute-monde*, and title-heiress marriages were treated as an extension of such desires: the rich buying themselves not only the trappings of aristocracy, but the titles themselves. Critics talked of a disease infiltrating America’s elite, diagnosed as “Anglo-mania” by one newspaper and named “chronic titleitis” by a prominent Illinois politician.<sup>43</sup> *The Independent* was one of numerous publications to announce itself scandalised by the whole spectacle. In an 1890 article, Goldwin Smith accuses the upper classes of reintroducing into U.S. society through title-heiress marriages a “regard for hereditary rank” that contravenes America’s founding principles – “the Jeffersonian sentiment,” under which “personal merit” rather than inherited status would form the “organizing force and ... instrument of local rule.”<sup>44</sup>

Like George Lippard fifty years earlier, Smith worries about the regression of America into a land of fixed social classes, the first sign of which is the acquisition by Americans of European titles through marriage. The emergence after the Civil War of a capitalist plutocracy was deemed by many bad enough, but newspapers could at least offer men like Carnegie and Rockefeller as examples of the fabled ‘American

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<sup>42</sup> See: Sean Dennis Cashman, *America in the Gilded Age: From the Death of Lincoln to the Rise of Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 47-85; Page Smith, *The Rise of Industrial America* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1984), 853-863; MacColl and Wallace, 266-267; Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 32-50; Montgomery, *Displaying Women*, 1-16.

<sup>43</sup> Anon., “An Anglo-American Marriage,” p.4; Congressman Whitelaw Reid Anon., quoted in Anon., “Congressman Anxious for “Our Dear Peeresses,” *New York World*, 21 June 1911, cited in Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 166.

<sup>44</sup> Goldwin Smith, p.10.

dream’ – heroic individualism in the land of opportunities. A plutocracy that wanted to close its doors to others and become an aristocracy, however, seemed a step too far. In his *History of the Great American Fortunes* (1907), social scientist Gustavus Myers argued that America’s plutocratic families deployed marriage with other wealthy and powerful families, including European ones, along with the establishment of business trusts and family foundations, as a means of protecting from taxation their (often ill-gotten) fortunes for future progeny.<sup>45</sup> These “new monied dynasties,” as Alan Trachtenberg calls them, constituted a “ruling stratum of inherited wealth, position, and power,” which seemed to Myers, Smith, and others little different from a hereditary aristocracy.<sup>46</sup> “The very rich are the royal families of America,” quipped the magazine *Town Topics* in 1895.<sup>47</sup>

Smith warns that title-heiress weddings and extravagant fancy-dress balls, both conspicuous displays of “European sybaritism and exclusiveness,” generate “envy” and “hatred and the lust of destruction” among the nation’s working classes, and are turning them towards “socialism and anarchism,” “increas[ing] the perils to society on this continent.” Smith and Myers shared what T.J. Jackson Lears calls their generation’s “nagging anxiety” that “European corruption might yet be imported; America might yet follow the example of earlier, failed republics” and be destroyed,

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<sup>45</sup> Gustavus Myers, *History of the Great American Fortunes* (1907; 1936; New York: The Modern Library, 1964).

<sup>46</sup> Trachtenberg, 86. See also: Henry Demarest Lloyd, *Wealth Against Commonwealth* (1894), edited with an Introduction by Thomas C. Cochran (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1963).

<sup>47</sup> Cited in MacColl & Wallace, 177. No further reference given.

torn apart from inside by the excesses of an unproductive and wasteful elite, and the lower-class violence such excesses would eventually, inevitably provoke.<sup>48</sup>

Smith also decries the “exodus” of money out of the United States that accompanied title-heiress marriages. The size of dowries paid by American families to their new European sons-in-law was from the start a common feature of reporting on title-heiress marriages. Around the turn of the century, it became an obsession among American journalists, perhaps triggered by the record settlement paid to the Duke of Marlborough by William Vanderbilt on his daughter Consuelo’s marriage to the English peer in 1895: thought at the time to be \$10 million, although probably closer to \$2.5 million.<sup>49</sup> Over the next decade several articles attempted to calculate the total amount of American dollars spent in dowry payments to European noblemen since the Civil War, usually putting the figure around \$200 million. Such was the concern about the economic drain on America of title-heiress marriages that when another Vanderbilt bride, Gertrude, married the son of an American railroad tycoon in 1896, the *New York Journal* reported with relief: “it will be an American wedding. There will be noblemen in this – no purchased titles. The millions all belong in America and they will all remain here.”<sup>50</sup> In 1908 a Chicago Representative even demanded that

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<sup>48</sup> T.J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (1981; Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1994): 27. As Maureen Montgomery and Jean Clark DuBro have already placed the title-heiress phenomenon in the context of American anxieties over its new conspicuous consumers, I will refrain here from looking at this issue in greater historical detail, although the analyses offered by both authors do inform my later examination of fictional texts. Both discuss various title-heiress tales in the context of Veblen’s famous discussion of America’s new leisure class in Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899; Mineola, N.Y.: Dover, 1994).

<sup>49</sup> The figure of \$10 million is reported in: Anon., “Millions for a Title,” *Atlanta Constitution*, 3 November 1895, p.30. In *Gilded Prostitution*, Montgomery discusses both the rumoured amount and the real figure (167-168).

<sup>50</sup> Cited in Eliot, 31-32.



title-heiress marriages be classified as a “trade,” taxed, and included in the national “balance of trade.”<sup>51</sup>

It was not only prenuptial settlements that exercised journalists but the even greater amounts spent subsequently on the upkeep of ancestral estates and general high-living. When newspapers detailed, for instance, the \$15 million lavished by the new Duchess of Marlborough on restoring her husband’s familial home, Blenheim Palace, it was sometimes with, Montgomery points out, “a tone of self-congratulation” that American dollars were now underpinning Old World culture.<sup>52</sup> More often, though, they questioned the morality of reinvigorating what had seemed only recently a moribund aristocracy, and of Americans subsidising the notoriously “degenerate” lifestyles of European aristocrats.<sup>53</sup>

The *Chicago Daily Tribune* in 1906 calculated that of “\$231,000,000 in dowries,” “Perhaps \$200,000,000 has been scattered among foreign noblemen who have mistreated and humiliated the women who trusted them.”<sup>54</sup> The alleged unhappiness of American title-heiress wives was a recurrent complaint of the U.S. press. As early as 1880, *Scribner’s* recounted a series of marriages made between a “young woman who desires rank” and a “nobleman in quest of money,” found overwhelming evidence of “conjugal unhappiness,” and concluded that “in nine cases out of ten,

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<sup>51</sup> Cited in: Anon., “American Women of Title Scorned,” *New York Times*, 29 January 1908, p.3.

<sup>52</sup> Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 77.

<sup>53</sup> The word “degenerate” is used in: Anon., “Titles and Money,” *Massachusetts Ploughman and New England Journal of Agriculture*, 23 July 1904, p.63.

<sup>54</sup> Anon., “Titled Marriages That Have Been Unhappy,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 October 1906, sec. D, p.8.

such unions are miserable.”<sup>55</sup> In 1908 *The Washington Post* reported, “the divorce court ... teems with the names of titled foreigners who married rich American girls.”<sup>56</sup> The *Tribune* claimed that of 174 known title-heiress marriages, “there are less than twenty [of which] reports of unhappiness have not come to America.”<sup>57</sup> So commonplace were such remarks that it became a counter-cliché of those more favourable to international marriages to point out, as Sherwood did in 1890, “Not ... all marriages of American women to titled foreigners are unhappy.”<sup>58</sup> The vast majority of commentators did, however, endorse “the seeming rule that marriages between moneyed Americans and titled Europeans cannot be happy.”<sup>59</sup> Some attributed this unhappiness to homesickness and cultural displacement on the part of the American bride. Others claimed the aristocratic in-laws of an American wife would always treat her as an outsider. Many more cited the supposed “moral deficiencies” of the titled husbands, devoting paragraphs of outraged prose to expounding a litany of allegations: physical and psychological cruelty, drunkenness, gambling, inveterate sexual infidelity.<sup>60</sup> It was the reiteration of an old story – American disapproval of European decadence – but it now carried added anxiety that Americans were in the midst of Old World hedonism, liable to become its dupes and victims or, worse, be seduced and transformed by it. Some articles depicted the typical international bride as an innocent casualty of her family’s social ambition. Those that figured the bride herself as the title-hunter implied that the woman’s

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<sup>55</sup> Anon., “Marrying Titles,” *Scribner’s Monthly* no.20:4, August 1880, p.622.

<sup>56</sup> Anon., “500 Married Titles,” *The Washington Post*, 28 January 1908, p.11.

<sup>57</sup> Anon., “Titled Marriages That Have Been Unhappy,” p.8.

<sup>58</sup> Mrs. John Sherwood, “American Girls in Europe,” p.685.

<sup>59</sup> Anon., “Titled Marriages That Have Been Unhappy,” p.8,

<sup>60</sup> See: Lucy H. Hooper, “Mrs. Hooper’s Letter: Some of the American Ladies Who Have Married Foreign Titles,” *The Washington Post*, 6 January 1884, p.3; Anon., “The Vultures of Paris,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 March 1890, p.16; Anon., “Titled Marriages That Have Been Unhappy,” p.8.

unhappiness was a measure of just desserts. “As a rule American girls do not make marriages of ambition. When they do they must take the consequences,” harrumphed the *New York Times*.<sup>61</sup>

All commentators agreed that any marriage made for reasons other than love would be beset by suffering and condemned to eventual breakdown. The *Chicago Daily Tribune* advised:

The American woman who marries a titled European must expect to go heart-hungry all her days. There is no more question of love in the home that owes its splendor to the wealth of the wife and the rank of the husband than there is cool springs and rushing streams in the Desert of Sahara.<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, in 1908 *The Washington Post* told readers:

Some ... have been love matches, and in these instances...the American wives have been happy. But these are the exceptions that prove the rule. Unhappiness, shame, and ignominy have come in most of the international marriages.<sup>63</sup>

By the 1870s, the bourgeois ideal of companionate marriage – instigated and maintained “‘til death do us part” by romantic love – had been fully embedded in the American psyche for several generations.<sup>64</sup> Newspapers could depend on their largely middle-class readership finding repellent the idea of marrying for any other purpose.

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<sup>61</sup> Anon., “Mixed Marriages,” p.6.

<sup>62</sup> Anon., “The Vultures of Paris,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 March 1890, p.16.

<sup>63</sup> Anon., “500 Married Titles,” *The Washington Post*, 28 January 1908, p.11.

<sup>64</sup> Karen Lystra, *Searching the Heart: Women, Men, and Romantic Love in Nineteenth-Century America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); Elizabeth Freeman, *The Wedding Complex: Forms of Belonging in Modern American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 1-45; Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005). See also: Ellen K. Rothman, *Hands and Hearts: A History of Courtship in America* (New York: Basic Books, 1984); Joseph Allen Boone, *Tradition Counter Tradition: Love and the Form of Fiction* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 1-30; Stephen Kern, *The Culture of Love: Victorians to Moderns* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1992; reprint, 1994), 315-371; Mary Evans, “‘Falling in Love with Love is Falling for Make Believe’: Ideologies of Romance in Post-Enlightenment Culture,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 15:3-4 (1998): 265-275; Cott, *Public Vows*, 1-156.

As the Progressive Era's zeal for moral reform took hold from the mid-1890s, journalists and preachers more and more frequently compared title-heiress marriages to prostitution, presumably hoping to shame their subjects by associating them with one of society's most disreputable activities. In 1901, English journalist William Stead coined one of the more famous nicknames of the international-marriage phenomenon: "Gilded prostitution."<sup>65</sup>

Title-heiress marriages apparently "arranged" by the couple's respective families came in for especial criticism for they breached both central ideals of companionate marriage: not only did they forsake love, but they made individual freedom of choice subservient to the demands of the wider family. Nancy Cott has noted that during the 1800s and early 1900s, "European immigrants [to the U.S.A.] ... when they came to write memoirs and fiction, often used the contrast between arranged marriage and the love match to stand for the difference between the Old World and the New."<sup>66</sup> In reporting title-heiress marriages, American journalists did much the same, accusing families involved in "arranged" marriages of reversion to "feudal" practices.<sup>67</sup> "Such marriages are un-American," the *New York Times* stated simply in 1906.<sup>68</sup>

The following year *Everybody's Magazine* pronounced, similarly, that loveless title-heiress marriages, "showed a shocking disregard for all that is most sacred in the

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<sup>65</sup> W.T. Stead, *The Americanisation of the World or, The Trend of the Twentieth Century* (London: Review of Reviews, 1901; reprint, 1902), 123.

<sup>66</sup> Cott, *Public Vows*, 151.

<sup>67</sup> Goldwin Smith, p.42.

<sup>68</sup> Anon., "Mixed Marriages," p.6.

American ideal.”<sup>69</sup> The article finds particularly offensive the reliance of title-heiress couples on income brought into the marriage by the wife, proclaiming: “The normal male citizen of the United States still regards the marriage of convenience with disgust. He works for his living and expects to support his wife. He despises the man who lives on his wife’s income.”<sup>70</sup>

As I now want to explore briefly: in a period in which discord over women’s role and rights in society intensified and in which the cultural and legal construction of marital relations was also being disputed, commentators increasingly took the opportunity of discussing title-heiress marriages to assert normative gender identities – the “normal male citizen of the United States” and normal female citizen. In doing so, they insisted a woman’s fulfilment of traditional duties as wife and mother was a matter of national interest and patriotic obligation, drawing in their arguments on the post-bellum surge of patriotic sentiment.

### **“A Woman’s Country is the Country Where Her Lover Lives”: Gendered Citizenship and Title-Heiress Marriages<sup>71</sup>**

In 1855 Congress passed a new Naturalization Act, under which, on marriage to a male American citizen, a foreign woman would automatically be granted U.S. citizenship without having to undergo the bureaucratic process of naturalisation. This offered significant advantages: as a citizen, one could inherit and transfer property,

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<sup>69</sup> George Barr Baker, “Dollars vs Pedigree: The Truth About International Marriages,” *Everybody’s Magazine* no.16:2, February 1907, p.167.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

<sup>71</sup> Citation: Sherwood, *A Transplanted Rose*, 259.

something from which non-citizens were barred, and one was immune from expatriation or deportation. However, on naturalisation, the foreign wife of a U.S. citizen would, in the eyes of the American law, without choice be divested of citizenship of her native country. The Naturalization Act belatedly brought citizenship into line with coverture, subsuming a married woman's official national identity into her husband's. It robbed such women of consensual citizenship, a right that in the aftermath of the Revolution and during the controversy over naval impressments in the lead-up to the War of 1812 the U.S. had proclaimed a fundamental human right. The new law, notably, did not grant American women the same capacity to endow foreign husbands with U.S. citizenship.

The Congressmen who passed the 1855 Act argued it was important for foreign women to feel themselves 'American' and to adopt 'American' values in place of their native country's. This was especially necessary, they contended, because it was women who were primarily responsible for the education of their children, and those children must be educated as 'good' Americans. In this way, the Act reinforced in the nation's consciousness and its official infrastructure motherhood as women's key social role.<sup>72</sup>

The Naturalization Act not only expressed an enduring attachment to traditional gender roles *within* marriage, but also reiterated mid-nineteenth-century Americans' fundamental belief in the importance of marriage to the wider national community.

Legal historian Matthew Lindsay argues that for most of the century politicians,

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<sup>72</sup> For accounts of the Act, see: Bredbenner 15-45; Cott, *Public Vows*, 133-134; Jacqueline Stevens, *Reproducing the State* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 135; Ann Marie Nicolosi: 1-21; Sapiro: 9.

judges, preachers, mainstream social scientists and the public in general all viewed marriage as “an intrinsically valuable institution,” necessary for the nation’s growth and stability.<sup>73</sup> The primary aim of the Act was to encourage and make it easier for immigrant men, necessary to meet the industrialising nation’s need for an expanding labour force, to bring their spouses with them to America. Policymakers reiterated the received wisdom that a man worked more productively and behaved more responsibly when he had a wife, and especially a wife and children, dependent upon him both for economic support and familial leadership. Having a family could deter a man – particularly, in policymakers’ minds, an otherwise ‘naturally’ unruly immigrant man – from indulging in anti-social activities: avoidance of employment, disobedience at work, criminality, drinking, and visiting prostitutes.

Ensuring the orderliness of young men was only one of marriage’s many significant public functions. Throughout the nineteenth century, policymakers co-opted marriage as a technology of social discipline, turning married men into the guardians of good order, as noted in my Introduction. Commentators and preachers offered further reasons for the importance of marriage, including: it was a safe and divinely sanctioned outlet for sexual passions, and it created stable familial units in which children could best be educated in their responsibilities as American citizens. In an 1887 judgment, the Supreme Court pronounced marriage “the foundation of the family and of society.”<sup>74</sup> One can find similar statements in numerous judgments by federal and state courts, sermons, advice books and articles published throughout the

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<sup>73</sup> Matthew J. Lindsay, “Reproducing a Fit Citizenry: Dependency, Eugenics, and the Law of Marriage in the United States, 1869-1920,” *Law and Social Inquiry* 23:3 (Summer 1998), 555.

<sup>74</sup> *Maynard v Hill*, 125 U.S. 190 at 211, 1887; cited in Brook Thomas, *American Literary Realism and the Failed Promise of Contract* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 63.

nineteenth century. In Tony Tanner's oft-cited phrase, in bourgeois societies such as the United States marriage is "the structure that maintains the Structure."<sup>75</sup>

In this context, one can see why anything in America during the 1800s that threatened traditional constructions of marriage was greeted with considerable anxiety and outrage, perhaps most notably towards the end of the century the liberalisation of divorce laws in certain states and the rapidly rising divorce rate, which almost trebled between 1870 and 1900.<sup>76</sup> Far from reordering gender relations, policymakers in fact framed new divorce laws in order to validate conventional notions of marriage, with partners only able to sue for divorce if their spouse transgressed traditional, gender-based marital roles – a disobedient wife, for instance, or a husband who did not provide economically for his family.<sup>77</sup> Nonetheless, such laws made marriage seem less than permanent and opened a space in which the rightness or wrongness of marital relations would by necessity come under scrutiny. In horror, conservatives attempted to stop the spread of divorce. Their fears were wide-ranging. Cott writes:

When anyone from ordinary concerned citizens to political conservatives or agitated ministers deplored the phenomenon of divorce, their imaginations might be seeing free love, polygamy, or a world in which husbands no longer controlled their wives, household dependents, and property.<sup>78</sup>

It is unsurprising, then, that when journalists, preachers and politicians came to talk about the conclusion in divorce of certain title-heiress marriages, they used the opportunity to assert the importance of forming unions likely to last, i.e. ones built on

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<sup>75</sup> Tony Tanner, *Adultery in the Novel: Contract and Transgression* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1979), 15.

<sup>76</sup> Cott, *Public Vows*, 107. See also Roderick Phillips, *Putting Asunder: A History of Divorce in Western Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 459-507.

<sup>77</sup> Cott, *Public Vows*, 48-55.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.



mutual love rather than more immediate, less enduring desires, such as material greed or bodily lust. They could not have the wider population following the much-publicised example of title-hunters and fortune-seekers; marriage-for-love must be protected.

In the years immediately following the Civil War, American life underwent a profound nationalisation – a phenomenon driven by industrialisation, perhaps symbolised most vividly by the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869, and met by the increasing intervention of federal government in the lives of individuals and running of businesses.<sup>79</sup> This nationalisation played a crucial role in conservatives’ defence of marriage. As Americans more and more perceived themselves to belong first and foremost to a nation, rather than as in previous generations to a town, state or region, so there grew the expectation that federal government could and often should impose nationalised laws. Marriage was one area in which central government took an increasing interest, often acting in response to the injunctions of campaigners, who, in Cott’s words, strove to impose a model of “intra-racial Christian monogamous marriage” on all sections of the nation.<sup>80</sup> Underpinning this model was the familiar wisdom that only a couple who were in love, of the same race, and willing to commit to lifelong monogamy could enjoy a successful marriage and produce virtuous, healthy American citizens. Campaigners’ particular targets included the millions of recently freed slaves, new immigrants, Mormons, and native Americans, all of whose pre-existing marital customs reformers

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<sup>79</sup> See: Trachtenberg, 59-60; Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the United States of America* (1985; London: Penguin, 1990), 356-417; McConnell, 102-119; O’Leary, 38-40.

<sup>80</sup> Cott, *Public Vows*, 104. Information in this paragraph is drawn from this work, especially 105-155.

believed needed to be brought in line with Protestant, American ideals of marriage. Mormon polygamy was outlawed, and black people who as slaves had been barred from marriage were encouraged to turn informal, non-monogamous couplings into monogamous, official marriages. Notably, earlier prohibitions on black people marrying whites were reinforced, the state validating contemporaneous scientific belief that the children of interracial unions were more prone to physical disability, stupidity, and madness.

In order to ensure that couples wanting to marry met these standards of intraracial Christian monogamy, campaigners successfully called for greater formal regulation of nuptial solemnisation. From the 1870s onwards, new state and federal statutes required couples to pass through an increasingly standardised wedding procedure, for which they needed the participation of witnesses and a certificated official, and which obliged them to register their marriage in state records. Courts, meanwhile, with greater and greater frequency refused to acknowledge the validity of informal and common-law marriages. Whereas before the Civil War, courts and policymakers had encouraged marriage relatively “indiscriminately,” as something “*prima facie* beneficial to society,” they now sought to do the opposite: to determine which marriages were good for society, and which bad, which should be permitted, and which not. Many courts continued to adhere to the earlier, ‘free-for-all’ conception of marriage. During the final decades of the nineteenth century and first of the twentieth, the two different versions of marriage co-existed and competed. By the early 1900s, however, the newer, more regulatory model had slowly and surely eased out the older ideal. This pleased campaigners concerned about the rising divorce rate;

if marriage was necessary for public stability, it was important to ensure that all marriages were likely to be harmonious, lasting and unlikely to end in divorce. Common-law marriage and, worse, its counterpart, self-divorce, must be eradicated and couples made to understand the importance of matrimony; “By adhering to the statutory provisions, parties are led to regard the contract as a sacred one, as one not lightly entered into,” concluded the judge in a Washington court case in 1892, “and are forcibly impressed with the idea that they are forming a relationship in which society has an interest, and to which the state is a party.”<sup>81</sup>

As Lindsay has persuasively demonstrated in a study that places post-bellum changes in marriage law in the context of the period’s burgeoning eugenics movement, the real target of nuptial reformers was the evermore multitudinous and increasingly multi-ethnic urban working class. The cycle of economic depressions and high unemployment that afflicted the nation from 1873 forwards made an unprecedented number of working-class families dependent on charity and federal aid. As each year passed, this more and more undeniably gave lie to the Jeffersonian ideal that the family unit could be relied upon to save the state the burden of maintaining women, children, the mentally ill, and physically sick. This was an increasingly industrialised and urbanised society, with the majority of the city-dwelling population reliant on wage labour and, in turn, forces of demand and supply now out of their control. The republican expectation that every family would be an independent, self-supporting entity, in charge of its own destiny, was becoming difficult to maintain. Journalists, sociologists, politicians and campaigners began to question the wisdom of

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<sup>81</sup> *In re McLaughlin’s Estate* (no further details given); cited in Lindsay, 562. Information in this paragraph and the next is drawn from Lindsay’s essay.

“indiscriminately” encouraging the working classes to marry and start families; they would only breed more dependents to drain the state’s resources.

As immigration levels rose dramatically from the 1870s onwards, commentators, campaigners and Congressmen were especially unsettled by the growing proportion of that working class that now consisted of Jews and Catholics from southern and eastern Europe.<sup>82</sup> Whereas in previous decades, immigrant ships predominantly came from western and northern Europe, by 1895 so-called ‘new immigrants’ constituted 57% of all incoming aliens, rising to 72% in the first decade of the 1900s.<sup>83</sup> In major cities there were now Russian, Polish, Italian and other single-immigrant-group ghettos – enclaves where native languages rather than English were the first, sometimes the only, language spoken, where the places of worship and shops looked unfamiliar, where ministers and lecturers spoke to audiences of foreign ideas in foreign tongues. These were places “whose alien character made the native American observer feel like an unwelcome intruder.”<sup>84</sup> The religious beliefs and cultural practices of these immigrant groups seemed at odds with ‘American’ values of political democracy, industriousness, civic obedience, self-restraint, and consensual romantic marriage. Many native-born Americans expressed their belief that ‘new’ immigrant groups would, as was their supposed wont, breed uncontrollably and an ever-increasing proportion of the U.S. citizenry would be composed of people who were, according to common wisdom, less productive, less skilled militarily, and more prone to civic

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<sup>82</sup> For an excellent account of racialist attitudes to immigration in America, see Matthew Frye Jacobson’s books, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998) and *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 59-97, 179-219. See also, Zwerdling, 41-60.

<sup>83</sup> Bredbenner, 114.

<sup>84</sup> Zwerdling, 45.

disruption. Eastern and southern Europeans, along with Chinese immigrants, were “roundly denounced as unfit citizens.”<sup>85</sup> Prevalent scientific thinking erroneously held that interbreeding between supposedly inferior racial groups, such as Jews, Russians, Italians and Slavs, and purportedly superior ones, such as people of northern-European origin, would result in the dilution of the physical strength, enterprising spirit, high moral values and intellectual capabilities of the ‘higher’ group – what one contemporary writer called “the degradation” of America’s “race existence.”<sup>86</sup> Just at the moment when, thanks to internal expansion and overseas imperialism, the United States had finally achieved the status of a world power, many white, Protestant Americans warned that once immigrants began to marry and have children, with each other and with native-born Americans, the progress of the nation would be halted by a weakening of its population. As Francesca Morgan notes, “Declining marriage and birth rates among native-born, educated, white women, when juxtaposed with immigrants’ large families seemed to threaten Anglo-Saxon governance of the United States and, therefore, civilization itself.”<sup>87</sup> There was what Alex Zwerdling calls an “Anglo-Saxon panic” around the turn of the century.<sup>88</sup> In 1894, prominent Bostonians formed the Immigration Restriction League and campaigned for a literacy test as a means of limiting immigration; many labour organisations, fearing white workers would lose their jobs to new arrivals, endorsed curbs on immigration; and innumerable books and essays were published with titles

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<sup>85</sup> Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 193.

<sup>86</sup> John Swinton, unreferenced citation in Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues*, 193.

<sup>87</sup> Morgan, 59.

<sup>88</sup> Zwerdling, 41.

such as *The Alien Invasion* (1902) and *The Immigrant Tide* (1909), all picturing “a country helpless to withstand the onslaught of hostile forces bent on its destruction.”<sup>89</sup>

These fears were responsible for the passage from the mid-1890s of a series of state and federal restrictions on eligibility for marriage. In 1909, the Washington state legislature implemented what Lindsay calls “one of the more comprehensive, though by no means exceptional sets of nuptial prohibitions,” banning from marriage, in the legislature’s words, any “common drunkard, habitual criminal, epileptic, imbecile, feeble-minded person, idiot or insane person, or person who has heretofore been afflicted with hereditary insanity, or who is afflicted with pulmonary tuberculosis in its advanced stages, or any contagious venereal disease.”<sup>90</sup> As alcoholism, criminality, physical illness and mental infirmity were all more likely to occur in areas of economic deprivation, such statutes were in effect aimed at limiting marriage in America’s poorest communities – urban slums, populated primarily by immigrants. By trying to limit marriages, conservatives in effect tried to limit procreation; this was an age in which most working-class couples lived with parents or rented accommodation, and (legislators assumed) neither parents nor landlords would allow unwed couples under their roofs to live, sleep, and make children. The aim of these conservatives was to keep hold over national destiny, to preserve the U.S.A. as an

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<sup>89</sup> Zwerdling, 46. For further information on contemporaneous U.S. anti-immigration sentiment, see: Roger Daniels, *Coming To America: A History of Immigration and Ethnicity in American Life* (New York: Harper Collins, 1990), 121-284; Mark Wyman, *Round-Trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880-1930* (Ithaca, N.Y. and London: Cornell University Press, 1993), 99-105; Daniel J. Tichenor, *Dividing Lines: The Politics of Immigration Control in America* (Princeton, N.J. and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2002), 87-149.

<sup>90</sup> Lindsay, 572; Washington state legislature (Wash. Comp. Stat. Ann. §8439) cited in Lindsay, 572.

‘Anglo-Saxon,’ Protestant nation – politically, culturally, and in terms of the biological composition of the population.

In a further effort to protect the American citizenry from interracial and inter-ethnic marriage, Congress in 1907 passed the aforementioned Expatriation Act, one section of which dictated that any American woman marrying a foreign man would be stripped of her American citizenship.<sup>91</sup> The new law deprived such women of the rights and privileges of citizenship, such as access to certain jobs (including teaching) and immunity from deportation. The Act reasserted the idea that a married couple shared a single legal identity – the husband’s.<sup>92</sup> The 1855 Naturalization Act had not commented on the status of American women marrying foreigners and between its passage and that of the 1907 Act, courts and federal government reached conflicting conclusions, sometimes drawing on the single-identity theory of matrimony to determine that on marriage to a foreigner an American woman automatically adopted his national identity and forfeited her own, and on other occasions deciding that expatriation required a separate act of renunciation of American citizenship, such as formally adopting the nationality of another country. Whatever the official uncertainty, there was already a prevalent cultural presumption that women derived national identity, informal if not formal, from their husbands. Even in *A Transplanted Rose*, a novel that elsewhere argues for independent rights for women in education and career-choice, Sherwood states: “a woman’s country is the country where her

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<sup>91</sup> See footnote 24 for references for this paragraph.

<sup>92</sup> As Jennifer Ngaire Heuer observes in her description of the French laws on which American marital-nationality legislation had since 1855 been modelled, it announced “the bond between husband and wife could be legally stronger than the bond between women and the state.” Jennifer Ngaire Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789-1830* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2005), 141.

lover lives” (259). Officially, the primary purpose of the marriage section of the 1907 Act was to tidy up administrative ambiguity over transnational marriage. However, as Bredbenner and Nicolosi have both shown, the debate around its passage clearly indicated its true intentions were to discourage native-born American women from marrying foreigners, and punishing those that did. Revealingly, when the Act came under review in 1912, a Congressman in favour of its renewal stated bluntly: “we do not want our girls to marry foreigners.”<sup>93</sup> There was little debate about the passage of the law, but enough for a consensus to emerge: if a woman loved her country, she would fall in love with one of her countrymen, and if she fell in love with a foreigner, she must not love her country.

In the decades between the 1855 Naturalization Act and the 1907 Expatriation Act, women’s-rights campaigners had gained considerable ground. As Cott notes:

Publicity about ... the spread of innovations on married women’s property and divorce, furthered the general awareness that the laws of matrimony were susceptible to alteration. Women reformers were in the halls of the Capitol demanding independent rights for wives.<sup>94</sup>

Coverture was (slowly) in decline, and it was not only in marriage law that gender relations were changing: there were more women in higher education and the workplace, and feminists were on their way to achieving full female suffrage, which they finally would in 1920. In this light, the 1907 Act seems strangely out of step with the trend towards independent citizenship for women. However, in the racialised context of immigration paranoia, it makes more sense. Indeed, the Act did not immediately elicit objection or even notable comment; it only later became a target

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<sup>93</sup> Congressman N.E. Kendell’s words are reported in U.S. House 1912 Committee on Foreign Affairs, *Women’s Expatriation on Marital Grounds, Review* 62<sup>nd</sup> Congress, 2<sup>nd</sup> Session, 17 April 1912; quoted in Nicolosi, 14.

<sup>94</sup> Cott, *Public Vows*, 105.



for women's-rights campaigners.<sup>95</sup> Not coincidentally, 1907 was the year immigration to the U.S. reached its numerical peak, with more than one-and-a-quarter million foreigners entering the country as prospective new citizens.<sup>96</sup>

The Expatriation Act provides another example of what Lindsay argues was not merely an expansion of state power into the realm of marriage, but a paradigm shift in the relationship between marriage and the American body politic. Lindsay contends that, after the Civil War, and especially from the 1890s onwards, as the nation's decision-makers and opinion-formers came to believe some types of marriages were undesirable, wedlock "became understood increasingly in terms of its procreative function" as "the biological source of the citizenry" and should be closely policed as such.<sup>97</sup> The 1907 Act was just one of a set of measures that were aimed at regulating the ethnic/racial composition of the U.S. population, including new quota-restrictions "that ranked and rejected immigrants based on their race or national origin."<sup>98</sup> More and more firm distinctions between who was 'fit' and 'unfit' to contribute children to the citizenry were drawn in legislation, scientific literature, reform campaigns and newspaper articles. In this ideological environment, there emerged the notion of what Lindsay calls 'patriotic parenthood.' Public figures called for every white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant woman to take on the responsibility of being "'the wise and fearless mother of many healthy children;'" if not, the nation would, Roosevelt prophesied,

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<sup>95</sup> Bredbenner, 65-79; Nicolosi, 9-16. I describe later legal challenges to the Act in my Epilogue.

<sup>96</sup> Bredbenner, 5. The exact figure was 1,285,349.

<sup>97</sup> Lindsay, 563.

<sup>98</sup> Bredbenner, 9.

“tremble on the brink of doom.”<sup>99</sup> It was the duty of ‘healthy’ – i.e. W.A.S.P. – individuals to procreate often and only with each other (within, of course, the official framework of monogamous marriage). “‘Fit’ procreation was constructed as an act of national service; ‘men could serve their nation by marrying young and supporting large families, while women bore the duty of mothering the race.’” Lindsay continues:

As professional eugenicists, politicians, social scientists, family reformers, and journalists came to view the hereditary quality of the American population as a crucial determinant of the country’s future, and thus as the primary object of state governance, patriotic motherhood was presented as an obligation for women who wished to remain dutiful to their nation.<sup>100</sup>

The debate over title-heiress marriages was shaped by and contributed to these movements. By 1907, newspaper reporting had shifted emphatically towards denouncing the marriages. The revelation the previous year that the Vanderbilt-Marlborough marriage, the most famous and scrutinised of all title-heiress unions, had disintegrated only reinforced opposition: both partners, it now became known, had been bullied by their ambitious families into the deeply unhappy marriage, and both had given up ‘true’ loves in order to do so. Consuelo Vanderbilt’s preference had been for an American suitor, the Duke of Marlborough’s for an Englishwoman.<sup>101</sup> In

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<sup>99</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “Race Decadence,” *Outlook*, 8 April 1911, reprinted in Andrea Tone ed., *Controlling Reproduction: An American History* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1997): 159-162; quoted in Morgan, 59. As Zwerdling notes (*Improvised Europeans*, 36-39), Roosevelt talked more of “peoples of European blood” or “English-speaking peoples” than the Anglo-Saxon race, and was more inclusive of groups such as Italians and Poles than many of his contemporaries in his conception of a superior white race. Theodore Roosevelt, “Biological Analogies in History” (1910) in Roosevelt, *Works* Volume 12, National Edition (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons), 1926; quoted in Zwerdling, 38. See also: Stuart Anderson, *Race and Rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American Relations, 1895-1904* (London: Associated University Press, 1981), 74-78.

<sup>100</sup> Lindsay, 567.

<sup>101</sup> See: MacColl and Wallace, 152-179; Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 173-179. Adeline R. Tintner, *Edith Wharton in Context: Essays on Intertextuality* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 148. The couple legally separated in 1907 but continued to live together until 1920, when the marriage was finally dissolved.

examining the story, it was easy for commentators to argue that marital happiness and stability could come only with marrying someone of one's own nationality. In her meticulous study of marital expatriation and naturalisation laws, Bredbenner argues that, although title-heiress unions formed only a fraction of all transnational marriages involving American women, the negative publicity around such prominent unions helped create the climate in which the marriage section of the Expatriation Act could be passed without dissension. Indeed, as the new Act came into force, journalists, preachers and politicians welcomed its introduction by repeating their denunciations of title-heiress marriages with increased vigour. President Roosevelt stated early in 1908 that were there a Constitutional means of doing so, he would simply make marriages between American women and foreign noblemen illegal.<sup>102</sup> Hostility towards title-heiress marriages no doubt grew as increased immigration inspired a newly powerful wariness of foreignness in general, but even in early reporting of the international marriage phenomenon, one can detect similar anxieties. In 1885 the *Chicago Daily Tribune* expressed concern that title-heiress marriages set an example of Europeanisation that "the minds of thousands might follow," at a time when "To properly control and assimilate the various elements which we are receiving all the time and at the same time to mold and maintain a distinct and true American character, should be the aim of all."<sup>103</sup> In 1880, *The Washington Post* talked of aristocratic degeneracy and the dangers of marriages involving "some fellow whose polluted blood,... diseased body and narrow soul are thus united to youth, beauty, innocence and wealth."<sup>104</sup> The newspaper's concern for the genetic effect of title-

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<sup>102</sup> O'Laughlin, p.18.

<sup>103</sup> Herbert Mayson, "American Girls Chasing After Foreign Titles," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 22 February 1885, p.14.

<sup>104</sup> Anon., "American Fools," p.2.

heiress marriages on America's upper class resonates with the emerging eugenicist conception of marriage as "the biological source of the citizenry."

The number of title-heiress marriages, however, continued to rise. For many commentators, this was evidence of the growing gulf in values between the upper class and the majority of the American population. Throughout the period between the Jerome-Churchill wedding and World War I, all parties involved in title-heiress marriages – bride, groom, and their families – were objects of criticism. From the mid-1890s onwards, however, American journalists, preachers, and politicians increasingly made heiress-brides the chief object of their ire. In 1897 a correspondent to *The Washington Post* complained of "the growing tendency of our rich girls to sell their birthright for title," making it clear throughout the piece where the author believed the blame lay for title-heiress marriages.<sup>105</sup> Perhaps emboldened by the Expatriation Act and its official punishment of American women who married foreigners, after 1907 participants in the title-heiress debate placed even greater emphasis than before on the marital and procreative responsibilities of young, wealthy American females. In a message to Congress in 1908, President Roosevelt pronounced:

... an obligation rests upon the American girl to do her part in adding to the general welfare and prosperity of the country, and this cannot be done by her marriage to a foreign nobleman, whose one idea is to get hold of her money and to use it either in defraying huge debts or to spend it in riotous living.<sup>106</sup>

During the final decades of the nineteenth century, and especially after the Centennial celebrations of 1876, Americans became evermore obsessed with demonstrating their

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<sup>105</sup> Washburn, p.7.

<sup>106</sup> Cited in O'Laughlin, p.18.

patriotism, and such rhetoric took advantage of increasing pressure on citizens to behave according to the definitions of patriotism offered by politicians and organisations such as the Grand Army of the Republic. Like citizenship, America's post-bellum patriotic culture was gendered, and hierarchically so. This was made visible during the Centennial Exposition, the Philadelphia world fair held in 1876 to celebrate one hundred years of independence and to "showcase for the world the young nation's vast material wealth and technological achievement."<sup>107</sup> A committee of Philadelphian women was tasked with raising funds for the Exposition, in exchange for which they would be allocated exhibition space within the event's main hall. However, having already raised more money than any other group, \$100,000, the Women's Committee was instructed by the main organisers to raise even more – so that a separate building could be constructed in which to house the women's planned exhibits and activities. The Director-General of the Centennial Committee gave as his reason for this request that all the berths in the main hall had been allotted to meet unexpectedly high demand for space from "foreign countries," including many monarchical nations.<sup>108</sup> American women, it seemed to the National Women's Suffrage Association, were considered less worthy than "foreign potentates and the myrmidons of monarchical institutions" to take centre-stage in this celebration of American democracy and progress.<sup>109</sup> Men, even undemocratic foreigners, came ahead of them.

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<sup>107</sup> Debra Ann MacComb, *Tales of Liberation, Strategies of Containment: Divorce and Womanhood in American Fiction, 1880-1920* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000), 70-71.

<sup>108</sup> Cited in Mrs. E.D. Gillespie, *A Book of Remembrance* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott, 1901): 311-312; re-cited in MacComb, 72.

<sup>109</sup> The words are Elizabeth Cady Stanton's, from Elizabeth Cady Stanton et al eds., *A History of Women's Suffrage* Volume 3 (Salem, New Hampshire: Ayer, 1969), 28; cited in MacComb, 73.

Organisations like the N.W.S.A. felt that women's crucial contributions to America's greatest moments, most recently the North's victory in the Civil War, were overlooked.<sup>110</sup> The war had challenged traditional gender roles. Although women were excluded from military service, many worked as cooks or nurses in or near the front lines, and some crossed enemy lines as spies. In the North especially, many more provided crucial functions on the home front, working in military hospitals, launching drives for supplies, and establishing soldiers' aid societies.<sup>111</sup> With their husbands away fighting, married women across the land stepped into the roles of breadwinner and head of family. In the war's immediate aftermath, women organised localised charitable groups that provided returning veterans with food and medical care. In doing so, they resumed their ideologically traditional function as nurturers; secondary citizens whose job was to support men who, in Nancy Cott's words, were "the citizens who mattered."<sup>112</sup> They also, though, proved their ability to form effective public organisations. They simultaneously confirmed and overstepped the distinction between the domestic and public spheres. This would become characteristic of women's involvement in patriotic culture over the coming decades.

The Grand Army of the Republic, a war-veterans' association and the largest and most influential of the male-membership patriotic organisations of the post-bellum decades, refused admission to women. In its membership criteria, literature, parades, and other productions, the G.A.R. configured service on the battlefield as the highest form of patriotism. It acknowledged the wartime contribution of women but refused

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<sup>110</sup> Background information on women's patriotic organisations in this and following paragraphs is drawn from O'Leary, 3-69; Morgan, 1-27.

<sup>111</sup> O'Leary, 72-73.

<sup>112</sup> Cott, *Public Vows*, 82.

to recognise them as equal partners in patriotism, casting women's activities as supporting and subordinate. Along with mainstream journalists and politicians, G.A.R. leaders contributed to a "national discourse [that] translated women's patriotic activism into idealist associations with nurturance that were far removed from their actual experience in the field."<sup>113</sup> G.A.R. rhetoric and practice reasserted the dependency of women, and it made their obedience as wives and effectiveness as mothers the vital tests of their patriotism. It is what Freeman calls "the cultural production of wifehood as the female form of patriotic loyalty."<sup>114</sup>

In 1883, however, with state and federal aid increasingly unable to meet the needs of tens of thousands of aging veterans, the Grand Army approached Massachusetts' local Women's Relief Corps and asked it to establish a nationwide organisation of women that could provide practical assistance to its members. Later that year, the Women's Relief Corps, the first national patriotic organisation of women, was founded.

Operating on a nationwide scale, the W.R.C. could exert national influence and move beyond localised and purely practical work. Within a year, it had turned Memorial Day from a patchily and diversely celebrated holiday into a national "holy day" of mourning for America's war dead.<sup>115</sup> The W.R.C. erected monuments to the Civil War's unknown casualties and its members prepared floral tributes for known veterans' graves. These ceremonies embodied the two public functions the W.R.C. assumed for itself: paying tribute to patriotic male sacrifice, and educating the public about the Civil War and America's other conflicts. Since the Revolution, similarly

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<sup>113</sup> O'Leary, 76.

<sup>114</sup> Freeman, 23.

<sup>115</sup> O'Leary, 103.

nurturing and educative roles had been assigned to women under the tenets of republican motherhood, an ideology based on women's supposedly innate capacity for maternal care, as well as their believed biological unsuitability for work outside the home. As Carroll Smith-Rosenberg notes, "Nineteenth-century American society provided but one socially respectable, nondeviant role for women – that of loving wife and mother."<sup>116</sup> In the division of civic labour, women's job was to support their husbands' patriotic endeavour, to educate sons in patriotic citizenship and, if need be, to sacrifice those husbands and sons for the national good. "Literature on child rearing, genteel women's magazines, children's books, all required of women an altruistic denial of their own ambition and a displacement of their wishes and abilities onto the men in their lives," Smith-Rosenberg continues.<sup>117</sup> Women's activities had, however, historically been located in the home. The W.R.C. extended domestic duties into the public sphere. O'Leary contends, "the W.R.C. invented rituals that reinforced traditional relations between men and women but also literally and ideologically inserted women into public life."<sup>118</sup> The W.R.C., which by 1890 had 100,000 members, "carefully avoided challenging the social and symbolic position of the nation's masculine citizen-soldiers" but it did argue that women's vocation as America's moral educators could best be served by securing a greater say in national politics.<sup>119</sup> The organisation eventually, and not without some internal dissension, formally aligned itself with the women suffrage movement during the early 1890s.<sup>120</sup> The W.R.C. became a powerful voice for women's rights, even if it argued for those rights on the grounds that it would enable women better to fulfil their historically

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<sup>116</sup> Smith-Rosenberg, 213.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>118</sup> O'Leary, 104.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 106.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 93-95.



limited civic functions. Other female-centred patriotic organisations, such as the Daughters of the Revolution (founded 1890), whose motto was “Home and Country,” took a more conservative stance, arguing that women must remain politically disinterested citizens in order to maintain their moral compass. The D.A.R. frowned upon women in the workplace, believing in the moral importance of women’s economic as well as political disinterestedness. Even more than the W.R.C., D.A.R. activities stressed domesticity – for instance, buying, restoring and maintaining the homes of deceased military and political leaders.<sup>121</sup> In part inspired by the activities of such organisations such, more and more women during became involved in charitable and social reform work, especially in the nation’s teeming, troubled cities.

As Smith-Rosenberg describes:

They moved into America’s corrupt and unjust cities not as self-conscious feminists but as ‘True Women.’ They were, they told husbands, politicians, and industrialists, the conscience and housekeepers of America. Their virtue constituted a national resource.<sup>122</sup>

In this climate, more intensely than ever before, wifhood and motherhood became imbued with the weight of patriotic responsibility.

Anxiety over the state of marriage, fears about immigration, the female-rights movement, patriotic culture and its definition of women’s roles: all these currents flowed through the debate over title-heiress marriages. Although written by a member of the public, the 1897 *Washington Post* reader’s letter cited above typifies negative press coverage of title-heiress marriages at the turn of the century. Its

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<sup>121</sup> O’Leary 79-81; Morgan, 42-54.

<sup>122</sup> Smith-Rosenberg, 173.

author, one Emma Washburn, complains of “the growing tendency of our rich girls to sell their birthright for title,” and continues:

Is there no pride in the girl of today? Does the glitter of her American father’s gold blind her to the perfections of the Creator’s noblest work – her own countryman, or does her jaundiced vision find only excellences in aliens.... The unwholesome longing for empty rank and the decided preference shown by our rich women for nobility of Europe, is an affront, not to say insult, to American men, and one feels inclined to ask, Is patriotism dying? No, not dying, but in a certain class already dead; for surely no patriotism lives in the heart of the woman who turns her back on her parents, her home, and her country for the honor of being called ‘your highness’ or ‘your grace.’ To all save these patriotism lives. Never fear for the republic.... No country can produce greater or more beautiful patriotism than is embodied in the Society of Colonial Wars and the Colonial Dames, the Sons and Daughters of the Revolution, and various others of like character.<sup>123</sup>

The impassioned inculcation of title-heiress brides above other participants in international marriages was becoming increasingly characteristic of discourse on the subject. Washburn argues that title-heiress brides fail to satisfy their primary duty: to support “her own countryman,” the male American citizen. There is, she argues, a symbolic snub to American men whenever an American woman marries a foreigner, especially a titled one. If the American male citizen was the embodiment of the nation, then the title-heiress bride rejected her nation in rejecting him. The 1907 Expatriation Act insisted that loyalty to the nation was incompatible with loyalty to a foreign husband, and it in effect punished women for choosing the latter. A woman’s very choice of husband was evermore a question not only of personal interest, but of public importance.

Washburn does not raise explicitly the issues of women’s rights or race and immigration. However, in making unfavourable comparisons between title-heiress

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<sup>123</sup> Washburn, p.7.

brides and female-patriot activists, her particular choice of patriotic organisations, the “Society of Colonial Wars and the Colonial Dames, the Sons and Daughters of the Revolution,” is telling. For a start, these groups were more conservative in terms of feminist politics than the Women’s Relief Corps. For Washburn, exemplary patriotism is best represented by these organisations’ renunciation of other women’s claims to fuller citizenship. The groups Washburn cites were among two-dozen patriotic organisations in existence by the mid-1890s whose entry criteria required members to be able to trace their family lineage back to the American Revolution or earlier. The W.R.C. actively opposed making heredity a qualification for patriotism and required of its members only “active loyalty to the union.”<sup>124</sup> In doing so, it was able to forge in racial and class terms a broader, although still not fully equalitarian, coalition than many other patriotic groups. By definition, membership of hereditary organisations such as the Colonial Dames and D.A.R. was limited to white, native-born Americans, predominantly of northern-European descent. Washburn uses her tirade against title-heiress marriages, then, as an opportunity to assert ‘true’ patriotism as the preserve of a racial elite and, by extension, to claim for that elite the right to determine national values.

Speaking of title-heiress marriages in Congress more than a decade later, Representative Charles McGavin would also draw a line between distant and mythologised national history and contemporary patriotism:

... I wondered what 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 the accident of birth, would say if from their

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<sup>124</sup> O’Leary, 78.

graves they could look back and see so many of the women of this country sacrificing their souls and honor upon the altar of snobbery and vice.<sup>125</sup>

McGavin's statement obliquely warns that title-heiress marriages might impede national progress, endowing women with an Eve-like capacity to undo the good work done by Adamic American males. His speech then moves to a more general comment on gender relations:

While I have engaged in some criticism of ... those [women] not satisfied with any other name than Countess Spaghetti or Macaroni – I want to say one word in tribute to those true American women who have spurned the wiles of earls, lords, and counts for the love of His Majesty, an American citizen.<sup>126</sup>

McGavin makes clear who in the United States is sovereign – the male “American citizen.” The American woman's role is to “love” the American man. McGavin projects onto title-heiress marriages a sexual competition for “the women of this country” between intrepid, virile American males and European rivals whose titular names, “Spaghetti or Macaroni,” and whose “wiles,” by comparison with the hardy and honest American “pioneers,” suggest something less than full “manhood.”

In 1908 Roosevelt also addressed Congress with his concerns about title-heiress marriages. He was reported by *The New York Times* to have “said that exactly as the first duty of a normal man is the duty of being the homemaker, so the first duty of a normal woman is to be the homekeeper,” and continued, “no other learning is as important for the average woman as the learning which will make her a good housewife and mother ... bearing and rearing the children.”<sup>127</sup> For Roosevelt, as for McGavin, title-heiress marriages offered an ideal opportunity to reiterate normative

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<sup>125</sup> Cited in Anon., “American Women of Title Scorned,” p.3.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> O'Laughlin, p.18.

gender roles, and to invoke the language of patriotic “duty” in support. That commentators increasingly directed focus on young American women involved in title-heiress marriages, and used the issue to make such generalised statements about female “duty,” suggests a growing anxiety about shifting gender relations in American society. When *Everybody’s Magazine* stated, “The normal male citizen of the United States still regards the marriage of convenience with disgust. He works for his living and expects to support his wife. He despises the man who lives on his wife’s income,” it was doing more than critiquing a handful of high-profile international marriages. It was trying to shut the lid on the Pandora’s Box that had been cracked open by women’s public roles during the Civil War and after, by industrialisation and women’s entry into the labour force, and by the movement for women’s rights. It was asserting the right of husbands to be sole providers, and the need for women to be dependent. For conservative pundits, title-heiress brides – using their economic power to ‘buy’ husbands, and then moving to Europe, where married women enjoyed greater freedom – embodied the wider threat to male social dominance.

By 1908 several American women who had married English peers had become involved not only in the women’s rights and social reform movements in Britain, but also in parliamentary politics, campaigning publicly for their husbands during general elections, and also making speeches on key issues in their own right. Nancy Astor, once a title-heiress bride, would in 1919 take over her late husband’s seat in the House of Commons, becoming Britain’s first female M.P.<sup>128</sup> The mainstream

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<sup>128</sup> See Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 212-216.

American press did report on the political activism of titled Americans, but such commentary took up few column inches compared to the thousands dedicated to describing the dresses, dinner parties and domestic grandeur of title-heiress brides; newspapers perhaps felt that political success gave credibility to the idea that American women were fully capable of contributing robustly and effectively to mainstream political discourse.

During 1908 Reverend Dr. R.S. McArthur and Reverend Samuel H. Woodrow were among several New York ministers whose speeches on title-heiress marriages were reported in the city's press. The marriages were "a reproach to noble manhood and true womanhood," said McArthur; "a stench in the nostrils of all right thinking men and women," according to Woodrow.<sup>129</sup> By the time these two men of the cloth added their voices to the clamour over title-heiress marriages, Americans had found numerous reasons to denounce international unions. From the outset, in the fiction produced around the subject, authors used title-heiress narratives to negotiate the very terms on which these denunciations were made, sometimes to confirm and sometimes to complicate such notions as patriotic "duty" and "noble manhood and true womanhood."

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<sup>129</sup> Cited in Anon., "Says Our Women Influence Europe: Rev. Dr. MacArthur Talks of Good and Bad Features of International Marriages," p.6; Anon., "Denounces Titled Matches," p.8.

### **“... Many a Yankee Maiden”: Henry James and International Marriage<sup>130</sup>**

Even before the Jerome-Churchill wedding in 1874, to some observers the wealthy, young American woman and the aristocrat who marries her for her cash were already apparent as discernible ‘types.’ In January 1873 *Godey’s* magazine warned of European “adventurers who lie in wait for American maidens” undertaking a “‘grand tour’” of the continent.<sup>131</sup> The article lists examples of English captains, French counts and Italian princes who, having successfully “ensnare[d] an heiress ... dazzled by the prospects of marrying a title,” have then exploited and mistreated their rich American wives. The article aims “to prevent by exposure the imposition of foreign noblemen who espouse American girls for their wealth.”

Only two months before the Jerome-Churchill nuptials, in February 1874, *Galaxy* magazine began serialisation of Henry James’s “Madame de Mauves,” a cautionary tale about just such an abusive marriage.<sup>132</sup> It features a “‘handsome young’” American man, Longmore, who seeks to rescue his “fair countrywoman” Euphemia de Mauves from her “miserable” marriage to Baron de Mauves, a “frivolous,” debauched, adulterous French aristocrat (180, 128, 146). The Baron married Euphemia for her money, and Euphemia had been deluded by a “romantic belief” in the virtue and good taste of aristocratic families (129). In the end, though, it is not Longmore’s intervention that saves Euphemia, but her own “invulnerable constancy”: her unwavering faithfulness to her marriage vows so shames the Baron that he

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<sup>130</sup> Citation: Henry James, “An International Episode” (1878), in James, *Major Stories and Essays*, edited by Leon Edel et al (New York: Library of America, 1984; reprint, 1999), 109.

<sup>131</sup> Anon., “Godey’s Arm-Chair,” *Godey’s Lady’s Book and Magazine* no.86:511, January 1873), p.90.

<sup>132</sup> Henry James, “Madame de Mauves” (1874), in James, *Tales, 1873-1875*, vol. 3 of *The Complete Tales*, edited with an introduction by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1962), 123-210.

eventually kills himself (199). Euphemia derives her fortitude from her mother-in-law, who advises her to be “‘Yourself ... in spite of everything,— bad precepts, bad examples, bad usage even’” (140-141). For all Longmore’s self-aggrandising and patriotic talk of the moral superiority of American men over “‘unclean’” Frenchmen, and the importance of American women marrying men of their “‘own faith and race and spiritual substance,’” he ultimately does nothing to help Euphemia (127, 171). It is the “‘common idiom’” Euphemia and her mother-in-law share as ill-treated married women, rather than the national bond that Longmore and Euphemia share as Americans, that provides succour and strength (128). Euphemia practices a form of “‘true womanhood,’” not so much from patriotic “‘duty,’” but from female solidarity and as a survival mechanism. Longmore, meanwhile, is demonstrated to be far from an ideal of “‘noble manhood.’”

With the baron’s suicide “‘Madame de Mauves’” seems at first glance to exact a satisfying revenge on those “‘adventurers who lie in wait for American maidens;” the story’s original American readers apparently interpreted James’s intention as a patriotic, retaliatory one.<sup>133</sup> However, while they, like Longmore, may think of Euphemia’s life in national and nationalistic terms, Euphemia herself is dubious about the relevance for a woman of such definitions. When Longmore enquires why she has remained in France despite her unhappy marriage, she tells him:

‘My imagination perhaps – I had a little when I was younger – helped me to think I should find happiness here. And after all, for a woman, what does it signify? This is not America, perhaps, about me, but it’s quite as little France. France is out there, beyond the garden, in the town, in the forest; but here, close about me, in my room and ... in my

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<sup>133</sup> Leon Edel, “Introduction: 1873-1875,” in James, *Tales, 1873-1875*, 9.



mind, it's a nameless country of my own. It's not her country ... that makes a woman happy or unhappy'" (146).

It is worth noting here that America's 1855 Naturalization Act was modelled on French and English laws.<sup>134</sup> Whatever other differences there may have been between nineteenth-century Europe and America, both continents enforced woman's dependent citizenship. Euphemia's statement seems to express James's awareness that in America just as much as in France, the relationship between women and the nation is different from that of men and the nation. Whereas a man's country might make him "happy or unhappy," because he has a direct relationship with it, a woman's happiness is instead conditional on her husband. National differences mean less to Euphemia than to Longmore – "for a woman, what does it signify?" – because, whether in America or France, she will be confined to private spaces, her "room" and her "mind." Once married, much of her experience of the wider world – "beyond the garden ... the town ... the forest" – will be mediated through her husband. This is not to say that national characteristics are meaningless to Euphemia. After all, she originally conditioned herself to fall in love with a French nobleman because she "thought Americans were vulgar" (128). Euphemia comes to believe, though, that for a woman gender more fundamentally than nationality defines her experience of life and construction of selfhood.

In the decade following "Madame de Mauves," as debate on both sides of the Atlantic about title-heiress marriages escalated, James became, as one reviewer named him,

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<sup>134</sup> Sapiro, 6. For more on France's Napoleonic Code and its implications for marital citizenship, see Heuer, 121-191.

the “Homer” of the subject.<sup>135</sup> A young writer, keen to establish his literary and public persona both in his native America and in Europe, where he now lived, as the great chronicler of the transatlantic *haute-monde* and the expatriate experience, title-heiress marriages were, Alex Zwerdling notes, “a godsend” for James.”<sup>136</sup> He could use international-marriage narratives as a means of comparing national types; indeed, reviewers frequently received his early works as if they were “scientific studies of national customs.”<sup>137</sup> He could also use them to express his own, well-documented opinion of marriage as an institution antithetical to personal freedom and self-expression; writing specifically about much-maligned title-heiress marriages, James found an audience receptive to his scepticism, and he sneaked in under the cover of such narratives more widely applicable criticisms of matrimony.<sup>138</sup>

By 1884, James had written so often of international marriages that, concerned he may become typecast, he decided to leave it alone, not returning for more than fifteen years with “Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie” (1900).<sup>139</sup> That first decade, however, was enough for James to help shape media discourse on title-heiress marriages. His name and those of his early characters peppered newspaper discussions over the next

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<sup>135</sup> Morton Fullerton, “The Art of Henry James,” *Quarterly Review* no.212, 1910, p.398; quoted in Zwerdling, 171.

<sup>136</sup> Zwerdling, 172.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 144.

<sup>138</sup> For debate of James’s opinions on marriage, see: Joyce W. Warren, *The American Narcissus: Individualism and Women in Nineteenth-Century American Fiction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1984), 231-252; Joseph Allen Boone, “Modernist Maneuverings in the Marriage Plot: Breaking Ideologies of Gender and Genre in James’s *The Golden Bowl*,” in *PMLA* 101:3 (May, 1986): 374-388 (“the social fiction of connubial bliss against which James was to rebel;” 376); Habegger; Nancy Bentley, *The Ethnography of Manners: Hawthorne, James, Wharton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 114-159; Brook Thomas, *American Literary Realism*, 64-87 and 280-297; Zwerdling, 168-181 (James’s “uncontrolled hostility to matrimony;” 170); Tessa Hadley, *Henry James and the Imagination of Pleasure* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 23-39; Leland S. Person, *Henry James and the Suspense of Masculinity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2003).

<sup>139</sup> Henry James, “Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie” (1900), in vol. 11 of *The Complete Tales*, edited with an introduction by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1964), 77-92.

thirty years; Daisy Miller was regularly offered as an example of the dangers of wealthy “American girls” freewheeling through Europe, even though she herself has no interest in “catching a count.”<sup>140</sup>

In the 1870s and 1880s, James wrote several different permutations of the title-heiress marriage theme. One imagines him as a scientist in a literary laboratory, taking the fundamental formulaic compound of international marriages – impoverished nobleman, American heiress, socially ambitious mother – and seeing what happens when he adds, removes or modifies the essential elements. There is not space here to write fully about each of James’s experiments, but I hope to show how he used title-heiress marriages, and variations on them, as a means of interrogating relationships between women, men, marriage, and the nation-state.

In *The American*, a novel serialised 1876—77, James explores the apparent difference between expectations of marriage in America and in Europe, a theme dear to journalists writing of international unions.<sup>141</sup> The narrative voice and characters within the text insist on a polar opposition between American marital ideals of individual consent and the “old traditions” of European arranged marriages (209). However, James sets up this binary between New World and Old in order only to warn us not to believe too firmly in it. Mr. and Mrs. Tristram, American expatriates in Paris, tell the novel’s central character, Christopher Newman, that it is not only in

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<sup>140</sup> Henry James, “Daisy Miller” (1878) in James, *Major Stories and Essays*, edited by Leon Edel et al (New York: Library of America, 1984; reprint, 1999), 50. Indeed, it is actually a measure of just how extremely unconventional Daisy is that she eschews social climbing and chooses to spend time in Rome with an Italian “who hasn’t a title to offer”; Daisy’s Europeanised American friend Winterbourne distances himself from her, and fails to help her, because he mistakes her democratic attitude to social intercourse for sexual promiscuity.

<sup>141</sup> Henry James, *The American*, edited with an Introduction by William Spengemann (1877; New York: Penguin, 1981 rep. 1986).

Europe that women are coerced by their families into marriage: “‘Helpless women, all over the world, have a hard time of it’ ... ‘A great deal of that kind goes on in New York.... Girls are bullied or coaxed or bribed, or all three, into marrying nasty fellows’” (121). “‘I don’t believe that, in America, girls are ever subjected to compulsion,’” Newman retorts with, we are reminded, uncharacteristic and greater-than-rational patriotism (122). The Tristrams affectionately accuse him of being “‘the voice of the spread eagle’” and the issue, raised so briefly, is then dropped (122).

Newman’s defence of America is an immature, mildly ridiculous, knee-jerk reaction – “‘he finally broke out and swore that they [the United States] were the greatest country in the world, and they could put all Europe in their breeches’” (65). We should, James seems to hint, distrust Newman’s attitude to marriage for it originates not in any genuine set of values about human relations, but in crude ethnological stereotyping and childish value judgments, under which America is good, and Europe bad. He nonetheless adopts these overly simplistic terms as those on which he conceives of his subsequent dealings with Claire de Bellegarde, the object of his affections, and her aristocratic family, who aim to force Claire to marry a European nobleman rather than a “‘Western barbarian’”; Newman imagines this as an encounter between New World freedom, consensual marriage and morality, and Old World obligation, feudal marriage and immorality (68). Committed to such black-and-white perceptions, Newman is unable to recognise that even in America marriage does not make a woman “‘perfectly free,’” as he claims (171-172). Newman, though, who James constructs as a representative American man (“‘a powerful specimen of the American’” [34]), himself betrays the truth – that, under coverture, marriage for a woman entails

the surrender of self-identity. Newman sees Claire not in individual terms, but as “a woman made for him and motherhood to his children” who he implores to “‘give yourself up to me’” (359, 242). She will “‘give up’” her self-identity and right to self-determination as much in marriage to Newman as she has in obedience to her family. This goes much of the way to explaining why, to Newman’s bafflement, Claire becomes a nun rather than marry him.

In not marrying Claire to Newman, James wilfully eschewed a conventional, patriotic and ‘happy’ ending for *The American*. The novel first appeared as a serial in *The Atlantic Monthly* and it was this ‘happy’ ending that the magazine’s American readers, James’s friend W.D. Howells included, called for as month by month the narrative neared its conclusion.<sup>142</sup> In rejecting their injunctions, I suggest, James pointedly refuses to condone Newman’s – America’s – construction of marriage; the novel’s criticism of Old World morals is not an automatic endorsement of New World attitudes. James draws our attention to a certain dubiousness about both patriotism and about matrimony. Patriotism, the novel suggests, blinds Americans like Newman to inequalities in matrimony; so pleased are such Americans that they practice consensual, companionate marriage, and so superior do they feel to Europeans who do not, that they are blinded to the erosion of identity that even in America the institution imposes on women.

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<sup>142</sup> Zwerdling, 162. When James came to write a stage version of *The American* in 1890, he replaced the novel’s ending with one in which Claire “rather than taking the veil, melts into Newman’s arms with the words, ‘You’ve done it – you’ve brought me back ...,’” Zwerdling, 188. (Citation: Henry James, *The American* (1890) in James, *Complete Plays*, ed. Leon Edel (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 238.

If *The American* was interpreted by some as unpatriotic, American readers did not necessarily hold it against James when they came to evaluate his other tales of transatlantic marriage. Sherwood in *A Transplanted Rose*, published in 1882, has one character, Mr. Amberley, say of the “fashion” for title-heiress marriages: “I like Henry James, Jr.’s brutality to all young Englishmen; he makes them desperately in love with American girls, and the American girls give them the mitten with such admirable and improbable patriotism” (99). This comment most obviously refers to “An International Episode” (1878).<sup>143</sup> Leon Edel has suggested that James’s tale of the intellectual, young Bostonian Bessie Alden, who turns down the marriage proposal of the “agreeable” but unintelligent Englishman Lord Lambeth (90), was written with something approaching patriotic intent: to avenge English readers who “laughed too loudly” at *Daisy Miller*.<sup>144</sup> To those who interpreted Daisy’s obliviousness to social convention as ignorant and uncouth rather than modern and liberated, James aimed his depiction of Lambeth and his travelling companion, Percy Beaumont, who are comically unprepared for and confused by “the general brightness, newness, juvenility, both of people and things” in America (61). A more recent critic, Adeline Tintner, has called “An International Episode” a “specifically Centennial story.”<sup>145</sup> However, the year in which the story is set, – “Four years ago – in 1874,” as the narrator tells us the its opening words – is not quite Centennial and, likewise, nor is the story itself quite as unequivocally patriotic as Mr. Amberley, Edel

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<sup>143</sup> It may also refer to the earlier “Longstaff’s Marriage” (1876). Although this is not a title-heiress tale, the American Diana rejects – at least at first – the advances of the “English gentleman” Longstaff. Henry James, “Longstaff’s Marriage,” in *Tales, 1876-1882*, vol. 4 of *The Complete Tales*, edited by Leon Edel (1876; London: Rupert Hart Davis, 1962), 213.

<sup>144</sup> Leon Edel, “Introduction: 1876-1882,” in James, *Tales, 1876-1882*, 10.

<sup>145</sup> Adeline Tintner, “The Centennial of 1876 and *The Portrait of the Lady*,” *Markham Review* 10 (1980-81): 28, cited in MacComb, 74.

or Tintner suggest (61). Under the guise of a story of English bewilderment in the face of American self-assertion, James hints at deficiencies in U.S. society.

“An International Episode” depicts an ever-closer Anglo-American relationship, England and the U.S.A. being drawn together by business and leisure travel. Beaumont is in New York on business – a lawyer whose clients “think of bringing a suit” against The Tennessee Central railway company (69). His aristocratically under-employed friend Lambeth has accompanied him “for the lark” (69). They carry a letter of introduction to Mr. Westgate, an energetic and efficient American businessman who quickly reassures Beaumont he can “Leave the Tennessee Central” in his capable hands (69). At a time when the shift in global power from the Old World to the New was becoming visible, Westgate represents an America increasingly taking care of transatlantic business on behalf of both Britain and the U.S. He sends Percy and Lambeth to his beachside house in Newport to escape the New York heat, and where, he promises, his notoriously pretty wife and his wife’s sister, Bessie, will look after them.

Lambeth soon takes an interest in Bessie, who not only is even “prettier” than her sister, but also is “highly educated”: “She has studied immensely and read everything; she is what they call in Boston ‘thoughtful’” (81, 89). Bessie is fascinated and impressed by England; she reads English novels and “everything about English life – even poor books. I am so curious about it” (87). She has, however, never visited England, although “It’s the dream of my life!” to do so, and Lambeth is the first Englishman with whom she has ever talked (87). Bessie asks

about Lambeth's family and its castle, his rank and father's seat in Parliament. "I should think it would be very grand," she tells the young lord, "to possess simply by an accident of birth the right to make laws for a great nation," but Lambeth is jovially dismissive of his "great privilege" – "The less one thinks of it the better" – and he quickly gets "bored" of talking about Parliament and the "tenantry" on his estates (94). He is, nonetheless, "far gone" in his attraction to Bessie (96). Beaumont, meanwhile, has been tasked by Lambeth's mother, the Duchess of Bayswater, to protect her son from "clever" "American girls" with title-hunting intentions (74). Beaumont writes about Bessie to the Duchess, who promptly recalls Lambeth home under pretence of a family illness.

The second half of "An International Episode" recounts Bessie and Mrs. Westgate's visit to England the following Spring. Bessie, perhaps having read her Irving, and "very fond of the poets and historians, of the picturesque, of the past, of retrospect, of mementoes and reverberations of greatness," is immediately enraptured by the "strangeness and familiarity" of England (97). She and Mrs. Westgate meet up again with Beaumont and Lambeth. Bessie is evasive when Mrs. Westgate asks if she intends to marry the lord, but she seems tempted: "He would be an unconscious part of the antiquity, the impressiveness, the picturesqueness of England; and poor Bessie Alden, like many a Yankee maiden, was terribly at the mercy of picturesqueness" (109). Bessie and Mrs. Westgate secure a presentation at Queen Victoria's court, that great desire of all socially ambitious Americans visiting Europe. They are accompanied by Lambeth dressed in a "gorgeous uniform." Afterwards, Bessie seems more than ever on the verge of succumbing to Lambeth: "her imagination was excited



and gratified by the sight of a handsome young man endowed with such large opportunities ... for setting an example, for exerting an influence ...” (121). However, on an earlier visit to the Tower of London, Bessie has started to worry about Lambeth’s “disappointing” ignorance of and indifference to the English history she so cherishes (118). Now, even after her presentation at court, “Bessie Alden’s silhouette refused to coincide with his lordship’s image.... [S]he felt acutely that if Lord Lambeth’s position was heroic, there was but little of the hero in the young man himself” (121). Experiencing the arrogance of Lambeth’s fellow aristocrats, she even starts to question the implications of Lambeth’s position, arguing with him about Britain’s rigidly demarcated class system: “you have a lovely country,” she tells him, “but your precedence is horrid” (124). Eventually, Lambeth does propose marriage, and Bessie turns him down. Mrs. Westgate frets that the snobbish Duchess will think she has defeated American interlopers, but Bessie “seemed to regret nothing” – these, the final words of the story (135).

“An International Episode” certainly reads like a patriotic tale. Like Euphemia de Mauves, Bessie tries to fit the first aristocrat she meets into the “silhouette” of nobility she has formed in her imagination, but, unlike Euphemia, Bessie is not to be seduced by the romance of aristocracy. She cannot delude herself that Lambeth lives up to her ideal of *noblesse oblige* and, once she experiences the aristocracy first hand, becomes disillusioned. She loves the “opportunities” for useful and progressive social leadership that hereditary position brings, but sees those “opportunities” wasted by those who actually inherit the power. In this sense, one might read “An International Episode” as a satire of *Queechy* and the dime novels that followed it; James reveals

young English lords to fall comically short of the image of the heroic, socially responsible aristocrat peddled by such stories.<sup>146</sup>

However, once again, James's critique of the Old World is not necessarily an automatic endorsement of American values. For a start, James uses the story to satirise gently the separation of the sexes in American society.<sup>147</sup> When Lambeth and Beaumont first arrive in New York and seek out Mr. Westgate at his up-town house, they are surprised to be told by a servant that he is in office "down town" and will be gone until evening (66). The absence from Newport of Mr. Westgate, perpetually preoccupied with business, becomes a running joke during the first half of the story. "The gentlemen in America work too much.... I don't like it. One never sees them," says Bessie, while Mrs. Westgate opines, "the universal passionate surrender of the men to business-questions and business-questions only, as if they were the all in life, would have to be stemmed" (82; see footnote).<sup>148</sup> Mr. Westgate is still tied to his office when Bessie and Mrs. Westgate travel to Europe. One result of this separation of male work and female society in the story is that it allows visiting European men, untaxed by "business-questions," unchallenged access to American women. Percy, it seems, is enjoying "a very good time with Mrs. Westgate, and that under the pretext of meeting for the purpose of animated discussion, they were indulging in practices that imparted a shade of hypocrisy to the lady's regret for her husband's absence" (95). James's point, coyly and playfully made, is that the almost complete separation

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<sup>146</sup> In making this observation, James was allying himself not only with an American tradition of attacking the English aristocracy, but an English one too – Dickens, Thackerary, Disraeli. I am grateful to my supervisor, Dr. Christopher Gair, for this observation.

<sup>147</sup> Habegger, MacComb, 53-120; Person, all deal at length with James's writing of gender and his ongoing challenge to the traditional separation of the sexes.

<sup>148</sup> The second citation in this sentence is taken from a different version of the story, as cited in MacComb, 75: "An International Episode," in *The New York Henry James* Volume 14 (Fairfield, New Jersey: Augustus Kelley, 1976), 305.

of men and women practiced in an increasingly business-oriented American society (a point Edith Wharton would later expand upon) undermines and makes a nonsense of marriage. In *The American*, it is perhaps Newman's lifetime spent in all-male environments – the army, the workplace – that makes him so uncomprehending of Claire de Bellegarde's needs.

The social separation of men and women was replicated in the Philadelphia Centennial Exposition, an event in which James took particular interest.<sup>149</sup> If the Exposition placed men at the centre and women at the edges of patriotic endeavour, however, “An International Episode” rather reverses this ordering, focusing on the patriotism of American women, and leaving American men, Mr. Westgate in particular, in the margins. The story makes several references to patriotism. The opening paragraph sees Lambeth and Beaumont travel by carriage through New York's Union Square, “in front of the monument to Washington – in the very shadow, indeed, projected by the image of the *pater patriæ*” (61). Later, Mrs. Westgate tells Lambeth that ““The American flag has quite gone out of fashion; it's very carefully folded up, like an old tablecloth,”” while Bessie and Lambeth share a brief discussion about English patriotism, which ends with Lambeth stating, ““patriotism is everything”” (81,110). These references keep ideas of patriotism in our consciousnesses as we read the story. The narrative may take place in the “shadow” of patriarchal patriotism, but the reference to Washington seems to be included only to underscore the absence of patriotism in the America of 1874, when the story is set. If we are to conclude anything about pre-Centennial patriotism from the tale, it is that

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<sup>149</sup> MacComb, 70-74.

there is some connection between American men's preoccupation with business and the lack of American patriotism – Mrs. Westgate's description of the Stars and Stripes being folded-up comes just a page before Bessie's lamentation that "The gentlemen in America work too much." It is left to these women to continue Washington's fight against the British, and if the story begins with the monumental 'father of the nation,' it ends symmetrically, with Bessie Alden's declaration of American independence, a young woman having taken the place of the great man. For Mary Sherwood, the appeal of James's story was perhaps that when Bessie gives "the mitten" to Lambeth's proposal, it seems simultaneously an assertion of American mental and cultural freedom from England, and female independence from men and marriage. Mr. Amberley finds this "'admirable'" but also "'improbable;'" improbable because, after all, by the early 1880s more and more young American women were marrying titled Englishmen.

By the time James wrote "An International Episode," in 1878, the Centenary and its various celebrations, of which the Philadelphia Exposition was the largest and most expensive, had reinvigorated American patriotism; it had unfolded the flag. So why, if James wanted to write a patriotic tale, as Edel and Tintner suggest, so conspicuously set it in 1874, before the Centenary? I suspect James was writing in protest at the social alienation of men and women that was embodied in microcosm in the allocation of space at the Exposition. He sets his story in a moment before the visible onset of patriotic culture, when (imaginatively, at least) there is still the opportunity to shape its contours and content, and by writing it, he attempts to bring women into the centre of patriotic discourse.

This perhaps speaks to the considerable discontent James felt that American society placed far greater emphasis on achieving economic and technological progress than it did on cultivating artistic and cultural achievement, which was for him the mark of a truly civilised society.<sup>150</sup> The Exposition, with its focus on manufacturing and material wealth, confirmed America's perceived preoccupation with industry over art, bodies over minds. Bessie, who reads copiously, whose "imagination" James mentions frequently, and who in London "especially prized the privilege of meeting certain celebrated persons – authors and artists, philosophers and statesmen," represents the very qualities James felt were lacking from this American national identity (119). Certainly, James worried that Americans had come to regard industrial growth, financial success, and technological innovation as the height of male public achievement, relegating art and literature to secondary concerns, pursued only by women and over-feminised men. The year after "An International Episode," James published *Hawthorne*, with its long, infamous complaint about "the absent things in American life":

No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles, nor manors, nor old country-houses, nor parsonages, nor thatched cottages nor ivied ruins; no cathedrals, nor abbeys, nor little Norman churches; no great Universities nor public schools – no Oxford, nor Eton, nor Harrow; no literature, no novels, no

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<sup>150</sup> For relevant discussions of James's treatment of the themes considered in this paragraph, see: Kelly Cannon, *Henry James and Masculinity: The Man at the Margins* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994); Sara Blair, *Henry James and the Writing of Race and Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-14, 60-89; Martha Banta, "Man, Woman, and the American Way," in *The Cambridge Companion to Henry James*, edited by Jonathan Freeman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 21-39; John Carlos Rowe, *The Other Henry James* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1998), 155-180; Person, 65-104.

For explorations of these themes in wider U.S. culture, see: E. Anthony Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993) and Lears.

museums, no pictures, no political society, no sporting class – no Epsom nor Ascot!<sup>151</sup>

Although a trace of self-irony sugars the pill of James's tirade, one senses his seriousness when he says that the English or French would find such absences "appalling." There is an echo in James's of the things Bessie seeks in England – "the poets and historians ... the picturesque ... [the] reverberations of greatness." She finds those things among "the authors and artists, philosophers and statesmen" who populate "London drawing-rooms" and it is one of her disappointments with Lambeth that he is "neither actually nor potentially present" at these "entertainments" (119, 122). However, if these virtues are alien to Lambeth, they are equally alien to American society, with the exception, James implies, of Bessie's native Boston (not coincidentally, his own family's seat). At the Westgate house in Newport, it is a matter of some novelty and amusement that there is among the guests a young man from Boston with "an open book in his lap" who "had been reading aloud" (78). "An International Episode" is, arguably, a counter-Centennial story. It implicitly critiques the official celebrations of the Centenary and post-Centennial patriotic culture for its reiteration of the male-female social divide, and celebrates if not a more feminised, then certainly a more culture-oriented form of nationalism and patriotism. If the story is patriotic at all, its loyalty is not so much to the U.S.A., but to Boston for producing Bessie – taking into account that Boston girls are almost un-American; "Boston girls, it was intimated, were more like English young ladies" – and the young man who, like James himself, reads (84).

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<sup>151</sup> Henry James, "Hawthorne" (1879), reprinted in Henry James, *Literary Criticism*, edited by Leon Edel (New York: Library of America, 1984), 351-352.

“An International Episode” leaves us with an unusual character among James’s tales of transatlantic relations: a young woman who is unmarried and who “regret[s] nothing.” At the close of *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881), the novel that cemented James’s international fame, although a desire for “independence” has been her defining characteristic, there is no such happiness for Isabel Archer.<sup>152</sup> The novel ends, James himself wrote, “*en l’air*”: we presume, but cannot be certain, that when Isabel leaves England, she returns to Italy and her miserable marriage to Gilbert Osmond.<sup>153</sup> “Certain obligations were involved in the very fact of marriage, and were quite independent of the quantity of enjoyment to be extracted from it,” the narrator remarks just a few pages before, and it is to these “obligations” it seems Isabel commits herself once and for all (534). The tragic irony is, of course, that throughout the novel it is just such “obligations” that Isabel so strives to avoid. She rejects proposals from two other suitors, American businessman Caspar Goodwood and English politician Lord Warburton, because such marriages would bring with them “a diminished liberty” (107). She fears Warburton has “the design of drawing her into the system in which he lived and moved,” and that Goodwood will “take possession of her” (95, 106). In one of the novel’s key scenes, Isabel tells her aunt she “‘always wants to know the things one shouldn’t do;” “‘So as to do them?’” asks Mrs. Touchett; “‘So as to choose,’” replies Isabel (63). Marriage will mean Isabel relinquishes her right “‘to choose;” at best, it will mean shared decisions, and at

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<sup>152</sup> Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady* (1881; London: Penguin, 1997). See Habegger, 152 and Zwerdling, 159-160 on the impact of *Portrait* on James’s fame. The very first description we read of Isabel is her aunt’s characteristically brusque assertion that Isabel is “‘quite independent”” (13).

<sup>153</sup> Reproduced in F.O. Matthiessen and Kenneth B. Murdock eds., *The Notebooks of Henry James* (New York, 1947); cited in Alan Shelston ed., *Henry James: Washington Square and The Portrait of a Lady – a Casebook* (London: Macmillan, 1984), 76.

worst, submitting to her husband's preferences. "I am not sure I wish to marry any one," she tells Warburton (100).

What is it about Osmond, then, that persuades Isabel to overcome her antipathy to marriage? Leland S. Person notes this question "has puzzled many" readers and cites as one persuasive answer Robert White's observation that Osmond attracts Isabel "because he is so unlike her other wooers, because his appeal is seemingly non-assertive, non-aggressive, almost, it would seem, non-masculine."<sup>154</sup> I would add to White's list of Osmond's negative characteristics that he is non-national, or nationless. Whereas, as we shall see, Goodwood and Warburton are defined by James's casting of them as national types, Osmond appears to Isabel to have no nationality, and marriage to him represents for her an opportunity to escape affiliation to a national identity that might shape her thoughts, direct her actions, and predetermine her choices. I argue here that James uses Isabel's story, alongside those of other women in the novel – Mrs. Touchett, Madame Merle, Countess Gemini, and Henrietta Stackpole, the last three of whom marry transnationally – to consider what power a woman has to choose or to reject a national identity.

In James's 1908 'Preface' to the revised, New York edition of *Portrait*, he acknowledged that the origin and essence of the novel was less "any conceit of a 'plot,' nefarious name," and more the study of a "single character," the psychological development of "a particular engaging young woman." James recalled: "Place the

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<sup>154</sup> Person, 93. Robert White, "Love, Marriage, and Divorce: The Matter of Sexuality in *The Golden Bowl*," *Henry James Review* 7 2:3 (1986): 66; quoted in Person, 93.



centre of the subject in the young woman's own consciousness,' I said to myself."<sup>155</sup>

One watershed in the evolution of Isabel's "consciousness" occurs shortly after her arrival from America at Gardencourt, her uncle's English estate. She refutes Mrs. Touchett's wide-ranging criticisms of England, precociously admonishing her aunt, "Now what is your point of view? ... When you criticize everything here, you should have a point of view. Yours doesn't seem to be American.... When I criticize, I have mine; it's thoroughly American!" (55-56). Mrs. Touchett, a dab-hand at the put-down, replies: "American? Never in the world; that's shockingly narrow. My point of view, thank God, is personal!" (56). "Isabel thought this was a better answer than she admitted," the narrator continues (56). Just a page of text and short period of time later and Isabel, so recently proud to describe her views as "thoroughly American," is desperate to avoid being so closely identified, not only with her own native country, but any narrowly nationalistic outlook. Ralph, her cousin, has "amused himself with calling her 'Columbia,' and accusing her of a patriotism so fervid that it scorched. He drew a caricature ... in which she was represented as a very pretty young woman, dressed, in the height of the prevailing fashion, in the folds of the national banner" (57). Isabel is deeply uncomfortable: her "chief dread in life, at this period of her development, was the she should appear narrow-minded; what she feared next afterwards was that she should be so."

Later, the narrator tells us Isabel's "general disposition [is] to elude any obligation to take a restricted view" (100). This statement comes in the middle of the section of the novel in which Warburton and Goodwood press their marriage proposals most

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<sup>155</sup> From Henry James's Preface to the 'Revised Collected Edition' of *The Portrait of a Lady* (London and New York: Macmillan, 1921-1923); cited in Shelston, 94, 101.

forcefully. Both men are defined by the respective national, political, social and economic “system[s]” in which they “lived and moved” (95). Warburton is encumbered with ““Great responsibilities, great opportunities, great consideration, great wealth, great power, a natural share in the public affairs of a great country,”” (66-67). As he proposes, Isabel sees Warburton not as an individual man but as “a territorial, a political, a social magnate” (95). The narrative voice reinforces our sense of Warburton as embodying an entire national “system”: the first time we meet him, he is described as having “a face as English” as Mr. Touchett’s is an “American physiognomy,” and later as “such a representative of the British race” (7, 268). Goodwood, meanwhile, is manager of a prosperous cotton-mill, the inventor of “an improvement in the cotton-spinning process,” who has “manners in the American style,” and who Mrs. Touchett calls ““an American truly”” (107, 115, 312). An industrialist and entrepreneur, he is as representative of post-bellum America as Warburton is of England. Unsurprisingly, Goodwood’s suit is championed by Henrietta Stackpole, Isabel’s patriotic American friend, who fears Isabel is no longer ““the bright American girl she once was,” is ““turning away from old ideals,”” and must be prevented from marrying ““one of those Europeans”” to ““call back her thoughts ... from foreign parts and other unnatural places,”” (110, 111, 114). Under coverture, marriage to any man would involve for Isabel a loss of legal and cultural identity and self-determination. It is what, in an echo of *The American*, she calls ““giving up”” and, as she tells Goodwood, ““I like my liberty too much. If there is a thing in the world I am fond of ... it is my personal independence”” (123, 149). Marriage to any man would reduce her relationship with the world to a derivative one and, she protests, ““I want to see for myself”” (140). ““I shall probably never marry,””

she informs Goodwood (145). If any marriage would be unwelcome, though, marriage to Goodwood or Warburton would be particularly unpalatable for both come unusually laden with the kind of “obligation[s]” – to a particular lifestyle, a particular political worldview, and a particular nation – that Isabel seeks to “elude” in order to keep her “view” of the world un-“restricted.”

When she rejects his proposal, Goodwood warns Isabel, ““An unmarried woman – a girl of your age – is not independent. There are all sorts of things she can’t do”” (150). Isabel disagrees, citing the fact that ““I am poor”” as one reason she is ““not bound to be timid and conventional.”” What soon changes is that, at her cousin’s request, Isabel’s uncle leaves to Isabel in his will a large sum of money.

Before his death, Mr. Touchett cautions Ralph that Isabel ““may fall a victim to the fortune-hunters’” but Ralph feels this ““small”” risk is worth taking (173). When Isabel reveals her plans to marry Osmond, Mrs. Touchett perhaps has this ““risk”” in mind as she rebukes her niece for choosing ““that man”” over Warburton and complains of Osmond that, by comparison with the nobleman, ““there is nothing of him”” (309). ““Then he can’t hurt me,”” retorts Isabel. Reading the novel in knowledge of how events unfold, we see the terrible mistake Isabel is making. There is much more to Osmond than Isabel realises: that Madame Merle is his former lover and biological mother of his daughter, Pansy, and that it is she, in collaboration with Osmond, who has manipulated Isabel into marriage as a means of securing for Pansy the dowry and social opportunities necessary to ““marry a great man”” (503). It is Isabel’s opposition to Osmond’s plans for Pansy to marry Warburton that condemns

their already unhappy marriage to even greater misery. Osmond, although he conceals it carefully behind his lifelong dedication to “the best taste,” is in effect as much a vulgar “fortune-hunter” as any Mr. Touchett might have had in mind (394). Indeed, for Isabel, it is Osmond’s superior practice of “taste” that is one of his principal attractions. She sees the opportunity to use her money nobly, to underwrite his art collection – an acceptably “aesthetic” rather than “worldly” pursuit (327, 321).

It seems to me that what truly appeals about Osmond as a prospective husband is precisely that Isabel believes there to be “nothing of him,” not simply that he is free of secrets, faults or vices that will “hurt” her, but because he appears to her entirely disconnected from the kind of social “systems” in which Goodwood and Warburton are both so embedded. Marriage to Osmond removes Isabel from the discomfort she clearly feels in dealing with proposals from her previous suitors, and from any future ones. At the same time, she thinks, it enables her to retain her “personal independence” from any larger social groupings – class, political faction, and nation. Osmond is throughout the novel defined by negatives, often lists of them. Madame Merle first describes him as having, “No career, no name, no position, no fortune, no anything” (183). Isabel later boasts, “He has no money; he has no name; he has no importance” (309), and, maybe most tellingly, she says to Ralph:

‘Your mother ... is horrified at my contenting myself with a person who has none of Lord Warburton’s great advantages – no property, no title, no honours, no houses, nor lands, nor position, nor reputation, nor brilliant belongings of any sort. It is the total absence of all these things that pleases me,’ (321-322).

She declares, “I am marrying a nonentity” (305). Osmond, utterly unlike Warburton and Goodwood, presents himself to Isabel as “living ... without responsibilities of attachments” (241). We are frequently reminded his house is on a “hill-top”; it enjoys the kind of unrestricted view of the world that Isabel makes her goal (210, 234, 235, 291, 361, 365). He is the perfect husband for a woman who states she will “not marry any one” for Osmond is, or at least so Isabel believes, no-one. All she sees in him is the gaping ‘O’ at the beginning of his name; even on the typeface of the page he appears as an “absence.” What she discovers, though, is that Osmond, with his “rigid system” and “calculated attitude,” his “egotism” and absolute “care” for what others think and his “wish to preserve appearances,” will strive to impose his will on Isabel more even than Goodwood or Warburton might have done, and will use the “obligations” of marriage – Isabel’s legal and cultural duty to “obey” her husband – to force her to conform to his beliefs and desires (397, 396, 496). She will not, after all, get “to choose.”

Among Osmond’s numerous negatives, James repeatedly notes his lack of national affiliation. When we first meet Osmond, “You would have been much at a loss to determine his nationality; he had none of the superficial signs that usually render the answer to this question an insipidly easy one” (212). Later, Ralph observes, “he is an American; but one forgets that; he is so little of one,” and Osmond himself jokes, “I couldn’t even be an Italian patriot” (274, 245). In a novel the opening pages of which set up expectations about people having an “American physiognomy” or an equally English one, James deliberately creates a character who defies his own standard of “ethnological typecasting,” as Zwerdling calls James’s habitual treatment

of individuals as national types.<sup>156</sup> Osmond has a double appeal for Isabel; technically, he is American, so she will not “give up” her nationality in marrying him, but so un-committed to any nation is he that nor will marriage to him involve the adoption of *any* set of fixed patriotic or nationalistic values. She escapes “the folds of the national banner” in which Ralph depicts her and does not have to wrap herself in any other.

If Isabel’s repudiation of her once “‘thoroughly American’” perspective is crucial in impelling her towards Osmond, then she pays a high price for it. So do other women in the novel who forego their American-ness – Madame Merle and Countess Gemini, Osmond’s sister. The latter is one of those unfortunate “American maidens” described in 1873 by *Godey’s*, married “by her mother – a heartless feather-head like herself, with an appreciation of foreign titles,” to a “low-lived brute” of a Tuscan count, only interested in her “modest dowry” (258, 259). The novel is set in the early to mid-1870s and Gemini is archetypal of (*Godey’s* account of) the kind of moderately wealthy, young American woman who with unhappy results married into minor foreign aristocracy in the late 1860s and early 1870s. When Isabel first meets Madame Merle, meanwhile, as with Osmond, she finds the older woman’s nationality attractively indeterminate, itself a hint of the connection between Merle and Osmond (163). In truth, Merle was born in “‘the Brooklyn Navy Yard,’” the daughter of an American officer (162). “‘I was born under the shadow of the national banner,’” Merle tells Isabel, the phrase “national banner” (which is repeated on the following page) linking her to the earlier image of Isabel as Columbia. Like Isabel, in her

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<sup>156</sup> Zwerdling, 144.

search for self-realisation, Merle has distanced herself from her American origins. Although she sought in Europe a suitably exalted husband (“she has always hoped to marry Caesar”), Merle instead married only “a horrid little Swiss, who died twelve years ago” (500). Having fallen short in her own marriage, she cultivates herself as “the incarnation of propriety” and “waited and watched and plotted” for her opportunity to secure for Pansy a “great” marriage (502, 503). This, however, has involved her renouncing any right to be recognised as Pansy’s mother; she cannot admit Pansy is the ‘illegitimate’ child of an extra-marital affair *and* see her married into high and respectable society. Even at the moment Isabel realises that in marrying Osmond she has been the victim of Merle’s machinations, she is humane enough to understand how Merle must have “suffered” for the sake of such “propriety” (503). Nonetheless, Isabel subtly thwarts Merle and Osmond’s plans to see Pansy married to Warburton, guaranteeing Merle will remain unfulfilled and unhappy. Merle returns to America, apparently the worst retribution for someone who has worked tirelessly to give herself the appearance of true cosmopolitanism. “She must have done something very bad,” observes Mrs. Touchett (527).

Ironically, had she paid greater heed to something Merle says soon after they first meet, Isabel may have mistrusted her own impression of Osmond as independent of “attachments.” Merle advises Isabel, “every human being has his shell, and you must take the shell into account.... There is no such thing as an isolated man or woman; we are each of us made up of a cluster of appurtenances” (186-187). Naively, Isabel disagrees, foreshadowing her failure to recognise that Osmond must have his “appurtenances,” even though they may not be visible, and to investigate

what they might be. Isabel is the product of James's original intention for the novel; she believes she is at the centre of a story solely about and to be directed by her own "consciousness." In truth, she is unwittingly playing a role in another story, Madame Merle's "nefarious" planning of an international-marriage narrative, a "plot" that disastrously impinges on Isabel's consciousness, but which, in turn, Isabel is able (just about) to disrupt. In marriage to Osmond, Isabel seeks the continued free play of her own consciousness, but she learns the lesson that, especially after marriage, "'There is no such thing as an isolated man or woman;'" her and Merle's decisions determine each other's destinies.

Isabel has "the supreme conviction" that Osmond "resembled no one she had ever seen; most of the people she knew might be divided into groups of half a dozen specimens" and Osmond alone has "the interest of rareness" (394, 241-242). Isabel sees around her not only people who conform to "specimen," but also "types" of marriage, including Gemini's "political marriage" and the emotionless marriage her aunt and uncle maintain, seemingly as a business arrangement rather than from mutual affection (242, 259). In her quest for utter individuality, she hopes that by marrying a man seemingly as "original" as Osmond, her marriage also will be "original" and un-categorisable (242). She is, of course, wrong, and her marriage is exposed to be as much a "political marriage" as Gemini's (259).

The Osmonds' marriage reaches its greatest crisis when Isabel disobeys Osmond and returns to England to see the dying Ralph. Although she refuses his will on this occasion, the argument they have before her departure seems to decide for her that,



after Ralph's death, she will return to Italy and Osmond. Specifically, Osmond's lecture to Isabel about the importance of maintaining their marriage as "something sacred and precious – the observance of a magnificent form" seems to echo in her mind (495). It is to marriage itself, idea and covenant, rather than to each other that the pair have made a commitment and, Osmond tells Isabel, "I think we should accept the consequences of our actions" (495). Osmond's appeal on behalf of marriage reminds us of the anti-divorce campaign of the 1880s and 1890s and its attempts through nuptial formalisation to force couples to "regard the [marital] contract as a sacred one, as one not lightly entered into." His statement, the narrator tells us, is "something transcendent and absolute, like the sign of the cross or the flag of one's country" (495). The passage reminds us of something Isabel has overlooked: just like giving one's self up to a particular religion or national interests, for a woman in particular signing up to marriage involves making commitments to an institution, to making certain choices and living in certain ways – the very kinds of commitment that Isabel seeks to "elude" by marrying Osmond. Elsewhere, the narrator observes, "there was more in the bond than she had meant to put her name to" (396).

It seems telling that James draws our attention to the similarity between matrimonial commitment and national loyalty – "the flag of one's country" – for the one woman in the novel who does achieve a happy, fulfilling romantic relationship is also the one woman who fully embraces an identity defined by her nationality – Henrietta Stackpole. Henrietta is so essentially American that Ralph calls her an "emanation of the great democracy – of the continent, the country, the nation," and she charges herself with preventing Isabel becoming "faithless" to the nation, championing

Goodwood as a potential husband because of his American-ness (86, 90). Her “opinions” have “the national flavour” and she lectures Ned Rosier on “the duties of an American citizen” when he derides American diplomats (449, 200). Isabel, although devotedly affectionate toward Henrietta, is dismissive of her patriotism. When Ralph says he is unlikely again to visit America, Henrietta chastises, “Do you consider it right to give up your country?” (83). When Isabel tells Goodwood she will not return to the U.S.A. “for a long time,” and, in an echo of Henrietta, he asks “Do you mean to give up your country?” Isabel responds, “Don’t be an infant” (149). Isabel treats patriotism as juvenile, something she decides during the early pages of the novel to outgrow. Isabel initially is surprised that Henrietta, the arch American patriot, becomes friendly with Mr. Bantling, the English officer and relative of nobility to whom she later becomes engaged. Ralph describes Bantling to Isabel as “a very simple fellow,” to which Isabel replies, “Henrietta is simpler still” (135). Isabel thinks that Henrietta’s success as a journalist for American newspapers (to which she sends patriotic articles about her experiences in Europe) makes her “a very brilliant woman,” but it is for Isabel a narrow, “simple” sort of brilliance.

It is, though, precisely Henrietta’s patriotism that enables her to form a stable partnership with Bantling. So self-assuredly patriotic is she that even transnational marriage holds no fear of loss of identity. For Henrietta, marriage does not entail “giving up” elements of self; rather, patriotism encourages and authorises Henrietta to keep hold of her existing identity. If anything, it is Bantling who undergoes a “giving up.” His visit to America with Henrietta seems crucial in the development of their relationship from friendship to courtship; Henrietta’s exhibition of the country to him

“had opened his eyes and shown him that England was not everything” (453). Significantly, it is when they return from America that Bantling finally promises to introduce Henrietta to his family (454). She has Americanised her English lover, and can marry him without feeling her sense of identity threatened. It is by being a patriot that Henrietta achieves eminence in a male-dominated profession – as a journalist, she attracts readers with her nationalistic worldview – and can maintain her identity even in marriage. Her patriotism enables her feminism, much as it was the patriotism of groups such as the Women’s Relief Corps that legitimised their public activities and in the name of which they argued for legal and electoral reforms. When Henrietta announces her engagement to Bantling, Isabel sets the same question Goodwood earlier asked of her: “‘Henrietta Stackpole,’ she asked, ‘are you going to give up your country?’” (521). Henrietta replies, “‘I won’t pretend to deny it,’” but, by now we have become used to Henrietta’s American viewpoint only being re-enforced by her encounter with European people and culture, and we do not really expect she will “give up” her country so much as bring it with her to London. We are reminded of Ralph’s answer to Henrietta asking him if he means to “give up” America: “‘one doesn’t give up one’s country any more than one gives up one’s grandmother. It’s antecedent to choice’” (83). We are also reminded of Henrietta’s promise when she first arrives in England; “‘I shall make my own atmosphere’” – she will recreate and carry America with her (79). Henrietta, we imagine, will continue to make her own atmosphere even as she lives in London, married to an Englishman. Isabel eventually understands this; she “saw that she [Henrietta] had not renounced an allegiance, but planned an attack. She was at last about to grapple in earnest with England” (522). Far from having renounced her country in marrying Bantling,

Henrietta will in fact serve her patriotic purpose by being an Americanising influence in the heart of Britain. By confronting and renegotiating Bantling's "appurtenances," his connection to nation and nobility, Henrietta ensures their marriage will be the opposite of Isabel and Osmond's; it will be made on openly understood and agreed-upon terms that give Henrietta the opportunity to express and pursue her own will.

Henrietta's sense of national identity is bound up with her progressive thinking about gender roles. Before we even meet her, she represents a challenge to normative constructions of femininity. As a woman doing a job traditionally practiced by men, Ralph, waiting for Henrietta to arrive, expects her to be "a kind of monster" and "very ugly," unable to imagine a woman who is both feminine and active in the public sphere (77). In the following chapter, Henrietta and Mrs. Touchett debate the social position of "American ladies" (89). Mrs. Touchett calls American women "the slaves of slaves – the Irish chambermaid and the Negro waiter. They share their work." In response, Henrietta asserts that American women are "the companions of freemen." Mrs. Touchett speaks of a social hierarchy that is simultaneously raced, faithed, and gendered, with white (rather than "Negro"), Protestant (rather than "Irish," implicitly Catholic), men (rather than women) at its peak. Henrietta does not challenge the racial and religious terms of this hierarchy but she does voice the kind of patriotic feminism that, as James was writing *Portrait*, was becoming more central to the discussion of women's place in American society. She shares the rhetoric of organisations like the W.R.C., who still defined women by their relationship to men – "the companions of freeman" – but who also argued that women's social contribution deserved a greater civic status. Although she does not,

apparently, belong to any particular organisation, Henrietta nonetheless channels the voice of the patriotic-feminist movement. James was prescient in creating Henrietta for female-centred patriotic groups would become more prevalent and powerful over the coming years; just two years after the publication of *Portrait*, the W.R.C. became a nationwide association. Mrs. Touchett is not wrong or outdated; American law and culture in 1881 in many important respects still constructed women as the human property of fathers and husbands, little freer than servants or slaves. Henrietta, however, belongs to a growing number of women who, through their political activism and success in historically male professions, were testing and transforming the laws and cultural limits that bound women. She speaks to the future where Mrs. Touchett speaks to the present and the past. Even Isabel, whose urge for self-determination is personal rather than politicised, does not belong to this future. If Isabel wants to exist outside systems in order to ensure her liberty, Henrietta wants to remodel systems to ensure hers.

Soon after introducing her, James draws our attention to Henrietta's futurity and its comparison with Isabel. She talks of Isabel and other women's "'duty'" to get married but, on the same page, her own "'right to marry'" (84; my italics). Henrietta's conception of matrimony as entailing rights, and its contrast to Isabel's sense of the "'duty'" involved in her marriage, resonates at the novel's end. Henrietta urges Isabel to divorce Osmond: "'nothing is more common in our Western cities, and it is to them, after all, that we must look in the future'" (462). It was Western U.S. states that during the nineteenth century passed the most progressive divorce laws and, although the laws were not originally intended to give women greater equality,

their net effect over time was a renegotiation of the marital contract in which women's rights were emphasised alongside their duties. This is the "future" of which Henrietta speaks, but Isabel is wedded to the present, and Henrietta's injunction is followed immediately by the narrator closing off the possibility of divorce: "Her argument, however, does not concern this history, which has too many other threads to unwind." (Perhaps were Henrietta Stackpole rather than Henry James writing this story, divorce would have been among the threads that the narrative would unwind.) Even after Isabel has discovered Osmond's lie about Pansy's parentage, and Goodwood has urged Isabel to leave her deceitful husband for him, she seems to reject separation and divorce. Isabel is perhaps ultimately too much a product of her Eastern U.S. and European upbringing to embrace this western prospect. Henrietta's final words to Goodwood, the novel's last line of dialogue, however, do open the possibility that Isabel will one day see divorce as a feasible option. Having just told Goodwood Isabel has left London for Rome, Goodwood turns away, Henrietta grasps his arm, and says, "just you wait!" (544). It is because this phrase could mean either he should not follow Isabel, or that if he waits Isabel may eventually leave Osmond that the novel ends "*en l'air*." Either way, Goodwood, the representative American man, like Longmore and Newman before him, is powerless.

The novel ends, then, with Isabel having departed the scene. She is not only the central character but her very "consciousness" is the novel's *raison d'être*. She is, however, absent from the book's final page, leaving us instead with Henrietta and Goodwood. Isabel, who has sought to divest herself of national identity, writes herself out of the novel's ending, while it is the two most quintessentially and self-

consciously American characters who are left standing. It is tempting to think this makes *The Portrait of a Lady* a novel about patriotism and the dangers of repudiating one's national allegiances.<sup>157</sup> Certainly, James invites us to consider the story in the context of American patriotism by giving us only one specific date during the entire novel, and making that date 1876, the centennial year (330). In that light, one might interpret James's inclusion of Henrietta as a prediction that, thanks to the patriotic-feminist movement, the liberties won by the Revolutionary generation will in the next hundred years be extended from "freemen" to their "companions." However, by the time James in his 1908 Preface reflected on Henrietta's role, he was ambivalent, simultaneously keen to justify her presence, which some reviewers had questioned, and to marginalise her importance. He spends several pages discussing Henrietta, but all the time insisting she is not one of the novel's "true agents," that she is "but wheels to the coach; neither belongs to the body of that vehicle, or is for a moment accommodated with a seat inside," and remarking, "I have suffered Henrietta (of whom we have indubitably too much) so officiously, so strangely, so inexplicably, to pervade."<sup>158</sup> This is the James of 1908 and not 1881 speaking, but even within the original text one senses James disowning Henrietta's worldview as his own, that he shares Isabel's opinion of Henrietta's patriotism as "simple" and infantile, and he makes caricatures of both Henrietta and Goodwood to make this point. At the same time, though, he recognises that Henrietta and her patriotism represent opportunities for women that Isabel's quest for utterly individualised independence does not.

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<sup>157</sup> If one believed James dealt in such childish things as anagrams, one might note here that the novel's title is an anagram of *The Patriot For A Lady*, which might suggest Henrietta, rather than Isabel, as the true subject of the novel.

<sup>158</sup> James's Preface, cited in Shelston, 104. James added a new final paragraph to his 1908 version of the novel, which ends with Henrietta walking Goodwood away from the scene. Was this James's way of writing Henrietta out of the picture too, attempting to erase her as he had Isabel?

In his illuminating examination of James's early writing, both fiction and non-fiction, Alfred Habegger argues that, while many of James's short stories and novels seem to be sympathetic meditations on the problems of female self-determination, he was no feminist. Indeed, Habegger contends, James was expressly antifeminist in many reviews and magazine articles, sceptical in particular about the movement for women's suffrage and other organised attempts by women to bring about legal and cultural change. "The basic fact is that up until his late middle age Henry James was for the most part contemptuous of women's suffrage and women's entry into the professions," Habegger writes.<sup>159</sup> Habegger suggests that for James female characters are primarily useful as part of a lifelong exploration of the role of the artist. Habegger seeks to persuade that James systematically likens the social marginalisation of women to the position of the writer in society; James sees women's struggle for absolute self-determination as analogous to the struggle of the writer to free himself from the demands of the literary marketplace and its reliance on formal and stylistic convention, and he projects on to female characters his own sense of un-belonging and desire for artistic freedom and cultural empowerment. Habegger suggests that, while James may have cared for individual women, he cared little for women as a disenfranchised group, and he resisted putting forward any tangible programme of gender reform because, for women to have achieved structural improvements in their status would have left him without his most potent figure for artistic isolation. James could not even grant freedom and acceptance to individual women within his own texts; that would have been a sacrifice of his carefully constructed symbols for artistic

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<sup>159</sup> Habegger, 6.



un-fulfilment. This is why “Daisy Miller [is] the one who dies of malaria, even though Giovanelli and Winterbourne are also exposed” and women like Isabel and Euphemia must remain unhappy and unfulfilled.<sup>160</sup> Each has a fatal flaw, whether it be susceptibility to malaria or an unshakeable commitment to matrimony, that will prevent them achieving self-realisation. They “have all been lamed in secret by their author.”<sup>161</sup> James concerns himself with women’s enforced dependence not because he wants to see women empowered, but because their struggle is usefully symbolic of his own sense of longing for a consciousness unrestricted by societal constraints and expectations. One might apply Habegger’s theory to *Portrait* to explain why James seems so ambivalent about Henrietta, the female journalist. A writer unbound by others’ preconceptions, she must have appealed to James, but she simultaneously represents a social force that might limit his ability to use women as a vehicle for his own frustrations. By contrast, Isabel’s story is exemplary of Habegger’s thesis. She is “lamed in secret,” not only by James, but by Merle and Osmond’s plotting, and by Ralph, for it is when he persuades Mr. Touchett to leave wealth to Isabel that her fate is sealed. James makes a whole novel out of his secret laming of Isabel.<sup>162</sup>

If Habegger’s theory holds true for Isabel, it less adequately explains the central female characters of James’s next stories of international marriage, “The Siege of London” (1883) and “Lady Barberina” (1884).<sup>163</sup> Perhaps precisely because they do

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<sup>160</sup> One might also cite “Longstaff’s Marriage” in which it is, like Daisy Miller, the woman who dies.

<sup>161</sup> Habegger, 26.

<sup>162</sup> James even makes it clear that this is what writers do to their creations; after all, Osmond and Ralph are both artists, (Osmond paints and Ralph sketches), both are writer-like, detached observers, and we watch as the two compete to author Isabel’s narrative.

<sup>163</sup> Henry James, “Lady Barberina” (1884), in James, *Tales, 1883-1884*, vol. 5 of *The Complete Tales*, edited with an introduction by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), 195-302;

not fit his template, Habegger excludes both stories from his study. Far from being “lamed in secret,” Nancy Headway in “The Siege of London” and the eponymous Lady Barberina successfully achieve their objectives. Nancy even survives being “lamed in secret” by one of her tale’s male protagonists. Having previously lived in “the newly admitted States” of the American West, we meet Nancy in Paris (91). She has been several times married and “exceedingly divorced,” having taken advantage of those progressive Western divorce laws recommended in *Portrait* by Henrietta (23). Her most recent husband died leaving her money, and, at “about thirty-seven,” she is not only beautiful and “charming,” but also wealthy (23, 70). She has, however, been snubbed by New York’s elite and is now determined to take her “revenge” on Manhattan by “get[ting] into society” in fashionable Europe (57). She is accompanied in Paris by a young English baronet, Sir Arthur Demesne. There, she meets Littlemore, an old companion from her days in San Diego, and his friend Waterville, holder of “a subordinate [U.S.] diplomatic post in London” (18). The obstacle to Nancy marrying Sir Arthur and achieving her social ambitions is the question of whether or not she is “respectable,” a word that recurs through the story (e.g. 15, 40, 109). If she can prove she is “respectable,” or, at least, prevent Sir Arthur and Sir Arthur’s mother from discovering she might not be, Sir Arthur will marry her. We never discover what, if anything, other than divorce, Nancy has done to make her less than “respectable,” but we do know she deploys “ingenious re-arrangements of fact” to keep Sir Arthur “mystified” (48). She is “a lady of ... ambiguous quality” (41). When she encounters Littlemore and Waterville, Nancy sees both an opportunity and a threat. As the one person in Europe who knows details of her past,

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Henry James, “The Siege of London” (1883), in James, *Tales, 1883-1884*, vol. 5 of *The Complete Tales*, edited with an introduction by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), 13-110.

Littlemore can choose either to vouch for her, or “give her away” (86). Waterville, meanwhile, worries Nancy will want him to use his diplomatic connections to secure for her that sought-after presentation at Queen Victoria’s court. Ultimately, Nancy does not seek Waterville’s help, and Littlemore eventually tells Lady Demesne, “I don’t think Mrs. Headway respectable” (109). Neither fact, though, spoils Nancy’s plans, and, the whole outcome of the story seemingly having rested on Littlemore’s decision, “The Siege of London” ends abruptly and with a surprise – the news that Nancy and Sir Arthur are married. Nancy’s campaign has been successful and New York is suitably jealous (110).

As Leon Edel notes, it is the English aristocracy’s peculiar habit of happily breaking its own rules, when it suits, that enables Nancy’s eventual admission into its ranks despite her still-dubious reputation.<sup>164</sup> It is a time when, the narrator tells us, European aristocrats are “all marrying Americans” (38). Nancy takes advantage of her countrywomen’s fashionableness and learns to play to “what is expected of her” in society – an essential and exotic American-ness (90). She “really worked hard at her Americanisms” and “drummed up the echoes of the Rocky Mountains and practised the intonations of the Pacific Slope” (90, 91). Jennie Jerome (Lady Randolph Churchill) wrote, “In England, as on the Continent, the American woman was looked upon as a strange and abnormal creature, with habits and manners somewhere between a Red Indian and a Gaiety Girl. Anything of an outlandish nature might be expected of her.”<sup>165</sup> Nancy adopts the “outlandish” persona that England’s *haute-*

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<sup>164</sup> Leon Edel, “Introduction, 1883-1884,” in Henry James, *Tales, 1883-1884*, vol. 5 of *The Complete Tales*, edited with an introduction by Leon Edel (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1963), 9.

<sup>165</sup> Recorded in Mrs. George Cornwallis-West, *The Reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill* (London: Edward Arnold, 1908), 47; cited in Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution*, 137.

*monde* wants of her and, she realises, that alone will guarantee her acceptance; “if she had only come to London five years earlier, she might have married a duke,” she concludes (91). Littlemore understands this too, and reflects that even his betrayal of Nancy “would make no difference” (109). Waterville is “positively scandalized” and chastises Littlemore for not having done more to prevent the marriage. Littlemore’s sister, Mrs. Dolphin, an American married to an English squire, is equally upset – “Herself a party to an international marriage, Mrs. Dolphin naturally wished that the class to which she belonged should close its ranks and carry its standard high” (98-99). She fears “dreadful Americans in English society compromising her native land” (110). What Mrs. Dolphin fails to understand is that “English society” values the America of “the Rocky Mountains” and “Red Indian[s]” and that Nancy, rather than sophisticated New York socialites, is exactly the type of American London wants.

Like Mrs. Dolphin, Waterville, the diplomat, considers himself a guardian of America’s national interests. Waterville “never forgot he was in a representative position” and agonises over whether it is his “responsibility” to “countenance” Nancy’s efforts at entry into London society, or to prevent it to maintain his entire nation’s respectability (49, 62, 84). He knows “of course they would have to refuse her” should she ask for an introduction at court (49). Waterville’s position is comically “subordinate”: invited to a weekend at the Demesnes’ country residence, he first discovers he has been relegated to an inferior bedroom because an ambassador is also present, and then that he has only been invited because he might have useful information about Nancy’s past. Nonetheless, Waterville flatters himself he is a diplomatic “shepherd ... and Mrs. Headway one of his sheep” (68). Waterville

eventually determines “the great thing” is that Nancy is stopped in order to safeguard his nation’s reputation, with which he feels himself entrusted (101). It is difficult to tell quite whether James wants us to approve of Nancy’s “success” – she is ambitious, perhaps even “vulgar,” but is also decidedly likeable – but James certainly seems to want us to take pleasure in her frustrating the irritating Mrs. Dolphin and the self-aggrandising Waterville (99, 110).

In a sense, Nancy recalls Dora Livingstone in *Quaker City*. She uses marriage as her means of making “headway,” first economically, by marrying a series of ever-richer men, and then socially, by targeting a British peer. In a subplot of *The American* too James presents us with a woman who unapologetically uses sex and marriage to make social progress. Noémie Nioche flirts her way into jewels and furs and the affections of a British aristocrat, making a much better job of economic improvement than her pathetic father and his failed businesses. When she tells Newman, ostensibly of her paintings, “Everything I have is for sale,” he perceives *only* her ostensible meaning and misses her wider point – Noémie puts herself on the market quite as much as she puts her paintings, and is much more likely to profit from her physical attractiveness than her awful artwork (199). It is a novel in which women simply have no acknowledged place in the public economic sphere; even when Newman buys Noémie’s terrible paintings, it is not because they have value in the open market, but because he sees her as a pet project, a woman “to be maintained, sentimentally,” as he believes all women should be (63). In such a society, sex and marriage seems, as Charlotte Perkins Gilman would later write, women’s sole permissible “vocation.”<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>166</sup> Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relations Between Women and Men* (1898; Amherst, NY: Prometheus, 1994), 93.

Women in “The Siege of London” do nothing but marry; there is, it seems, little else for them to do in either Britain or America. In his depictions of Noémie and Nancy, James might not be advocating any kind of social reform, but he is at least willing to articulate what Gilman called the “ingenious cruelty” of women’s situations – denied any route to economic security other than marriage, yet scorned if they marry for money rather than love.<sup>167</sup> This seems why, while never quite approving of Noémie and Nancy’s actions, neither does he make them the villains of their pieces. They must use sex and marriage to make economic and social progress because no other opportunities are available to them and, yet, they are chastised – by Mrs. Dolphin, Waterville, Monsieur Nioche, Newman – for doing just that. One senses James would, if nothing else, prefer to reward them rather than punish them by thwarting their plans.<sup>168</sup> Indeed, “Siege” leaves us considering not Nancy’s actions but Waterville’s hypocrisy as we discover, in the penultimate sentence, that he himself wanted to marry Nancy, and that his concern was motivated less by propriety than personal interest. The story ends with Waterville “blushing” and “indignant,” humiliated and defeated (110).

Both Newman and Waterville derive self-worth from their American-ness but each ultimately has his emotional security disrupted and complacency pricked. In “Lady Barberina,” James pulls the proverbial rug from under the feet of yet another representative American man in Europe. Jackson Lemon is an amiable, self-assured American doctor. The son of a successful businessman, he is worth ““about seven

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<sup>167</sup> Gilman, 89.

<sup>168</sup> This said, the implication at the end of *The American* is that Noémie will not marry her lord, but be his kept woman. One wonders, then, what will happen to her once she grows older. Her ‘punishment’ may just be deferred.

millions ... in dollars” (235). Visiting London, Lemon falls in love with the stately Lady Barberina Clement, daughter of a long-established aristocratic family whose “fortune was more ancient than abundant” (216). The first half of the story is a comedy of two different sets of protocol for courtship and marriage coming into conflict: the unchaperoned communion of young, unmarried men and women in America against their separation in British society; the freedom for young people to choose partners in America against the degree of parental intervention in Britain. This clash of matrimonial cultures comes to a head when Lady Barb’s parents, Lord and Lady Canterville, insist on negotiating a prenuptial financial settlement before they will agree to the marriage, something Lemon considers “a nasty little English tradition – totally at variance with the large spirit of American habits” (247). He does, however, eventually concede, and we next see him and Barb six months later, in Lemon’s native New York, where he has been steadfastly determined the two should make their home. Mrs. Freer, an American friend of Lemon’s in London, has warned Lemon that the aristocratic Barb “would not be satisfied” in democratic New York but Lemon fends off such predictions with confident assertions such as “If she likes me, she’ll like my country” (258, 237). He tells Barb, “I will make you like it [America]” (229). In New York, however, Barb is bored, unhappy and “perpetually wanting” to return to England (281). Lemon knows that “if Barb once gets to England she will never come back” (283). His only plan for dealing with the situation is to delay Barb even visiting England until she begins to enjoy New York more. He is, however, thwarted when he fails to prevent Lady Agatha, Barb’s younger sister, who has accompanied her sibling to the States, from eloping with a heavily moustachioed Californian, Herman Longstraw, who has a dubious past as “a

trapper, a squatter, a miner, a pioneer” (271). The elopement becomes the subject of embarrassing newspaper gossip. Lady Canterville demands that “in compensation for the affronts and injuries that were being heaped upon her family,” both her daughters are returned to England (300). The tale ends with Lemon having relocated with Barb to London, defeated, having forsaken his beloved New York and with no hope of returning.

The story develops a distinction between the virile, acquisitive, “irrepressible” American West that Longstraw represents, and the more passive, less potent East to which Lemon – like Longmore before him – belongs (293). Nancy Headway too belongs to the West and, notably, she and Longstraw appeal more to the English aristocracy for their sense of the exotic and the adventurous than men like Lemon and Longmore, with their East-Coast pretensions to sophistication, at which their respective stories’ European characters sneer.

Lemon’s defeat comes about because he fails to recognise that “Lady Barb, in New York, would neither assimilate nor be assimilated” despite the fact it is her profound Englishness that initially attracts him – “was it not precisely as a product of the English climate and the British constitution that he valued her?” (292, 251). It is telling that early in the story, when Lemon’s friend Dr. Feeder tells Lemon, “I am sorry [Barb] isn’t American,” Lemon responds, “If I should marry her, she would be” (214). Lemon is the cultural product of coverture’s single-identity conception of marriage, and of a nation whose immigration law since 1855 had automatically imposed American citizenship upon the foreign wife of a male U.S. citizen. He has



unquestioning faith in the power of the act of marriage alone to transform a woman's national identity. He acknowledges that for Barb marriage will entail a "change, not only of the geographical, but of the social, standpoint" but sees nothing problematic in this, nor even for a moment considers alternative living arrangements – Lemon is surprised anyone would question his assumption that, once married, he and Barb will live in New York, telling Lord and Lady Canterville, "that's my home, you know" (222, 237). Lemon is not being purposefully rude; he merely works from the premise, one provided by Anglo-American law and culture, that his home and his country will seamlessly become Barb's. Indeed, he presumes Barb's passiveness in the entire matrimonial process. Negotiating the terms of the marriage with Lord and Lady Canterville, Lemon thinks to himself: "They were to give their daughter, and he was to take her; in this arrangement there would be quite as much on one side as on the other" (239). As an active participant, Barb is absent from this equation. When Lemon says, "She will be, before anything else, my wife," he repeats Newman's belief that once married a woman's identity is limited exclusively to being her husband's wife (258). In New York, however, Lemon's confidence that marriage would make Barb American, and happy to be so, erodes. "You knew when I married you that I was not an American," and "I knew, of course, you expected me to live here, but I didn't know you expected me to like it," she tells an increasingly bewildered, frustrated Lemon (263, 264). "I guess she'll get used to it," Lemon says, "but with a lightness he did not altogether feel" (286). Faced with having to return to England and become a permanent expatriate, Lemon realises that, far from having transformed Barb's national identity, marriage is about to transform his own. He reflects that Mrs. Freers "had been right when she said to him ... he would not

find it so simple to be an American. Such an identity was complicated ... by the difficulty of domesticating one's wife" (296). It is his own "identity" that has been "complicated" by marriage. He has failed to "domesticate" Barb, the sentence playing on the double meaning of "domestic" – familial home, and nation. "He will have to make great concessions," remarks Mrs. Freers at the start of the story and is proved correct (199). What James exposes is that, while the very law of marriage in Anglo-American culture assumes a single identity for man and wife, that law fails to account for the two-way give and take of "concessions" and accommodations that is the reality of modern human relationships, even ones motivated by financial considerations.

Barb's chief attraction to Lemon is that she embodies, he believes, the best of "the physical conditions of the English – their complexion, their temperament, their tissue" and he desires "his own children to have the look of race" (223). "He saw her as she might be in the future, the beautiful mother of beautiful children, in whom the look of race should be conspicuous" (223). Like Newman, Lemon sees in Barb a mother and wife rather than an independent being. He believes that, like some expensive artefact collected during European travels, he can "marry her and transport her to New York" (223). Somewhat conceitedly, Lemon views himself as a walking embodiment of America's supposedly predestined position as the apotheosis of human progress – "he, the heir of all ages ... one of the most fortunate inhabitants of an immense, fresh, rich country, a country whose future was admitted to be incalculable" (259). He relishes the idea of adding to that country Barb's aristocratic "breeding," of affecting through their marriage a racial reunion of elite Anglo-American peoples: "They were one race,

after all; and why shouldn't they make one society – the best on both sides, of course” (297, 239). In this sense, Lemon follows contemporaneous U.S. culture, which was increasingly regarding women as “the biological source of the citizenry.” For the sake of safeguarding America’s manifest destiny as “the heir of all ages,” Lemon seeks to consolidate Anglo-American racial supremacy within that “citizenry.” Manoeuvred into expatriating himself to England, however, he realises that the Clements “have interfered with the best heritage of all – the nationality of his possible children” (297). His progeny will not be Americans who have an infusion of British aristocratic blood, as Lemon had hoped, but simply English. Worse, having suffered Lord and Lady Canterville’s “odious” ideas about marriage, Lady Agatha’s “passionate” and “impulsive” character, and Barb’s own “obstinacy,” by the very end of the tale, set more than a year later, Lemon is not even sure whether “the look of race” is such a good thing in his and Barb’s young daughter, whose “features ... Jackson already scans for the look of race – whether in hope or fear, to-day, is more than my muse has revealed” (247, 280, 297, 301).

James wrote in a later preface to “Lady Barberina” that his intention had been to reverse the “regular” configuration of international marriages, real and fictional, and rather than marry a wealthy American woman to an impoverished European nobleman, wed a wealthy American man to an impoverished European noblewoman, and “put ... to the imaginative test” the consequences of such a union.<sup>169</sup> The result of James’s experiment is that Lemon discovers himself to be no different to other wealthy Americans involved in the exchange of status and money: his cash and his

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<sup>169</sup> Henry James, Preface to ‘*Lady Barberina*,’ ‘*The Siege of London*,’ ‘*An International Episode*’ and *Other Tales* (London: Macmillan, 1922), xi, xii.

very self become absorbed into the obstinate English aristocracy, so adept at survival. In all James's international marriage experiments, whatever the configurations of gender, the encounters between Europeans and Americans are all about placing people – English, American, French, male, female – in situations in which they are out of their depth, where their assumptions about the world are undermined and certainties about themselves tested.

After 1884, James seemingly felt he needed new types of situations in which to conduct his testing and he vacated the literary laboratory of international marriages.<sup>170</sup> When he returned in 1900 with “Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie,” it was to register the shifted power balance of Euro-American relations, with its American heiress who gets the better of an Italian prince's family in pre-nuptial negotiations, unlike Lemon in his battle with Lady Barb's family. As in “An International Episode,” here again it is an American woman who leads America's renegotiation of the terms of the European-American relationship rather than an American man; while James's would-be international grooms are passive and incompetent, his would-be international brides are determined and successful.

In *The Ambassadors* (1903), one is left with a similar feeling that the transatlantic scorecard these days favours America.<sup>171</sup> The narrative revolves around the divided loyalties of the talented Chad Newsome, who ultimately commits his future to America, industry, his mother, and his family firm, rather than to Madame de

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<sup>170</sup> Zwerdling discusses James's feelings of wanting to escape international marriage plots. Zwerdling, 178, 190.

<sup>171</sup> Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (1903; London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994).

Vionnet, his aristocratic French lover, who is left opining, “the only certainty is that I shall be the loser in the end.”<sup>172</sup> Europe in both stories is “the loser in the end.”

Between “Miss Gunton” and *The Ambassadors*, James published *The Wings of the Dove* (1902).<sup>173</sup> Set largely in London, the novel’s central characters, Kate Croy and Merton Densher, are secretly affianced lovers prevented from marrying by familial objections and financial impediments. Their new American friend Milly Theale is a young American heiress – “an angel with a thumping bank account” and, as Kate discovers, an incurable illness (283). Kate connives a plan that Merton will exploit Milly’s love for him; he will marry her so that, when she dies, she will leave her fortune to Merton, enabling the couple finally to marry.

Milly, like Isabel Archer, is “isolated, unmothered, unguarded”; it is her wealth that makes her a target, renders her vulnerable to the guiles of those she encounters in Europe (143). *The Portrait of a Lady* places Isabel at the centre of the text; we see her threatened from all angles – by Merle and Osmond, and by Ralph’s unwittingly injurious interventions. *The Wings of the Dove*, by contrast, engages our sympathies first with Kate and Merton, the frustrated lovers who pledge eternal commitment to each other but face so many unfair “difficulties and delays” (251). The novel’s opening paragraphs show us Kate dealing with her dissolute father, hoping that the marriage she makes will bring financial salvation to the family. The scene makes us care first about Kate and her predicament, not Milly. Indeed, Milly does not appear until the third of the novel’s ten books. If *Portrait* is about one woman’s

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<sup>172</sup> Henry James, *The Ambassadors* (1903; London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994), 369.

<sup>173</sup> Henry James, *The Wings of the Dove* (1902), edited with an introduction by John Bayley and notes by Patricia Crick (London: Penguin, 2003).

“consciousness,” *Wings* diffuses itself across the consciousness of all three protagonists in its strange love triangle. James’s later novels are subtler, more psychologically complex than his earlier ones and, while we might not condone Kate and Merton, nor can we entirely condemn them as we do the out-and-out villains of previous texts – Osmond or the Machiavellian Bellegardes. The political effect is that *Wings* is not, as *Portrait* or *The Americans* might be interpreted, a novel of innocent Americans on one side, falling prey to sinister Europeans and Europeanised Americans on the other. If in those early novels, James undermines the very binaries he sets up, in *Wings*, he dispenses with them from the start.

This is not to say that national differences are overlooked in *Wings*. Milly has “the pattern, so unmistakable, of her country-folk” (240). James invests her not simply with wealth, but with a very American type of destiny; she is “the potential heiress of all ages” (125). Milly’s American-ness is, though, something other than essential, as it is to characters like Newman, Longmore, Lemon and arguably even Isabel. Milly, more like Nancy Headway, understands that national identity is something to be performed. Merton’s job as a journalist for a London newspaper is to investigate America and write about American types. To please him, Milly “became as spontaneous as possible and as American as it might conveniently appeal to Mr Densher ... to find her,” offering herself up to his professional need to find types (244). “She had long been conscious,” the narrator tells us, “... of her unused margin as an American girl” and she plays “her own native wood-note” (244). Milly, when she wants, performs a role James had helped to invent: the American girl.

In these moments, Milly turns herself into a character from one of James' earlier tales or from the more populist fiction and reporting of the international-marriage phenomenon: the young, single, rich American woman, 'invading' Europe. Milly, however, has no interest in "A duke, a duchess, a palace" (325). She is not dazzled by titles and old castles. Her illness, it seems, leads her to seek more a fundamental form of happiness. Milly, after all, foregoes her chance of marrying a nobleman. Lord Mark is a rival suitor to Densher – ironically, both for Kate and Milly. Of Lord Mark, Milly thinks, "Perhaps he was one of those cases she had heard of at home – those characteristic cases of people in England who concealed their play of mind so much more than they advertised it" (151). Suitably for someone of this inscrutable and somewhat sinister nature, we strongly suspect that Mark's prime interest in Milly is, like Kate, the young American's money. We do know, and are reminded, that he "has no money" (later, "a decidedly proclaimed want of money") and that his career in politics has been short-lived (289, 491 169). We also know that it is at the moment when in Venice Mark proposes marriage to Milly that she first realises it is not simply her money that would attract men to her, but the combination of her money and her imminent death; "With that there came to her a light: wouldn't her value, for the man who would marry her, be precisely in the ravage of her disease? *She* mightn't last, but her money would" (346). She may not see this "ugly motive" in the "so awfully clever" Mark (and he does seem both clever and awful), but we do (346, 432). He seems one of those "adventurers who lie in wait for American maidens" about whom *Godey's* had warned its readers decades before. When Mark later discovers Kate and Merton's plot, he returns to Venice to tell Milly, taking his revenge on the couple by wrecking their "crafty" plans (251). The effect on Milly is to hasten her illness; "it

simply killed her” (454). The revelation that Kate, her close friend, and Merton, who she loves, have so manipulated Milly is the fatal blow, but it is Mark’s proposal that in the first place makes her aware that her money and her “disease” make a horribly attractive dowry; it is what enables her to believe Kate and Merton’s deception of her. In this sense, Mark’s key contribution to the narrative is as a device; James uses him to bring about what proves not only the end of Milly’s life, but the end also of Kate and Merton’s love; it makes Merton realise that Kate has gone too far and he refuses to marry her unless she agrees to forego the money that Milly has bequeathed him.<sup>174</sup>

Mark also functions as a moral barometer. Twice towards the end of the novel, both moments when Merton is questioning the morality of his and Kate’s plan, he catches sight of Mark through windows; once in Venice through the window of a café, and then in London through the window of a carriage (418, 477). On the first occasion, Merton convinces himself that he is treating Milly in a “delicate and honourable way” whereas Mark is a “brute” (419). The second, however, seems to act as a catalyst for Merton’s realisation he has sunk low “in the scale of hypocrisy;” immediately afterwards, he goes to church where phrases such as “sudden light” and “on the edge of a splendid service” hint at his forthcoming, belated renunciation of Kate’s plot (479, 481). Either side of the moment at which Merton spots Mark through glass this second time, James uses the word “reflexion” (476, 479). It hints that Merton in seeing Mark is looking in a mirror, seeing his own face, his own corruption. Far from being Mark’s opposite, as he thought himself in Venice, Merton is his double.

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<sup>174</sup> The novel’s end is somewhat cryptic and, although we assume Milly has bequeathed money to Merton, we are not sure. To Merton, it does not matter; he just needs to know that Kate would give up the money.



Mark, like Milly in her “American girl” moments, is a character from a more conventional title-heiress tale; we know from those previous narratives, both James’s and other writers’, what type of person he is and his role here is for us to measure by him how far, with each increment of Kate’s plot, Merton has fallen. The difference, and what maybe saves us from condemning him and Kate, is that they act for love rather than for purposeless greed and ambition. If marrying for love was indeed a bourgeois invention, then their thwarted love is a bourgeois tragedy played out on the edge of the title-heiress phenomenon, the story to which Milly and Lord Mark belong. For James here, the title-heiress theme is useful primarily as a lens through which to view other types of sexual and emotional relationships.

This was the last time James would tackle an Anglo-American courtship, although in *The Golden Bowl* (1904), his final complete novel, he would tell of an American heiress who marries an Italian nobleman in what seems to be an exchange of dollars for title.<sup>175</sup> It is a story about “the state of being married” and how that “wedded condition” requires a giving up of selfhood for the performance of the public roles of faithful husband and dutiful wife, however little those roles accord with a person’s inner life (109, 162, 213, 326). The novel’s four main characters – Maggie Verver, her husband Prince Amerigo, her father Adam and his wife Charlotte Stant, who is also Amerigo’s lover – all have public identities: nobleman, citizen-businessman, citizen-businessman’s wife and daughter. When both marriages are threatened by Charlotte and Amerigo’s affair, Maggie acts to protect their public reputations by

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<sup>175</sup> Henry James, *The Golden Bowl*, edited with an introduction and notes by Virginia Llewellyn Smith (1904; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983 rep. 1999).

separating the lovers, at the likely expense of all four individuals' happiness.<sup>176</sup> Marriage here is not the fulfilment of one's emotional needs, but an obstruction to it. Maggie, for the sake of her father's business as much as, if not more than, her affection for Amerigo, maintains her marriage so that Amerigo's, Adam's and her own public personas will remain in tact. As James well knew, title-heiress marriages could be striking examples of the difference between public personas and private lives. Many, like the Vanderbilt-Marlborough marriage, were publicised by the protagonists' families as love matches when, in fact, they were deals involving only finance and social ambition. The couples in such cases attempted to preserve a public face of affectionate matrimony that bore little resemblance to the miserable reality of their married lives. Where *The Golden Bowl* differs from so many other fictions of title-heiress marriages is in rejecting their conventional, conclusive endings. The story neither attempts magically to transform a marriage of reciprocity into one of mutual love (the fantasy of redemptive romance), nor to contrive a melodramatically tragic finale (the punishment for not marrying for love). Instead it ends grimly with its characters locked without apparent escape into their public, marital characters. What is more, James infers that for *all* married individuals the "wedded condition" involves an unresolvable tension between public and private elements of selfhood.

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<sup>176</sup> Certainly, Charlotte, Amerigo and Maggie's happiness is under threat. In a longer examination of the text, I would argue not only that the seemingly genial Adam is less perturbed than the other characters, but also that he might be seen to be pulling the strings silently to contrive just the conclusion that he wants.

**“For Then We Could Keep Them Both Together””: Frances Hodgson Burnett, Patriotic Womanhood, Race, and Anglo-American Rapprochement<sup>177</sup>**

During the 1880s, 1890s and early 1900s, James may have been silent on title-heiress marriages, but numerous other writers produced fictions that commented on the phenomenon. Among them, novels such as Sherwood’s *A Transplanted Rose*, Constance Cary Harrison’s *The Anglomaniacs* (1890) and Gertrude Atherton’s *His Fortunate Grace* (1897), as well as plays like *The Title-Mart* (1905) by U.S. writer Winston Churchill all share a certain characteristic.<sup>178</sup> All offer explicit critiques of the title-heiress phenomenon, reproducing the attacks made by the mainstream press on marriages made for money rather than love, but all contrive plots that end with the English aristocrat and the American heiress falling in love and marrying. *The Anglomaniacs*, *His Fortunate Grace* and *The Title-Mart* all transform relationships that are born of social ambition and financial greed into ones based on mutual and genuine attraction. In *The Title-Mart*, for example, Edith Blackwell, “A modern, strenuous, American girl. Incidentally, an heiress,” and the Marquis of Tredbury, “A young nobleman in financial straits,” are seeking to marry for social kudos and financial profit respectively. However, the play, a convoluted comedy of concealed and mistaken identities, achieves a happy ending by having Edith and Tredbury fall truly in love with each other while each is disguised as someone less distinguished. Tredbury is an incorrigible cynic and Edith believes that “Love is *bourgeois*,” that “only the lower classes and fools marry for love,” and that the American upper classes

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<sup>177</sup> Citation: Burnett, *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, 230.

<sup>178</sup> Constance Cary Harrison, *The Anglomaniacs* (London: Cassell & Company, 1890); Gertrude Atherton, *His Fortunate Grace* (London: Bliss Sands and Co., 1897); Winston Churchill, *The Title-Mart: A Comedy in Three Acts* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1905).

“are learning better ... nowadays our marriages are arranged.”<sup>179</sup> Nevertheless, against their own judgments, they each find themselves deeply attracted to someone who, they think, is below their station; social or financial ambition plays no part in their feelings. Once their true identities are revealed, they marry, conveniently fulfilling both their genuine desires and pragmatic ambitions. For the middle-class theatre-going audience, the message is that love is not after all a bourgeois construct, but a universal emotion, impossible for even avaricious aristocrats and haughty heiresses to ignore. Much like the newspapers and magazines that simultaneously revelled in and reviled title-heiress marriages, works like *The Anglomaniacs* and *The Title-Mart* try to have their proverbial cake and eat it. They offer the commonplace objections to international unions, while simultaneously keeping alive for their republican audiences the fairytale of the American woman who falls in love with and marries the English aristocrat. Even Mark Twain’s *The American Claimant* (1891), a relentless satire on Americans who idolise the English aristocracy, ends by celebrating the *Queechy*-esque marriage of lowly Sally Sellers to an English lord.<sup>180</sup>

Atherton’s *His Fortunate Grace*, having throughout seemed to endorse the calls of several characters for American women to ““raise the self-esteem of our own men,”” by ““vow[ing] not to marry any foreigner of title,”” concludes with the loving marriage of American heiress Augusta Forbes to an English duke (110-111). Augusta’s father objects both because Augusta’s enormous dowry will be used to ““prop up a rotten aristocracy”” and on eugenicist grounds (139). Disgusted by the

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<sup>179</sup> Churchill, 212.

<sup>180</sup> Mark Twain, *The American Claimant* (1891), in Twain, *The Complete Novels* (Garden City, N.Y.: Nelson Doubleday Inc., no date): 1-186. Twain also satirises the American obsession with ye olde England in *A Connecticut Yankee*. Mark Twain, *A Connecticut Yankee at King Arthur’s Court* (1889; London: Penguin, 1971; reprint, 1986).

physicality of the “small, delicately-built” duke, Mr. Forbes growls, ““Sooner than have that puny demoralised creature the father of my grandchildren, I should gladly see Augusta spend her life alone”” (32, 129). Mr. Forbes, who as well as a successful businessman is a respected politician, imagines a weakening of healthy American stock, both financial and genetic, if Augusta marries ““this whelp”” (131). Forbes’s socially ambitious wife, however, ensures the marriage takes place, and by the end his concerns have been largely overshadowed by the couple’s genuine connubial happiness, although the very final paragraphs do introduce a note of ambivalence, with the suggestion that the stress caused by his daughter and wife’s defiance has exhausted Mr. Forbes and damaged his, rendering him unable to continue his political and economic good work for the American nation.<sup>181</sup>

These works capitalised on Americans’ fascination with title-heiress marriages and on their enduring fascination with ‘the old country,’ which had recently been given enormous impetus by Frances Hodgson Burnett’s staggeringly successful children’s story *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886). The book sold out its initial 10,000 print run almost as soon as it was published, was one of the year’s three top bestsellers, and by 1893 was in three-quarters of American libraries.<sup>182</sup>

Burnett spent the first fifteen-and-a-half years of her life in poverty in Manchester, England.<sup>183</sup> Her father having died when Burnett was just three, in 1865 Burnett’s

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<sup>181</sup> Atherton’s later novels move towards a more unequivocally sceptical view of title-heiress marriages. Gertrude Atherton, *American Wives and English Husbands* (1898: London: Collins, 1908); Gertrude Atherton, *Tower of Ivory* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910).

<sup>182</sup> Ann Thwaite, *Waiting for the Party: The Life of Frances Hodgson Burnett, Author of The Secret Garden* (London: Penguin, 1974; reprint, 1994), 82, 93-96.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

mother moved the family to America, to join an uncle whose dry-goods store had flourished during the Civil War. By the time the Burnetts arrived in Tennessee, however, the war had ended, Uncle William's business was struggling, and the family found themselves poorer than ever. Burnett wrote fiction primarily to make money and stave off destitution.<sup>184</sup> By the time she wrote *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, Burnett had been publishing successfully for almost twenty years, but it was the tale of the seven year-old American boy who suddenly finds himself heir to an earldom that secured Burnett's worldwide fame and lasting fortune. This was 1886 and Burnett had been reading Henry James, with whom she would later become friends, since the 1870s.<sup>185</sup> During that decade and throughout the remainder of her life, she travelled frequently between Britain and America. In a 1901 feature, *The New York Times* described Burnett as a quintessentially transatlantic figure, noting her "unusual mixture of English and American characteristics" and recalling her speaking one moment with "all the fire of the true daughter of the Republic" and "the next moment, she was speaking of the green lawns and ancient trees and storied turrets of her English country home with the same sense of pride and satisfaction."<sup>186</sup> It was maybe unsurprising that she, like James, would write about the encounter of republican ideals with a social system based on hereditary class. Like Warner, Melville and Alcott before her, Burnett would in *Little Lord Fauntleroy* write about Americans joining the English aristocracy as a fantasy of economic escapism. Her own finances may as a professional writer finally have been secure, but, as Burnett's biographer Ann Thwaite

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<sup>184</sup> When in 1868 she submitted her first short stories to *Ballou's Magazine* to be considered for publication, she ended her brief cover letter with the blunt statement, "My object is remuneration." Quoted in Thwaite, 33; no further reference given.

<sup>185</sup> Thwaite, 70.

<sup>186</sup> Anon., "Mrs. Burnett: A Visit to Her Home in London," *New York Times*, 15 June 1901, sec. BR, p.12.

observes, poverty haunted her and escape through a “sudden reversal of fortune” remained a “favourite theme throughout her life.”<sup>187</sup> In common with *Queechy* and *Little Women*, however, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* is not so much a story of rags to riches as of genteel poverty to riches.

The eponymous hero of *Little Lord Fauntleroy* is Cedric Errol, a “handsome, cheerful, brave” seven-year-old American (20). While visiting America, Cedric’s father, Captain Errol, youngest child of the Earl of Dorincourt, met and fell in love with the paid companion of a rich American woman. On writing to tell the Earl, “a very rich and important old nobleman with a very bad temper and a very violent dislike to America and Americans,” that he wished to marry this young American, the Earl disowned his son (3). The story begins after Captain Errol’s death, following which Cedric and his adored mother live in that kind of middle-class ‘poverty’ so familiar to us in Victorian novels – not much money, but enough to maintain a servant. Cedric is not aware of his aristocratic lineage, and he admires the republican, anti-monarchical diatribes of his friend Hobbs, the local grocer. Then, a lawyer arrives from England and tells Mrs. Errol that, following the deaths of Captain Errol’s two older brothers, Cedric is now Lord Fauntleroy, next in line to his grandfather’s earldom. Cedric is whisked to England, where his energy, innocence, “kind heart” and irrepressible, democratic desire to help those in misfortune transform his grandfather from a curmudgeonly old man, neglectful of his impoverished tenantry, into a benevolent and beloved patriarch (166). Money is distributed to the sick and needy, “squalid” cottages are torn down and replaced with decent housing, and the village as a whole is

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<sup>187</sup> Thwaite, 39.

revitalised (164). Like Fleda in *Queechy*, Cedric reinvigorates an ageing English aristocracy and reconnects it to the populace supposedly in its care. At the start of the novel, Hobbs proclaims the English aristocracy will ““get enough of it some day, when those they’ve trod on rise and blow ‘em up sky-high – earls and marquises and all! It’s coming ...!” (12). By the end, however, such revolutionary events have been averted and at Cedric’s eighth birthday party, the working people of the Dorincourt estates “drunk the health of the Earl with much more enthusiasm than his name had ever been greeted before” (236). Even Hobbs, who visits Cedric in England and decides to stay, foregoes his rabid republicanism and “became in time more aristocratic than his lordship himself... [He] read the Court news every morning, and followed all the doings of the House of Lords!” (238). As Warner had in *Queechy*, Burnett, who Thwaite describes as believing “in charity and opportunity rather than revolutionary change,” demonstrates the potential benefits of Americanisation on English society, but in doing so keeps in tact the aristocracy so that it can remain a fantasy destination for impoverished Americans.<sup>188</sup> It is, as the text itself says, “a fairy story” (78). Again like *Queechy*, one can understand why *Little Lord Fauntleroy* appealed to readers on both sides of the Atlantic: it simultaneously flatters Americans, promoting the benefits of American values on British society, and offers to British readers a soothing vision of a benevolent aristocracy resuming its nurturing, paternalistic care of a grateful populace.

Cedric’s mother accompanies her child to England. Initially detested by the Earl, who blames her for having led astray his favourite son, she is installed in a cottage on the

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<sup>188</sup> Thwaite, 46.



Dorincourt estate rather than living in the manor house with Cedric and his grandfather. Cedric's daily visits to his mother are, we are told, crucial in him maintaining his American-bred values of fairness and generosity, even when "gifts and pleasures were lavished upon him" by the Earl: "he might have been spoiled by it, if it had not been for the hours he spent with his mother at Court Lodge" (146). Eventually, the Earl discovers that little lord derives his good looks and pleasing qualities from Cedric's mother, with her "pretty dignity" and "sweet face," as well as from Captain Errol, and he relents, finally welcoming "his son's wife" into his home (213, 235). Unlike the American heiresses who wed European noblemen and whose social ambition was punished with miserable marriages, the narrative ultimately rewards Mrs. Errol for her lack of social ambition, for having married an English nobleman for love rather than prestige, and having maintained that love despite his disinheritance and loss of his title. I have not yet established whether Burnett consciously intended *Little Lord Fauntleroy* to be a comment on elite international marriages. However, it seems reasonable to speculate that readers would have interpreted any Anglo-American love story in the context of the widespread and escalating debate over international marriages, and one can again understand why *Little Lord Fauntleroy* might appeal to audiences; it offers a moral counterpoint to the apparently acquisitive and loveless unions of the upper classes. The book was particularly beloved of middle-class readers – it caused a craze among bourgeois families in Britain and America for dressing their young sons in the kind of lace-collared, knee-length suits worn by Cedric – and it is indeed an impeccably bourgeois fantasy: the young woman of genteel poverty escapes upwardly, away from the toils and economic travails of everyday life, into the aristocracy, not because of calculated

social climbing, but thanks to that most cherished emotion of the middle classes: romantic love.<sup>189</sup>

Given that *Little Lord Fauntleroy* became popular during a period of increasingly contentious public discussion of the responsibilities of motherhood and wifedom, it is worth examining Mrs. Errol's role. It is useful to point out that we never during the entire story learn her first name or maiden surname. To Cedric, she is known just as "Dearest" (the name given to Burnett by her own sons), to the Earl as "his son's wife," and to everyone else as Mrs. Errol, the name she adopted on marriage. Even during the passage in which the narrative relates how she and Captain Errol met, she is described simply as "a companion to a rich old lady" (2-3). Mrs. Errol is defined solely by her relationships with other people, all of whom sit higher than her on economic and/or gendered social hierarchies. By contrast, Cedric has two names all to himself – Cedric Errol and Lord Fauntleroy – and is promised a third, Earl of Dorincourt, on his grandfather's death. If James's Madame Merle is correct in her proposition that we are *all* made up of a "cluster of appurtenances," not one of us has an essential and entirely self-constituted being. Even so, Mrs. Errol has even less individual selfhood than the other main characters in *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, all of whom are male. Her main role is as the ideal Victorian mother – she is genteel and domestic, and, when she lets Cedric live with the Earl, proves willing to sacrifice her own happiness to benefit her son. Every character who comes into contact with Mrs. Errol – the Earl's servants, Mr. Hobbs, Mr. Havisham (the Earl's lawyer), the villagers of Dorincourt, and, eventually, the Earl himself – praises her for having so

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<sup>189</sup> Thwaite, 71, 82, 86.

successfully nurtured Cedric. Cedric, in this story, is the American citizen who matters, while Mrs. Errol voluntarily takes on the function of supporting him. Her role is that of the symbolic, generic, good mother. She privately inculcates her son with attributes he will use and values he will circulate in civic life, but does not herself have a direct role in the public domain. Cedric at one point proudly says of his mother, ““My father left her to me to take care of, and when I am a man I am going to work and earn money for her”” (97). It is, of course, a sweet thought, but it also reinforces Mrs. Errol’s domesticity and passivity; there is no suggestion that she may have a role in the public sphere working and earning money. At the start of the novel, we do not learn how, given she no longer seems to work outside the home, Mrs. Errol maintains a house and servant, although we might speculate that her late husband, once an English army captain, left her with a military pension. As Cott has demonstrated, when the U.S. government introduced its widows’ pension scheme after the Civil War, it did so to discourage women from working outside the home, and reiterated a wife’s economic dependency on her spouse, even after the husband’s death.<sup>190</sup> Likewise, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* offers as its vision of ideal wifedom and motherhood a married woman who is connected to the civic and economic realm not directly, but through her son and dead husband.

The Earl’s eventual acceptance of his daughter-in-law is brought about when the old man visits her cottage. He is ““troubled”” and ““miserable”” and seeks solace from Mrs. Errol when another American woman, who claims to be the estranged wife of his oldest child, the late Bevis, emerges with a son and a competing claim to Cedric’s title

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<sup>190</sup> Cott, *Public Vows*, 103-104.

and inheritance (212). If Mrs. Errol is “simple and dignified,” pretty, sympathetic and intelligent, the rival American claimant’s mother is ““an ignorant, vulgar person’...‘absolutely uneducated and openly mercenary’” (184, 210). If Mrs. Errol is middle class, comfortably poor, the rival claimant’s mother is “common ... ‘from the lowest walks of life’” (207-208). To the Earl’s dismay, it seems the rival claimant might usurp his adored Cedric, but coincidence eventually saves the day. A friend of Cedric’s in New York, Dick the bootblack, reads in a newspaper of the controversy over the earldom and recognises from a photograph Minna as his own sister-in-law. Following this revelation, Minna’s son is proved not to be Bevis’s child and her claim exposed as fraudulent. Cedric’s rightful claim, of which we are directed to understand him to be morally deserving as well as hereditarily entitled, is restored.

The rival-claimant episode is not simply centred around Cedric and Mrs. Errol’s superiority in class and education, but also is deeply racialised. Cedric and his mother have “gold-coloured hair” and “rosy” skin (6, 7). Minna, however, as Dick describes, has ““big black eyes ’n’ black hair down too her knees’” and is ““part Itali-un – said her mother or father’d come from there’” (197). She is prone to fits of anger – ““a regular tiger-cat,”” says Dick, adding, ““She’d tear things to pieces when she got mad – and she was mad *all* the time,”” and noting that she once hurt her own son during such a fit. She has “a passionate temper and a coarse, insolent manner,” the narrator later notes (207). Lying, avaricious, lazy, uncouth, uncontrollable, animalistic, mentally unhinged, violent, and an irresponsible parent, the part-Italian Minna represents much of what white, Protestant America feared from the rising numbers of southern and eastern European immigrants landing on American shores during the late

nineteenth century. Mrs. Errol, by contrast, has passed not only desirable values to her son, but also the best of what the narrative calls “‘American blood’” to the athletic and virtuous Cedric, a biological inheritance that fuses English aristocratic D.N.A. with the American bourgeois variety (67). The story implies that if America is to have the kind of modernising and improving influence on the world that Cedric has on Dorincourt, it must protect itself from the sinister influence of new immigrants such as Minna. Who knows what would happen to Dorincourt under the guardianship of *her* son? The story acknowledges Minna’s alien influence to be tempting, especially sexually. Minna is, Dick admits, “‘a daisy-looking gal’” who is able to convince Ben, Dick’s brother, to leave his secure job in New York and head west to make more money for her; out West, though, Ben’s “‘luck had not been good’” (197, 198). “‘That gal,’” says Dick, “‘... took all the grit out o’him.’” America is in danger of having “‘the grit’” taken out of it by its new immigrants, who will render luckless even western endeavour, that key characteristic of American life and history. Manifest Destiny itself is at risk.

It is telling that Burnett chooses to stage a competition between old, white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant America and new, Catholic, immigrant America not in America itself, but in England.<sup>191</sup> England had not yet welcomed immigrants in any large numbers; in terms of the religion, language and skin colour of the overwhelming majority of its inhabitants, it resembled the United States of yesteryear (at least as imagined by a cultural mainstream that tended to marginalise Native Americans,

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<sup>191</sup> Mrs. Errol, noticeably, attends a Protestant church in England.

blacks, and non-English speakers in its national histories and characterisations.)<sup>192</sup> By the end of *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, Dorincourt has come to resemble that bucolic, Irvingesque vision of happy, peaceful, socially cohesive Olde England. Arguably, that vision was now attractive to America's predominantly white bourgeoisie not just as a fairytale of economic escapism and as historical romance, but also as a racialised fantasy of social retrogression. Certainly, reviews and articles about *Little Lord Fauntleroy* over the twenty years following its publication found the appeal of the novel and its main character to be that both were "old fashioned."<sup>193</sup> One piece attributed Cedric's "so very healthy and so very attractive" characteristics to his "favorable conditions of birth and breeding;" another traced his "goodness" to "the qualities he has inherited from his father," while yet another celebrated Burnett for producing such a "well-bred" central figure.<sup>194</sup> Such comments articulated a belief in Cedric's Anglo-American biological heritage as the source of his "goodness" and vitality. In an article in 1898, Mary Sherwood talked of "the hearty English blood" with which Burnett had infused *Little Lord Fauntleroy*.<sup>195</sup> Only *The Catholic World*, possibly offended by the depiction of the Italian Minna, suggested that Cedric's success might be a result not of biology but of social circumstances; in an article about the provision of library books for the poor, it commended "a Catholic boy

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<sup>192</sup> Zwerdling notes that at the time "Britain's immigrant pool was tiny compared to that of the United States" and that it was not until 1902, at the first sign of an influx of "'undesirable' aliens," that the government moved to restrict immigration. Zwerdling, 59-60.

<sup>193</sup> See, for instance: Frederic Adye, "Old-Fashioned Children," *The Living Age* no.198:2569, 30 September 1893, p.819; 'Pendennis,' "Mrs. Hodgson Burnett's Plea for the Child," *New York Times*, 19 March 1905, sec. SM, p.3.

<sup>194</sup> Anon., "Book Reviews," *Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine* no.12:68, August 1888), p.670; H. Sutton, "The Children of Fiction," *The Living Age* no.195:2522, 29 October 1892, p.262; 'Pendennis,' p.3.

<sup>195</sup> Mrs. Sherwood, "Books That Society Reads," *The New York Times*, 22 January 1898, sec. BR, p.54.

...[with] neither the leisure nor the educational environment of little Lord Fauntleroy” for his “eager” and “intelligent” consumption of literature.<sup>196</sup>

With centres such as Boston and New York increasingly becoming “polyglot cities of swarming tenements, clanging streetcars and Catholic immigrants” wearing foreign dress and speaking in foreign tongues, many middle-class, white Americans felt themselves embattled by immigration, no longer secure in their political or social primacy.<sup>197</sup> Burnett’s bucolic England, by contrast, offered an image of a place where “well-bred” Anglo-Americans were fully entitled (literally en-titled) to rule, and could even repel the claims of immigrants like Minna. Having been exposed as a fraud, Minna, notably, “took the train to London, and was seen no more” (226). Burnett wishes away once and for all the perceived threat of immigration.

Towards the end of the tale, when the Earl throws Cedric a birthday party to which the whole village is invited, the young lord comments that the event, with its “dancing and games in the park, and bonfires and fireworks in the evening,” is ““Just like the Fourth of July,”” and continues, ““It seems a pity my birthday wasn’t on the Fourth, doesn’t it? For then we could keep them both together”” (230). Dorincourt resembles not only Irving’s England, but also an idealised, “old-fashioned,” i.e. pre-mass-immigration America. The sentiment overlooks the political differences between Britain and America to suggest a more fundamental kinship. Cedric has symbolically reunited America and Britain.<sup>198</sup> The Anglo-American reconciliation is underscored

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<sup>196</sup> Anon., “The Columbian Reading Union,” *Catholic World* no.54:324, March 1892, p.933.

<sup>197</sup> Temperley, 64.

<sup>198</sup> *The American Claimant* seems about to do the same, Berkeley and Sally’s marriage promising “to reconcile York and Lancaster, graft the warring roses (i.e. the American claimants and

on the very final page by the ultra-republican Hobbs's easy acceptance of life in Dorincourt and friendship with the Earl. Dorincourt resembles America, and America – the America of Mr. Hobbs' beloved Fourth of July and Declaration of Independence – lives on, if not in America itself, beleaguered as it apparently is by “part Itali-un[s],” then in England, or, at least, a romanticised version of England. Similarly, Cedric, the English lord and earl-to-be, is the ideal U.S. citizen: the faultlessly Anglo-Saxon standard-bearer for democratic America. Of course, Mrs. Errol, whose “beauty” and values Cedric inherits and whose selflessness means that he can go to England to claim his title, enables this cheerful, if paradoxical conclusion. However, she is, as we have seen, denied individuality by the text. In a sense, this is entirely logical; what is important to the narrative is not her selfhood, but her facilitative relationship to the men around her – her part is to ensure the continuance of the all-male Dorincourt line that is threatened by the deaths of the Earl's three sons. This was how *Living Age* approvingly interpreted her role; its unreservedly delighted reviewer commented: “even the mother herself, sweet as she is, gains reflected glory from the child who is so bright and beautiful, and brimful of what is most charming in childhood.”<sup>199</sup> Mrs. Errol enables property and title to pass from one citizen-who-matters to another, from the Earl to his grandson. In doing so, the pair regenerate Dorincourt and create in the English countryside a kind of utopian Anglo-America, overseen by a benevolent aristocracy informed by republican ideals. Mrs. Errol is recognised and valued by the narrative, but primarily for her non-participative contribution to an all-male public realm. Here, it is worth recalling Matthew

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incumbent aristocrats) upon one stem,” and having the Earl of Rossmore and Mulberry Sellers become friends (156). However, the end of the novel somewhat undercuts this promise by having Mulberry decide against a visit to England and instead pursue schemes to buy Siberia and employ science to manage “the climates of the earth according to the desire of the populations interested” (181)!

<sup>199</sup> Sutton, p.264.



Lindsay's description of shifts in U.S. marital culture during the final quarter of the nineteenth century: "As professional eugenicists, politicians, social scientists, family reformers, and journalists came to view the hereditary quality of the American population as a crucial determinant of the country's future,... patriotic motherhood was presented as an obligation for women who wished to remain dutiful to their nation." Mrs. Errol certainly fulfils her duty of "patriotic motherhood," siring a blond-haired, rose-cheeked son, in whose hands the fruitful and fair future of America is safe, albeit a mythical America located in England.

*Little Lord Fauntleroy* was credited by some of Burnett's contemporaries, including Prime Minister William Gladstone, as having tangibly improved Anglo-American relations.<sup>200</sup> It certainly anticipated the official rapprochement that occurred in the mid-1890s, especially in its race-based logic. Ironically, the catalyst for this rapprochement was a territorial dispute that briefly brought Britain and America to the brink of a third Anglo-American war. The dispute centred on the border between British-owned Guiana and the independent state of Venezuela. When the Venezuelan government felt Britain was encroaching on its territory, it appealed for protection to the U.S. government under the terms of the Monroe Doctrine, which warned European powers away from interference in the Americas. The argument between Britain and the U.S.A. over the border had started in the late 1880s but reached a dramatic peak in 1895, in part because President Cleveland identified a stand-off with Britain and an affirmation of the Monroe Doctrine as a potential vote-winner in the following year's presidential elections, and also because of growing concern that

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<sup>200</sup> Thwaite, 86; Zwerdling, 31.

American access to important trade routes were at risk if, as suspected, Britain expanded its empire further into South America. In July and December 1895, Cleveland sent “belligerent” messages both to Congress and to the British government suggesting that failure by the British to agree to immediate arbitration with Venezuela might lead to war with America.<sup>201</sup> For a few days, the U.S. public supported Cleveland, the dispute provoking outbursts in the press of vehement Anglophobia.

However, Charles Campbell writes, “just as quickly the excitement subsided.”<sup>202</sup> The prospect of war provoked a flurry of selling on New York’s Stock Exchange and, during what was already a period of economic downturn, the country’s finances took an unexpected battering. On Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December, the nation’s clergymen, “in pulpit after pulpit, roundly rebuked” Cleveland.<sup>203</sup> The business community withdrew its support and newspapers could be seen performing hasty 180° turns.

The British public had been largely unaware of the Venezuela dispute until Cleveland’s December missive prompted panic in Westminster and politicians called for calm. Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain announced: “While I should look with horror upon anything in the nature of fratricidal strife, I should look forward with pleasure to the possibility of the Stars and Stripes and the Union Jack floating together in defence of a common cause sanctioned by humanity and justice.”<sup>204</sup> Now in America too there were widespread calls not only for resolution of the Venezuela issue by diplomatic rather than military means (and negotiations did indeed begin

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<sup>201</sup> Campbell, 181.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid., 182.

<sup>203</sup> Ibid.

<sup>204</sup> Reported in *The (London) Times*, 27 January 1896; cited Campbell, 183.

within weeks), but also for a permanent system of arbitration between Britain and America that would guarantee permanently peaceable transatlantic relations. Public petitions to this effect were signed by thousands on both sides of the Atlantic, one in Britain proclaiming that “all English-speaking peoples united by race, language, and religion, should regard war as the one absolutely intolerable mode of settling the domestic disputes of the Anglo-American family.”<sup>205</sup>

Just a few weeks after the Venezuelan *volte-face*, this new spirit of Anglo-American friendship received a boost from another international incident. When British subjects were captured raiding goldfields in the South African Transvaal, the German Kaiser telegraphed congratulations to the Boer president.<sup>206</sup> This move was viewed in Britain and America as evidence that the intention behind Germany’s recent naval expansion was a challenge to Britain’s long-held control of the world’s seas, a situation from which the U.S.A. benefited, for it meant easy passage of American goods to Britain, its most important trading partner, and that America could limit naval expenditure, safe in the knowledge Britain would protect secure navigation of the Atlantic for vessels of both countries.<sup>207</sup> The Venezuela controversy had shown Americans the folly of provoking war with Britain, and Britain, then occupied with greater problems in other parts of its globe-spanning empire, had no desire for conflict with a nation with which it had enjoyed stable, if not always entirely harmonious, relations since the 1870s. Both Britain and America had prospered during recent decades and the realisation that Germany might upset what was for both countries a favourable balance of global power underlined for public, press and politicians the

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<sup>205</sup> Quoted in Campbell, 183; no further reference given.

<sup>206</sup> Campbell, 182-183.

<sup>207</sup> Temperley, 65.

importance of co-operation. One modern historian succinctly describes the situation thus:

Quarrelling with fellow Anglo-Saxons in the face of a Teutonic menace that threatened the interests of both was absurd. Thanks to the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884, Britain could now claim to be a liberal democracy much like the United States. Germany, in contrast, was an autocratic power, governed by a militaristic elite, bent on overturning a world system long taken for granted.<sup>208</sup>

Very quickly, Britain and America found themselves allies. Over the following few years, treaties were signed regarding long-contentious issues such as the Canadian border and Atlantic fishing rights; there was agreement over the building of the Panama Canal, so crucial to both nations' trade interests; and the two countries joined forces to establish the Permanent Court of Arbitration at The Hague. The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 was met with almost as much public mourning in America as in Britain; for the first time, the White House flew its flags at half-mast in memory of a foreign sovereign. A few months later, when President McKinley was assassinated, memorial services were dedicated to him at St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey.<sup>209</sup> When the Boer War began in 1899, the British military effort was reliant on U.S. supplies of equipment and was part-funded by monies raised on the New York Stock Exchange and loans arranged by J.P. Morgan. The previous year, the U.S. had launched what Secretary of State John Hay called its "splendid little war" to wrest control of Cuba from Spain.<sup>210</sup> Although Britain's official line was neutrality, it effectively threw its weight behind America. "Within hours of the news that the United States had declared war thousands of red, white and blue streamers decked buildings in London and the British press came out enthusiastically on the American

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<sup>208</sup> Temperley, 78.

<sup>209</sup> Zwerdling, 21.

<sup>210</sup> Cited in Boyer et al, *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 611. No reference given.

side.”<sup>211</sup> There was “an outpouring of British sorrow” when the U.S. warship *Maine* was sunk by an explosion at Havana, an expression of solidarity that the *London Daily News* attributed to “a community of race.”<sup>212</sup> It was rumoured that British vessels had helped to repel a German naval squadron that intended to intervene on behalf of the Spanish. Although the story was not quite true, it was long believed by Americans, who were now willing to see straightforward friendship and common interest in British actions.<sup>213</sup>

With Cuba won, the British government reversed its traditional opposition to American overseas expansion and encouraged the U.S. to continue on to annex Hawaii and the Philippines. This last act prompted Kipling’s famous poem, in which he urged America to “take up the white man’s burden,” the British ‘duty’ of spreading Christian civilisation to the “newcaught, sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child” of the world’s colonised lands, and in which he warned of the problems as well as the glories of imperialism.<sup>214</sup> There were even calls from prominent figures such as Andrew Carnegie (a Scot who made his vast fortune in America) and Chamberlain (an Englishman married to an American) for Britain and the United States to consider formal reunification. Even before 1895, Carnegie had contributed to a series of essays about reunification published by *The North American Review*, the surprising fact about which, as Zwerdling points out, is that “most of the essays concern the timing

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<sup>211</sup> Dimpleby and Reynolds, 35.

<sup>212</sup> *London Daily News*, 17 February 1898; quoted in Campbell, 191.

<sup>213</sup> Temperley, 78.

<sup>214</sup> Rudyard Kipling, “The White Man’s Burden (The United States and the Philippines,” in Kipling, *Selected Poems*, edited by Peter Keating (1899; London: Penguin, 1993), 82-84. See Zwerdling, 26, for more on Kipling’s poem.

and practical details of such a union, not its wisdom or viability.”<sup>215</sup> In a 1901 interview, Frances Hodgson Burnett approvingly reflected on a growing understanding that Britain and America were now locked into a symbiotic relationship:

I hold that no-one today, in our complex civilization, can be thoroughly and symmetrically developed unless he knows and lives in both countries. We are nowadays too complicated and many-sided to be satisfied by what either one of these countries alone can offer us; we need both of them.<sup>216</sup>

As Campbell notes, although the events of 1895—1896 came as a surprise, rapprochement “should have been anticipated.”<sup>217</sup> After all, since 1812, no Anglo-American dispute, not even during the Civil War, had led to actual conflict; the two nations still shared a literary and artistic culture; many families in Britain had relatives in the States, and vice-versa; politically, Britain was increasingly resembling a democratic society, in part because of American example and influence; each nation was the other’s primary overseas market for its goods; the ever-increasing ease of travel between the two countries had fostered familiarity; and since Irving, in America Britain had been viewed as having made a positive contribution to American history as much as it was seen as the tyrannical former coloniser.

*Little Lord Fauntleroy* was not the only literary work in the years prior to official rapprochement to acclaim kinship between Britain and America and to fantasise about reunion. Arthur Conan Doyle’s “The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor” (1892), another tale of transatlantic marriage, ends with Sherlock Holmes – speaking on behalf of Doyle – telling Dr. Watson:

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<sup>215</sup> Zwerdling, 28.

<sup>216</sup> Anon., “Mrs. Burnett: A Visit to Her Home in London,” p.12.

<sup>217</sup> Campbell, 189.

'I am one of those who believe that the folly of a monarch and the blundering of a minister in far-gone years will not prevent our children from being some day citizens of the same world-wide country under a flag which shall be a quartering of the Union Jack with the Stars and Stripes.'<sup>218</sup>

In "Lady Barberina," James had offered a visionary character, Lady Marmaduke, who, like Carnegie and Chamberlain, believes enthusiastically that "an ultimate fusion [of Britain and America] was inevitable," and who sees facilitating and encouraging the marriage of Jackson Lemon to Lady Barb as a means of furthering her cause (216). Lady Marmaduke's philosophy is: "They were one race, after all; and why shouldn't they make one society – the best on both sides, of course?" (239). As it turns out, far from bringing Britain and America closer together, Lemon's marriage to Barb only exposes apparently deep and enduring differences between the two countries. Lady Marmaduke's hopes are exposed as naïve. That was 1884, however, and by 1888 James himself was confessing in a letter to his brother William that he now thought of "the life of the two countries as more or less continuous"; "I can't look at the English and American worlds, or feel about them, any more, save as a big Anglo-Saxon total, destined to such an amount of melting together, that an insistence of their difference becomes more and more idle and pedantic."<sup>219</sup> Like so many speakers I have cited over the previous few paragraphs – Chamberlain denouncing Anglo-American war as "fratricidal strife," *The London Daily News* celebrating an Anglo-American "community of race," the petition that describes "all English-speaking peoples united by race, language, and religion" – James here exhibits his

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<sup>218</sup> Arthur Conan Doyle, "The Adventure of the Noble Bachelor" (1892), reprinted in Doyle, *The Penguin Complete Sherlock Holmes* (1930; London: Penguin, 1981), 299-300.

<sup>219</sup> Henry James, *Letters, 1883-1895*, vol. 3 of *Letters*, edited by Leon Edel (London: Macmillan, 1980), 244.

understanding that Britain and America share a racial affinity that he calls “Anglo-Saxon.”

Indeed, during the second half of the nineteenth century, there emerged in Britain and America what historian Stuart Anderson names a “doctrine of Anglo-Saxonism.”<sup>220</sup> This doctrine drew on the ideas of Darwin and the host of racial theorists who extended the Englishman’s evolutionary principles to include humans as well as animals. Darwinists held that the world’s population was divided into a number of races, each with particular strengths, weaknesses, and traits, and which, according to the precepts of natural selection, were in constant conflict with each other for resources and for primacy. Proponents of Anglo-Saxonism stressed their belief in the innate physical, intellectual and moral superiority of peoples descended from the ancient Anglo-Saxons that invaded Britain. They identified characteristics including love of liberty; capacity for self-government; the ability to conquer wilderness and make it fruitful; and honesty and chastity as among the key qualities of the Anglo-Saxons, and noted the lack of these qualities in other races. The Russians and the Germanic races preferred despotism to democracy, the Chinese were apparently untrustworthy, and the Latins simply corrupt. In other words, if any race could and should rule the world, it was Anglo-Saxons.

There had, of course, always been a belief among white, English-speaking people in their own racial superiority but Anglo-Saxonism refined and codified this belief into a powerful racialised worldview, which was propagated and accepted throughout white

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<sup>220</sup> Stuart Anderson, 12.



Anglo-America. Anderson in *Race and Rapprochement* (1981) and Zwerdling in *Improvised Europeans* (1998) have examined at length the history and popularisation of Anglo-Saxonism, recounting its development by leading historians, scientists, and philosophers, and its adoption and promotion during the 1870s, 1880s and 1890s by key members of the British and U.S. governments, including Roosevelt, Hay and Chamberlain, as well as the cultural and social elites of both countries. Anglo-Saxonism became so pervasive and so influential in the U.K. and U.S.A. that, Zwerdling contends, “around the turn of the century, what was called a ‘patriotism of race’ came close to replacing the traditional ‘patriotism of country.’”<sup>221</sup> There is a consensus among historians that the growing belief among politicians and the public that Britain and America belonged to the same “Anglo-Saxon total,” and an increasing allegiance to that cross-Atlantic ‘race,’ prepared the way for and underpinned the rapprochement of the mid-1890s. Economic fears may have been the real reason Americans retracted their threats of war with Britain in 1895, but the idea that such conflict would be “fratricide” could usefully be rolled out as a more satisfying reason for reconciliation. Anglo-Saxonism made Britain and America seem lined up on the same side against the world’s other races at a time when both countries needed an ally. Many Anglo-Saxonists warned that if the United States and the British Empire failed to work together, the entire race would be under threat from other races; better to stand united than fall divided.

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<sup>221</sup> Zwerdling, 34.

family lineage, a national population, a transnational group that shares aspects of culture or has supposedly identical biological inheritance, a skin colour, a religious sect, or any combination of the above.<sup>222</sup> The fact that among historians and scientists there were numerous different theories about what constituted a race, how many races there were, and what the races should be called, gives some idea of the fluid foundations of Darwinist thinking. As Zwerdling observes, though, it was, and still is, the multivalency and flexibility of the term that gives ‘race’ its power to be “opportunistically appropriated and modified to serve different ends.”<sup>223</sup> What is important is that, whatever white, English-speaking, British and American people at the turn of the century meant by the word, most believed themselves to belong to the same ‘race.’

In Britain, the idea of a race-based alliance with America was attractive because the country needed an ally to rebuff diplomatically and, if need be, militarily, the threat posed by Germany and Russia to the British Empire. In America, Anglo-Saxonism appealed to the W.A.S.P. population as a vocabulary and historiography that could legitimise restrictions on immigration; the doctrine held that the millions of southern and eastern Europeans arriving in America were less fit than the ‘native’ population to fulfil the country’s glorious destiny. Anglo-Saxonism could also be deployed to justify and secure British support for America’s overseas imperialist activity – as a continuation of the race’s “mission of civilizing the dark places of the earth.”<sup>224</sup> The Spanish-American War was imagined in Britain as in America as the “final chapter in a story of Protestant Anglo-Saxons beating Spanish Catholics that had started 400

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<sup>222</sup> See Stuart Anderson, 18-61; Jacobson, *Whiteness*, 1-28.

<sup>223</sup> Zwerdling, 32-33.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

years previously with the Armada.”<sup>225</sup> “Geopolitical necessity,” Zwerdling notes, was successfully “translated into the language of high idealism.”

Throughout the nineteenth century, the United States’s expansion across continental North America had been viewed with mistrust by Britain, and British colonisation of territory across the globe had been equally scorned by America. Now, at the very end of the century, the two countries spoke proudly of each other’s imperialist achievements, their mutual white man’s burden. As early as 1879, American historian John Fiske had predicted the ‘English race’ “would not rest ‘until every land of the earth’s surface that is not already the seat of an old civilization shall become English in its language, in its political habits and traditions, and to a predominant extent in the blood of its people.’”<sup>226</sup> Preparing public opinion for the Spanish-American War, Hay, then U.S. ambassador in London, soon to be secretary of state, pronounced in spring 1898, “we are joint ministers of the same sacred mission of liberty and progress, charged with duties.” and he composed a sonnet that lauded England as “the cradle of our race.”<sup>227</sup> The British public reciprocated; without irony, American Independence Day was celebrated across the United Kingdom on 4 July 1898, just as the Spanish-American War reached its swift conclusion. Having only recently seemed sworn enemies, at least in political terms, Britain and America were now blood brothers. By the midway point of the first decade of the twentieth century, the sway of Anglo-Saxonism on Anglo-American relations was in decline, the earlier “high idealism” complicated by new diplomatic quarrels and superseded by a more

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<sup>225</sup> Zwerdling, 24.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>227</sup> Tyler Dennett, *John Hay*, (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1933), 218; quoted in Stuart Anderson, 83.

*realpolitik* attitude.<sup>228</sup> Nonetheless, its impact had been decisive, ensuring the rapprochement of 1895 took deep root in both Britain and America as a relation based on something more fundamental than temporary political expediency, and establishing the basis of a ‘special relationship’ that lasts to this day. It is worth noting that in works like *The Title-Mart* and *The Anglomaniacs* – where, despite the criticisms of international marriages, the aristocrat and the American heiress are allowed by their authors to find love and marry – the aristocrat is an Englishman. Title-heiress unions may not be desirable to Americans but, apparently, if they were going to happen, better it be with an English aristocrat than a French, German, Italian or Russian one!

In an article written about Henry James in 1921, the critic Carl Van Doren characterises him as a “loyalist to the tongue of England,” who regarded the English-speaking world as a single united entity, for “it was language which outlined the empire of the English and bound its various parts together.”<sup>229</sup> James, in Van Doren’s portrait, understood London as the origin and “center” of this “Anglo-Saxon civilisation,” and Van Doren argues that the writer’s decision to live in the city was not a betrayal of “American patriotism” but an assertion of a commitment to something bigger. “The differing governments of England and the United States were simply nothing to him;” James was “a patriot to his race.”

More recently, Sara Blair and Zwerdling have both demonstrated that James, long before he wrote to his brother William in 1888 of “a big Anglo-Saxon total,” was developing in his travel writing and literary reviews in particular a proudly Anglo-

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<sup>228</sup> See Stuart Anderson, 148-178.

<sup>229</sup> Carl Van Doren, “America and Europe,” from *The American Novel* (New York, 1921), 188-189, 199-202; extracts reprinted in Shelston, 107-110. Citations: 108, 107.

Saxonist worldview that anticipated and influenced the Anglo-Saxonism promoted by journalists, politicians, novelists, philosophers and scientists during the rapprochement years of the mid-late 1890s.<sup>230</sup> Zwerdling notes that after his permanent move to London in the late 1870s James addresses works to “‘we Anglo-Saxons.’”<sup>231</sup> Blair argues that James’s “writing of race and nation” is characterised by complications, contradictions, revisions, and suggestive ironies, but nonetheless works towards a “peculiarly ‘internationalist’ or ‘cosmopolitan’” and definitely “racialized” ideal of an Anglo-American culture that, as Van Doren suggests, transcends national difference.<sup>232</sup> All three critics broadly agree that James’s project was to imagine into being this “Anglo-America,” as Blair calls it. It is not quite that, as Van Doren would have it, the differences between Britain and America “were simply nothing” to James, but that, like later Anglo-Saxonists, he regarded those differences as superficial in comparison to more fundamental similarities. In that letter of 1888, James states:

I aspire to write in such a way that it would be impossible to an outsider to say whether I am, at a given moment, an American writing about England or an Englishman writing about America ... and so far from being ashamed of such an ambiguity I should be exceedingly proud of it, for it would be highly civilized.<sup>233</sup>

Critically here, it is the writer who can achieve this “highly civilized state” of being recognisable not as English or American, but only as Anglo-American. Van Doren, Blair and Zwerdling all reveal how James promoted the artist – specifically, the author of fiction and literary non-fiction – as the central figure in defining and

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<sup>230</sup> Sara Blair, *Henry James and the Writing of Race and Nation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Zwerdling, 125-214.

<sup>231</sup> Zwerdling, 139.

<sup>232</sup> Blair, 9.

<sup>233</sup> James, *Letters*, 244.

describing to others to contours of a putative Anglo-America; the writer was the pioneer, lighting a trail for the rest of transatlantic society.

In thinking about James's first burst of international-marriage narratives, this might be telling. Stories such as "An International Episode" and "Lady Barberina" seem to depend upon insurmountable disconnections between Britain and America. Indeed, the differences between the countries were James's stock-in-trade, the raw materials of his early success; he needed Britain and America to misunderstand each other. Maybe, though, when in "Lady Barberina" James ridicules the match-making Lady Marmaduke for predicting that "an ultimate fusion [of Britain and America] was inevitable," he is not so much mocking the racial ideal, as undermining the woman's belief that reunification can be achieved through the international marriage plots of interfering aristocrats. It is instead, he might have said, the more subtle plots of the cosmopolitan writer that will realise an "ultimate fusion." If we interpret "Lady Barberina" this way, we start to see James's enumeration of various misunderstandings between English and American culture – attitudes to courtship and marriage settlements, differences between an aristocracy and an industrial plutocracy, modes of social etiquette – as serving a different purpose in the story. They are included not to underline the incompatibility of Britain and America, but quite the opposite: we are asked to understand them as trivialities, inconsequentialities that should not be allowed to disrupt or distract from the deeper likeness that ought to bond the two countries into "one society" defined by racial commonality.

One of the most prominent and fervent promoters of Anglo-Saxonism and formal Anglo-American reunification was English journalist W.T. Stead. His 1901 book *The Americanisation of the World* is an exhaustive analysis and celebration of America's rapidly increasing economic and cultural power, in which he argues that Britain's "definite displacement from the position of commercial and financial primacy is only a matter of time, and probably a very short time," and calls for the United Kingdom to "substitute for the insular patriotism of our nation the broader patriotism of our race, and frankly throw in our lot with the Americans to realise the great ideal of Race Union" so that "we shall enter upon a new era of power and prosperity."<sup>234</sup>

Throughout the book Stead delights in examples of Anglo-American cooperation. The one notable exception is the chapter titled "Marriage and Society."<sup>235</sup> Here, Stead rails against title-heiress marriages, coining the phrase "gilded prostitution."<sup>236</sup> He offers the usual explanations for the appeal to American women of a titled English husband: the attraction to "the susceptible female imagination" of "ancient lineage, ivy-clad castles, and the associations of a great historic name," coupled with their recognition that American men, "more immersed in business than men of a similar class in the Old World," make less attentive husbands than their English counterparts.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Stead, 5. Stead's comparison of declining British power with dynamic American expansionism had been a common feature of American nationalist writing since Cooper and Emerson. See Part One.

<sup>235</sup> Stead, 121-132.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

However, Stead also complains that far from helping to modernise English aristocracy, “this continual influx of American heiresses” retards social progress in Europe:

The unchecked operation of economic causes in the Old World, aided by the pressure of American competition, would, in the course of a generation or two, have destroyed feudalism in Europe.... But hey, presto! and behold, the American heiress descends like some maleficent fairy to arrest the process of disintegration and decay, and to give a new lease of power to the oligarchy which seemed to be descending into its grave. Old castles are repaired and upholstered with the aid of American dollars. Mortgages are paid off, and great estates restored to the possession of their nominal owners. The plutocracy of the New World, reinforcing the aristocracy of the Old, robs democracy of its destined triumph.”<sup>238</sup>

In Stead’s book, title-heiress marriage is just about the only undesirable type of Anglo-American unification. Stead does acknowledge that some marriages of prominent Europeans to American heiresses have had positive effect in being “conductors of American influence upon English and European life.”<sup>239</sup> These are, “however, a rare exception.”<sup>240</sup>

Burnett returned to the subject of Anglo-American marriage in *The Shuttle*, a novel on which she started work in 1900 but was not published until 1906 (in serialised form; 1907 as a book).<sup>241</sup> In it, she compares two examples of title-heiress marriage: timid Rosy Vanderpoel’s to Sir Nigel Anstruthers, an exemplarily “unscrupulous, sordid brute,” and her beautiful, talented, younger sister Betty’s to the stoic, heroic Lord Mount Dunstan (11). While Rosy’s marriage is a dramatically unhappy example of a woman duped with the fairytale of English nobility by an aristocrat desperate for

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<sup>238</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 126.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 124.

<sup>241</sup> Thwaite, 214.



money, a match cited by other characters as proof of the folly of title-heiress unions, Betty and Mount Dunstan's loving relationship promises fruitful Anglo-American cooperation – the riches of the sisters' father Rueben Vanderpoel's enormous business empire allied with Mount Dunstan's vast English estates. It is one of Stead's "rare exception[s]."

Significantly, while the small, "petted," "childlike" Rosy and the prematurely aged and possibly syphilitic Nigel have three children, two of whom die in infancy and the surviving one, Ughtred, is "delicate" and "hunchbacked," the tall and stately Betty and the physically impressive Mount Dunstan are destined, according to Reuben, to sire "splendid children ... and among them will be those who lead the van and make history" (9, 55, 103, 511). The novel is obsessed by the importance of family lines. Barely a chapter passes without mention of how Betty and Mount Dunstan have inherited their physical superiority and social mastery from ancestors – Betty from the first Rueben Vanderpoel, fur-trapper and founder of the family business dynasty, and Dunstan from his legendarily fiery medieval progenitor Red Godwyn (e.g. 56, 60, 99, 146, 183, 194). Their children will make history because their ancestors have; this is the logic of a novel that deploys a series of racial theories, all of which have the idea of inheritance at their core. Stringing these theories together, the novel argues that all great families are descended from a strong and noble "First Man," whose "Primeval Force" is lost in many descendants through poor marital choices or over-civilisation, but is reawakened in some individuals through a seemingly spontaneous "revival of type" (134-136, 185, 183). Dunstan is the archetype of this theory: his family estate has fallen into ruin in the hands of his dissolute father and older brother, but Dunstan

himself, the reincarnation of Red Godwyn, single-handedly tackles its rebuilding and regains the respect and obedience of his tenants when he proves his leadership qualities during a deadly outbreak of typhoid in his village. Like Dunstan, Betty possesses inherited qualities that her sibling lacks.

The novel begins in New York, where Rosy marries Sir Nigel. Betty, then a child, instinctively distrusts Nigel. She is proved correct; in Stornham, Nigel's "chilly and miserable," damp, "dreary," neglected, "ancient and ragged" English estate, Rosy is subjected to years of physical and psychological bullying, reducing her to a "faded little wreck of a creature" (41, 36, 104). Nigel denies Rosy contact with her family for more than a decade until Betty, now twenty, makes good on a childhood promise to rescue her sister. Betty arrives in Stornham while the increasingly vile Nigel is away pursuing an extra-marital affair, and she immediately sets to work rehabilitating Rosy and rebuilding Stornham.

Like Fleda Ringgan and Cedric Errol before her, Betty regenerates the moribund English estate, winning the admiration and adoration of Stornham's tenantry as she revives the village's flagging health and dwindling economy, improving its decrepit buildings, meeting Nigel's many unpaid bills with local tradesmen, distributing charity to the old and sick, and providing meaningful labour for Stornham's workforce. Betty uses her father's money to make Stornham thrive again. When Nigel finally returns, he promises to thwart Betty's plans to separate Rosy from him by threatening to use fabricated accusations of an affair in order publicly to shame his wife and win custody of Ughtred. He not only resents Betty's popularity in Stornham,

but also develops a sinister sexual interest in her. Nigel is particularly jealous of the younger, more virile Mount Dunstan, whose equally dilapidated estate adjoins his own, and with whom Betty is by now clearly in love.

Betty and Nigel's simmering feud comes to a head during an encounter in an abandoned cottage where Betty has taken refuge after hurting her ankle in a riding accident. Nigel is on the verge of raping the defenceless Betty when in the nick of time Dunstan, who Betty mistakenly believes has died in the typhoid epidemic, appears and saves her. He gives Nigel a thorough (and, the novel makes clear, deserved) beating, from which Nigel later dies – conveniently, for it saves Rosy the ignominy and legal jeopardy of a divorce trial. Betty and Dunstan declare their love for each other and the future of both Dunstan's estates and Stornham are secured.

Betty and Dunstan are figured as an Anglo-American Adam and Eve: "A great race might be founded on such superbness of physique and health and beauty" (325; see also 145, 148, 324). From the start, the novel establishes itself in the context of contemporary transatlantic relations. Its opening paragraph describes a metaphoric shuttle moving "to and fro between two worlds ... East and West," Britain and America, reuniting the two nations that had been divided by the "bitter quarrel" of the Revolution; it consists of commercial and cultural interactions that between the Revolution and early 1890s "drew them closer and held them firm" (1, 2). The twelve years of Rosie's effective incarceration at Stornham have been the rapprochement years of the 1890s and early 1900s – "years which initiated and established international social relations" between Britain and America (52). Anglo-American

marriages have, Burnett tells us, been part of this reunification, constituting a “cord of sex and home-building and race-founding” as one strand of “the web” between the two countries. The time is right, Burnett suggests with Betty and Dunstan, for a union that cements friendly, fruitful U.S.-U.K. relations; the marriage of the two nations is made to appear as natural and desirable as marriage between a man and a woman romantically predestined to love each other (2; see 123, 195, 198).

Underlying this is that familiar notion that Britons and Americans belong to the same race. Betty argues that Americans are essentially English:

‘I could never be convinced that *the old tie of blood* does not count. All nationalities have come to us since we became a nation, but most of us in the beginning came from England... It is only an English cottage and an English lane ... that wakes in us that little yearning, groveling tenderness, that is so sweet. It is nature calling us home’ (95; my italics).

Despite her own Dutch-sounding surname, Betty argues that Englishness has made both her family and nation great. She attributes the best American qualities – being “athletic and tall,” the “practical quality” of “doing things” – to English ancestry (126, 164). Betty proclaims of this “practical quality” that: “one of the results of it is that England covers a rather large share of the map of the world” (164). *The Shuttle* was published in book form in 1907, the peak year of immigration into the United States from southern and eastern Europe. More explicit about race and nationality than *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, it is pointed in its call for recognition that America is and should remain an Anglo nation rather than allow itself to be altered by immigration. Burnett tells us that Americans have developed useful characteristics of their own – primarily, the “commercial” qualities of “briskness and initiative,” of

which Betty is the embodiment – but they derive their fundamental nature from their Englishness (52).

The novel never uses the phrase “Anglo-Saxon” but is a decidedly Anglo-Saxonist text, arguing for the two nations’ racial kinship, and demonstrating the value of formally bringing together timeless English qualities – represented by Mount Dunstan’s honesty, hardiness and persistence – with those “commercial” abilities of the Americans, embodied in the Vanderpoels. If “England covers a rather large share of the map of the world,” “America,” the narrator remarks, now “ruled the universe,” one of numerous references to American cultural and economic power (53; e.g. 2, 59, 123). Burnett imagines a world in which British and American global power not only can co-exist but if put in tandem, as they are in Stornham and Dunstan’s lands, can uplift and regenerate failing communities. In essence, it calls for the genetically superior specimens of both nations to breed together to form for the benefit of mankind a “great race.” More than once a similarity is drawn between America’s commercial elite, at the pinnacle of which is Rueben Vanderpoel, and Britain’s aristocracy; the narrator notes that “the heads of the great American houses” are the American’s “nobles ... entirely parallel, in his mind, with heads of any great house in England” (230). Betty, in her benevolence towards Stornham’s villagers and effective leadership of them, and Dunstan in his fearless management of the typhoid crisis, demonstrate a keen sense of *noblesse oblige* that, Burnett implies, will stand the two nations in good stead to consolidate and expand America’s control of “the universe” and Britain’s rule over “rather a large share of the map of the world.” There is never any question of the rightness of Anglo-American global dominance, only a prevailing

sense that in together assuming control of Dunstan's lands and tenants he and Betty are fulfilling their personal, familial, national and racial destinies. In doing so, the couple consolidate the social power and pre-eminence of their respective classes – America's industrial plutocracy and Britain's aristocracy.

*The Shuttle* was a bestseller in both Britain and America, earning enough for Burnett to buy with the royalties a large, landscaped house on Long Island.<sup>242</sup> Its success suggests an appetite among the transatlantic reading public for stories of Anglo-American synergy, as well as a readiness to accept that the strengthening of the Anglo-American relationship should be conducted through the two nations' existing elites.

If *The Shuttle* shares its racial ideology with *Little Lord Fauntleroy*, it promises to differ in its approach to gender. Where Mrs. Errol is denied independent selfhood, Betty Vanderpoel dominates *The Shuttle*; intelligent, witty, capable, decisive, imaginative, admired, resourceful, and beautiful, she is its central figure and animating force. Rueben Vanderpoel believes “it is part of the evolution of race” that women should take on previously male-only roles, and Betty does just that in taking up management of Stornham (279). However, Burnett does not quite grant full autonomy and individuality to Betty. Realising she is falling in love with Dunstan, Betty admits that in his presence, “I am no longer Betty Vanderpoel,” implying that love involves an erasure of female identity (325). Just before this, unusually perturbed by Nigel, over whom in arguments she normally has the upper hand, Betty

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<sup>242</sup> Thwaite, 217.

realises, “She was a strong girl, but a girl, notwithstanding her powers” – that her gender brings with it unspecified limitations (310). At the novel’s end, when Dunstan rescues Betty from her would-be violator, the narrative resolves into a comparatively conventional tale of female weakness and male heroism. It seems that for Burnett, patriotism of race, just like patriotism of country, is ultimately to be secured by men, with women playing a supporting and, in the end, supplicant role.

### **Conclusion: Anglo-American Imperialism and the Politics of Love Stories**

In *Queechy* and *The Shuttle*, Anglo-American marriages revitalise an English aristocracy that otherwise seems destined to lose the respect and obedience of the working classes. In *The Shuttle* in particular, this simultaneously asserts the fitness for social government of an American heredity elite. Just as their ancestors helped tame the American frontier, so Fleda Ringgan and Betty Venderpoel bring order to near-destitute and potentially unruly English villages. The ‘old country’ itself has become a kind of frontier for these Americans.

Jack London’s novel *Adventure* (1911) deploys an Anglo-American love affair as a weapon of conservatism on another frontier. Set in the Solomon Islands, an outpost of the British Empire, the relationship between English plantation owner David Sheldon and the American Joan Lackland acts not only to express London’s “long-

standing belief in Anglo-Saxon supremacy” but also, ultimately, to contain Joan’s transgressive belief in female independence.<sup>243</sup>

*Adventure* in one sense replays *Queechy* and *The Shuttle*. Joan’s boat washes up on the shores of Sheldon’s Berande plantation in the immediate aftermath of a series of disasters – a dysentery epidemic, the death of Sheldon’s business partner, the loss of the plantation’s trading schooner – that have weakened the Englishman’s authority over his “horde” of “bestial, ape-like,” “sullen and defiant,” cannibalistic, native labourers (23, 7, 18). Although officially contract workers, Sheldon treats these “two hundred woolly-headed man-eaters” more like chattel slaves, using guns and whips brutally to repel their seemingly constant threat of “savage” uprising (17, 23). Joan discovers Sheldon suffering from severe fever and Berande under-productive and financially near-destitute. Having nursed Sheldon back to health and insisted on becoming his new business partner, Joan sets about “revolutionizing things” on the island (85). She strikes a bargain on an improved replacement schooner, introduces new business practices that make Berande “once more financially secure,” plants new crops that provide plentiful, healthful food, and builds a new hospital for the labourers (334). Like Fleda and Betty before her, the energetic and always-capable Joan revitalises what had seemed only recently a moribund English agri-business and ensures the continued domination of its current owners. The novel reproduces the relative economic trajectories of Britain and America. Between 1900 and 1920, the gross national product of the U.S. doubled, propelled by new industrial and bureaucratic methods, the spirit of which are captured in Joan, and it overtook Britain,

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<sup>243</sup> Robert Peluso, “Gazing at Royalty: Jack London’s *The People of the Abyss* and the Emergence of American Imperialism,” in *Rereading Jack London*, eds. Leonard Cassuto and Jeanne Campbell Reesman (Stanford, Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1996), 57.



which like Berande was in economic decline (albeit relative rather than absolute), as the world's leading manufacturing power.<sup>244</sup> ““What Berande needs is good American hustle”” (158), Joan tells Sheldon, echoing Stead's calls of a decade earlier for Britain to welcome an infusion of “American managers, American machinery, and American methods” into the U.K. economy.<sup>245</sup> Joan goes on to implement her own “forceful American methods,” which by the end of the novel have made Berande sustainable and profitable (236). Having insisted throughout the narrative that she would never return Sheldon's love for her (“I came to the Solomons for a plantation, not a husband;” “Getting married is not *my* way in the world”), in the final pages Joan admits her love for him, and agrees to be his wife (83, 266). Their unconventional living situation – an unmarried white man and woman, sharing a plantation house – has scandalised neighbouring islands' colonialists and jeopardised the long-term success of the business partnership, but now their engagement promises lasting power and profit.

Joan is less successful in her attempt to reform Sheldon's treatment of his slave-labourers. Initially she hopes to instil the same non-violent form of management that she practices with her own Tahitian sailor-bodyguards (“discreet kindness and gentleness”), but repeated attacks by the Solomon Islanders – which for London are never justifiable acts of anti-colonialism, but always animalistic and illegitimate outbursts of rebellion by “naked savages” – lead her eventually to compromise (98, 23). She “joined with Sheldon,” agreeing that “they must be gripped with the strong hand and at the same time be treated with absolute justice” (274). In London's

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<sup>244</sup> Anne Orde, *The Eclipse of Great Britain: The United States and British Imperial Decline, 1895-1906* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1996), 1-4.

<sup>245</sup> Stead, 139.

crudely racist depiction of them (“they’re a whole lot lower than the African niggers”), the Solomon Islanders are so “low in the order of human life” – infantile, superstitious, cannibalistic, incapable of self-management – that violence is made to appear the only form of government under which they will work and, paradoxically, live peacefully (95, 7). Joan may at first contend, “they are human beings, just like you and me” but she ultimately comes at least partially to share Sheldon’s assessment of the Islanders as “ape-like” (94, 7). As Sheldon predicts, Joan in the end learns the ‘necessity’ of using firearms against the labourers when they rebel. In his early notes for the novel, London envisaged her “final conversion to the fact that blacks are vermin.”<sup>246</sup> Within the published text, the violence and very un-humanness of the native population, even those Joan has treated with “kindness and gentleness,” seems intended to justify Joan and Sheldon’s frequent, violent and, where ‘need’ be, deadly suppressions of troublemakers.

In those preparatory notes for *Adventure*, London wrote of “The imperial race, farming the world.”<sup>247</sup> *Adventure* demonstrates British imperialism and American capitalistic methods combining to make a “primeval” island orderly and fruitful (314). Sheldon needs Joan’s vigour and business savvy, and Joan needs the hardy, fearless Sheldon’s (and, by extension, the British Empire’s) experience of playing “the role of the white man who must always be strong and dominant” (293). Each would fail without the other. America learns from Britain how to rule in far-flung territories, while Britain learns from America how to make that power pay better dividends.

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<sup>246</sup> Unnumbered manuscript notes to *Adventure*, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, California; cited in Clarice Stasz, “Social Darwinism, Gender, and Humor in *Adventure*,” in Cassuto and Reesman eds., 132.

<sup>247</sup> London, manuscript notes; quoted in Stasz, 132.

There is no question of the rightness of Euro-American rule in the Pacific; it is simply what Joan calls the “‘Blind destiny of race’” (102). The entire novel is engineered as an exemplar of Britain and America sharing “the white man’s burden”: Anglo-Saxons tasked by God with civilising the ‘dark spaces’ of the map, however dangerous and difficult the enterprise may be.

Since the mid-1890s, Britain and America had lauded each other’s imperial activities. America approved the extension of the British empire to span one-quarter of the earth’s surface and one-third of its inhabitants, and Britain supported the States’ growing involvement in Asia and Latin America.<sup>248</sup> Both countries used their military strength to gain control and crush rebellion in territories that, like Berande, held commercial promise and where imperialism could be justified by supposedly mentally and morally inferior native populations that ‘needed’ the civilising influence of the Anglo-Saxon people.<sup>249</sup> Although the two nations largely concentrated their efforts on different regions of the globe, politicians, press and public in both countries increasingly came to understand their efforts as part of a joint racial mission. This was confirmed by Anglo-American co-operation when and where both nations did have overlapping interests – the building of the Panama Canal, for instance. In *Adventure*, the enduring success of this mission is ‘proved’ to depend on Anglo-

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<sup>248</sup> Temperley, 59.

<sup>249</sup> Writing on late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century America, historian Matthew Frye Jacobson states: “the entire period from 1876 to 1917 is best understood as an imperialist epoch” and details a series of events in which the U.S. used deadly force over civilian populations to further its interests abroad, most notably in the Philippines. Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Barbarian Virtues: The United States Encounters Foreign Peoples at Home and Abroad, 1876-1917* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2000), 221-259. Citation, 224. At the same time, Britain was using its force across Africa and Asia. See: Lawrence James, *The Rise and Fall of the British Empire* (London: Abacus / Little, Brown and Company [UK], 1994 rep. 2001), 169-349.

American co-operation – sealed by Sheldon and Joan’s engagement – and on “‘the strong hand’” tactics of white rule over darker-skinned peoples (100).<sup>250</sup>

For Joan and Sheldon, success also entails the curtailment of Joan’s desire for absolute independence. “‘I demand to be considered as a man,’” she tells Sheldon at the beginning of their business partnership; he finds her “‘assumption of equality with him ... disconcerting” (119, 76). Until the final chapter, the novel seems to revel in Joan’s capacity to match and exceed male characters in a variety of skills – sailing, shooting, business, equestrianism. Sheldon sees her simultaneously as “‘hopelessly and deliciously feminine” and as a tomboy who wants only “‘a sexless *camaraderie* with men” (76, 128). This confuses and frustrates the straight-laced Sheldon, who unsuccessfully attempts time and again to impose on Joan his sense of gender propriety, encouraging her either to marry him, to recruit a chaperone, or to leave the island to silence their disapproving neighbours. Having fallen in love with her, he proposes marriage, which she rejects, prompting him to tell her, “‘the woman in you is asleep – and ... some day the woman will wake up” (270). In the concluding chapter, Joan succumbs, confesses her love for Sheldon and agrees to marry him. Her acceptance of Sheldon is figured as a “‘Capitulation,” the telling title of the chapter; the novel’s final image is a conventional one of a woman “‘nestled” in the arms of her protective man (374). London may allow Joan the final words, “‘I am ready, Dave,”

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<sup>250</sup> It is worth noting that the year *Adventure* was published, the U.S.A. backed a revolution in Nicaragua and the following year began a 21-year military occupation to support its investments in the country. Within America, the nation’s interventions overseas were conceived as a simultaneously a spreading of liberal political values and a good business opportunity. President Wilson famously enjoined business leaders in a speech in 1916: “‘You are Americans and are meant to carry liberty and justice and the principles of humanity wherever you go.... Go out and sell goods that will make the world more comfortable and more happy, and convert them to the principles of America.” That Joan’s investment in Berande promise financial returns renders her an embodiment of U.S. enterprise abroad. Citation: Boyer et al, *The Enduring Vision: A History of the American People* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 653; no further details given.

but they are spoken “almost in a whisper,” a marked contrast to the first time we encounter her, when she issues instructions to the stricken Sheldon in a tone “sharply imperative, a voice used to command” (49). Joan is silenced, as if Sheldon finally has her under control. Noticeably, Sheldon no longer calls Joan “boyish,” as he has repeatedly before now, but refers to her as “little girl” (370). Joan’s “disconcerting” challenge to normative gender roles has been repelled and clear masculine-feminine boundaries reasserted. Scott Derrick has observed that London often betrays a “desire to embrace an adventurous femininity” at the same time as seeking to “preserve the integrity of basic gender categories” and *Adventure* is typical of this.<sup>251</sup> Joan can only assume a position of “equality” as long as she effaces her own femininity. As soon as the woman in her “wake[s] up,” she becomes passive. London clearly intends that we accept this as the happy, rightful ending to the narrative; Joan’s “capitulation” is necessary for marriage, and marriage is necessary for Berande to continue to be successful. For London, the Anglo-Saxon imperial project rests on Sheldon and Joan’s assertion of racial supremacy, and then on Sheldon’s assertion of male superiority; the novel authorises the claims of white manhood to overall hegemony.

In 1912, the year after London published *Adventure*, *All-Story* magazine carried in its October edition the American author Edgar Rice Burroughs’s *Tarzan of the Apes*, the famous tale of “the aristocratic scion of an old English house” who is raised in the African jungle by apes and there becomes the dominant force over both humans and animals – the king of the jungle (39). Later published as a stand-alone book, *Tarzan*

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<sup>251</sup> Scott Derrick, “Making a Heterosexual Man: Gender, Sexuality, and Narrative in the Fiction of Jack London,” in Cassuto and Reesman eds., 113.

*of the Apes* was the first instalment of a series of novels, films and cartoons, the phenomenal popularity of which during the 1910s, '20s, and '30s can only be likened to *Star Wars* or *Harry Potter* in our own day. Over recent years, critics have written much about the way in which Tarzan narratives in print and on celluloid use Africa as “testing grounds” on which to demonstrate the mental and moral superiority of white over black, European over African, men over women, conventionally masculine men over “effeminate” men, and of the upper over the working classes (*The Return of Tarzan*, 17).<sup>252</sup> In mythic and vividly cartoonish terms, the Tarzan stories are engineered as parables of white, upper-class, male supremacy.

What is often overlooked, however, is the transatlanticism of the *Tarzan* stories. Burroughs wrote that in creating Tarzan he was “mainly interested in playing with the idea of a contest between heredity and environment. For this purpose I selected an infant child of a race strongly marked by hereditary characteristics of the finer and nobler sort.”<sup>253</sup> Burroughs wanted to show that race – nature rather than nurture – is the primary determinant of a person’s physical, intellectual and moral being. Tarzan’s “hereditary characteristics” – brave, intelligent, “stately and gallant” – equip him to become king of his jungle, and they ultimately predominate despite his upbringing by apes (*Tarzan*, 179). Howard Temperley notes that in the early twentieth century, so strong was the sense of Anglo-American racial alliance, British and American readers

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<sup>252</sup> For accounts of the Tarzan phenomenon, see: Eric Cheyfitz, *The Poetics of Imperialism: Translation and Colonization from The Tempest to Tarzan* (New York / Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991); 11-21; Richard J. Utz ed., *Investigating the Unliterary: Six Essays on Edgar Rice Burroughs' Tarzan of the Apes* (Regensburg: Verlag Ulrich Martzinek, 1995); John F. Kasson, *Houdini, Tarzan, and the Perfect Man: The White Male Body and the Challenge of Modernity in America* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 157-218. Citation re: “testing grounds”: Daniel Iwerks, “Ideology and Eurocentrism in *Tarzan of the Apes*,” in Utz ed., 87. Edgar Rice Burroughs, *The Return of Tarzan* (1913; New York: Del Rey / Random House, 1990).

<sup>253</sup> Cited in John Taliaferro, “Introduction,” to Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan of the Apes*, (1912; New York: The Modern Library, 2003), xiv; no reference given.

were happy to consume stories of white men triumphing over darker-skinned peoples regardless of their nationality: “It made little difference whether the enemy were Zulu or Sioux or the heroes British cavalymen or American cowboys.”<sup>254</sup> In the context of his aims for *Tarzan*, though, Burroughs’ specific choice of an English aristocrat as the subject for his experiment was crucial: Tarzan/Greystoke has an ancient lineage and we are, presumably, meant to understand that his virtues are inherited over numerous generations, in a way that might have been more difficult to demonstrate in an American hero.

However, the novel needs a catalyst to transform Tarzan back into Lord Greystoke, from “a beast of the jungle” into an English “gentleman,” and, notably, that catalyst is American: Jane Porter, the “fair American girl” whose travelling party improbably finds itself stranded in Tarzan’s jungle (194, 124). It is when he rescues and then falls in love with Jane that Tarzan, in his automatic desire to protect and impress her, begins to demonstrate the “hereditary instinct of graciousness which a lifetime of uncouth and savage training and environment could not eradicate.... [A]t last the instincts of the former predominated, and over all was the desire to please the woman he loved” (179). As the story progresses and Tarzan becomes evermore a “polished gentleman,” each has doubts about their relationship: Jane, understandably, wonders whether she can ever marry someone raised by apes and still prone to the odd outburst of animalistic behaviour, while Tarzan frets about giving up the freedom of the jungle for a life of civilisation (179). However, at the end of the second Tarzan novel, *The Return of Tarzan* (1913), after numerous danger-filled adventures and the

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<sup>254</sup> Temperley, 73.

death or dismissal of rival suitors, Tarzan and Jane do finally marry, as if to celebrate Anglo-American cooperation on the new frontiers of global imperialism.

In order to remove all the obstacles to their union over the course of *Tarzan of the Apes* and *The Return of Tarzan*, Tarzan repeatedly uses force to kill or suppress the Africans, Arabs and occasionally Eastern Europeans who threaten him and Jane. In *The Return of Tarzan*, among other events, this involves surviving the perils of the ancient city of Opar, from which Tarzan, having violently and successfully defeated the city's bloodthirsty pygmy-men, diabolical priests and sexually voracious priestesses, eventually removes a fortune in gold ingots and transports them back to Europe. The novel concludes on the deck of the ship that carries Tarzan and Jane back to England and with a double Anglo-American wedding – not only Tarzan and Jane, but also their friends, the heiress Hazel Strong and Lord Tennington. The future wealth and power of both couples has been secured by the ingots stowed beneath them in the ship's hold. It is a suggestive image, linking the appropriation of African riches and resources by the west with the centrality to Anglo-American culture of monogamous heterosexual marriage; the image of Tarzan's bloody plunder of Opar is replaced by a more comforting one of Christian harmony and Anglo-American symbiosis, the rightness of the marriages sanctifying and justifying the preceding carnage.

This is the end that, if we are 'good' readers, we have always desired: the noble Tarzan/Lord Greystoke and the virtuous Jane Porter united, and with a prosperous future. The novel is constructed in such a way that the pair cannot be married, though,



without the violent defeat of non-white people, and without Tarzan asserting his dominance over women, less masculine men, and people of 'lower' classes. I would suggest that in a culture that still prizes romantic love above all other human emotions, even today most western readers of the first two Tarzan novels cannot help but hope for a 'happy' ending in which Tarzan and Jane end up together. We as readers are made complicit with Burroughs's project. We are culturally conditioned to desire the mutual happiness of any two characters an author can convince us are in love. For a reader like me, a culturally conditioned sucker for even a half-decent love story, this is troubling, for I find one part of myself deploring the racism and imperialism of *The Return of Tarzan* while another part deems it important that Tarzan and Jane overcome the obstructions to their union. I feel I have been coerced into rooting for an ending that is freighted with implications I find unacceptable.

In the aftermath of World War One, Burroughs again deployed Tarzan and Jane's relationship as a symbol of Anglo-American alliance against common foes; in *Tarzan The Untamed* (1919-20), Tarzan/Greystoke righteously avenges Jane's apparent murder by a "sadistic German officer" by killing several other Germans.<sup>255</sup> The war accelerated America's ascension as a political, military and economic power, and the Second World War confirmed what historian Anne Orde calls the United States's "eclipse of Great Britain" as the dominant force in world affairs.<sup>256</sup> As the Anglo-American relationship has evolved, writers and film-makers have continued to use narratives of love and marriage as a means of registering such dramatic shifts in global power. Recently, for example, the 2004 television drama *The Grid* featured a

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<sup>255</sup> Citation: Kasson, 222. Edgar Rice Burroughs, *Tarzan the Untamed* (1920; New York: Ballantine Books, 1963).

<sup>256</sup> Orde uses the phrase as the title of her book.

burgeoning romantic relationship between a British MI6 counterterrorist agent and her American CIA counterpart as a symbol of rightful Anglo-American cooperation in the so-called ‘War on Terror.’<sup>257</sup> The configuration of allegiances may have changed since that other novel of spying and courtship, *The Spy*, but the deployment of transnational love stories for political ends has survived.

This thesis examines almost 100 years of Anglo-American history and literature. In that period, the United States developed from a new nation – whose political and cultural leaders were eager to promote its independence and exceptionalism, and to define their country by its differences to Britain – into a global power that (in part, at least) asserted its moral claim to world leadership through its racial kinship with ‘the old country.’ Over this century, the relationship between the two nations fluctuated between varying levels of animosity and friendship. As I hope I have demonstrated, at all moments, stories of Anglo-American love affairs, courtships and marriages remained a useful way for American writers to mirror and negotiate the wider transatlantic relationship and, in doing so, to promote their ideal versions of U.S. national identity. As we have seen, more often than not, American women were the key actors in these narratives, and the fictions double as opportunities to assert or to challenge the ‘proper’ place of women in the American nation. If writing this thesis has taught me one thing, it is that love stories are never free from ideology – placed under critical pressure, a love story readily reveals the assumptions, anxieties, and divides of the moment in which it is produced.

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<sup>257</sup> *The Grid*, dir. Mikael Salomon, BBC / TNT / Fox; broadcast in U.K.: BBC Two, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2004.

## EPILOGUE: EDITH WHARTON AND INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE

Related to New York's leading socialite, Mrs. Astor, and invited aged 21 to the city's annual debutantes' ball, where she 'came out,' Edith Wharton grew up and, until she removed herself permanently to Europe in 1911, spent her early adult life in the very social set, the New York elite, that provided so many brides for title-heiress marriages.<sup>1</sup> She was a childhood friend of Winthrop Rutherford, the man to whom the unfortunate Consuelo Vanderbilt was secretly engaged, but was forced by her overbearing mother to forsake for a more prestigious match with the Duke of Marlborough.<sup>2</sup> Wharton had first-hand knowledge of the social ambition that drove the international-marriage phenomenon and, through her acquaintances with several unhappy brides, of the misery such unions could engender.

Between 1904 and World War One, Wharton wrote a short story, novella, and novel about international marriage; after the war, two novels, one unfinished, both of which reflect on the 1870s and the start of the great age of title-heiress marriages. Taken together, these texts explore the public, political and personal aspects of title-heiress marriages, and especially the predicament of women involved in them. Propelled by her own socially ambitious mother into marriage with a man who, although she liked, she did not love, Wharton perhaps empathised with the frustrations, feelings of disempowerment, and constricted emotional lives of women like Consuelo Vanderbilt. Her first title-heiress tale, 'The Last Asset' (1904), is a short, sharp satire about a ruthless American mother who, "in want of social renovation," pulls off "a

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<sup>1</sup> Hermione Lee, *Edith Wharton* (London: Chatto and Windus, 2007), 722.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, 723; Adeline R. Tintner, *Edith Wharton in Context: Essays on Intertextuality* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 1999), 146-148.

superlative piece of business” by marrying her daughter into ““one of the oldest and most distinguished families in France,”” a masterstroke that involves some clever concealment of her own disreputable past (170, 167, 169).<sup>3</sup>

Wharton wrote her next tale of international marriage, *Madame de Treymes* (1907), in the run-up to the passage of the 1907 Expatriation Act.<sup>4</sup> Although there is no evidence she penned the novella with the Act specifically in mind, its narrative might be interpreted as a retort to the increasingly prevalent idea that it was unpatriotic for an American woman (but not a man) to marry a foreigner, a belief that was fuelled by criticism of title-heiress brides and on which the Act’s sponsors capitalised.<sup>5</sup> A replaying of James’s “Madame de Mauves,” it features another American man who fails to rescue a beautiful compatriot woman from her miserable marriage to a French aristocrat. Fanny de Malrives eventually chooses to stay in France rather than return to America with John Durham, her husband’s family having ensured that if she does, they will legally be able to claim custody of her beloved son. Fanny’s priority is to save her child from the “religious and political convictions” of his Catholic grandparents and instil in him the “free individualism” and ““energy ... and truth”” that for her characterises Americans (221). In this sense, Fanny adheres to the tenets

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<sup>3</sup> Edith Wharton, “The Last Asset” (1904), in Wharton, *Ethan Frome and Other Short Fiction* (London: Bantam Books, 1987), 159-190.

<sup>4</sup> Edith Wharton, *Madame de Treymes* (1906—07) in Wharton, *Madame de Treymes and Three Other Novellas* (New York: Scribner, 1995), 211-282. See Lee, 232, 306, for details of Wharton’s life as she was writing the story. It is worth noting that it was during this period Wharton was dividing her time between New York and Paris, where she would eventually take up permanent residence in 1911. In writing *Madame de Treymes*, the sympathetic story of an American woman who moves to Paris, one might argue she was defending her own decision to leave the United States.

<sup>5</sup> As Martha Banta points out, Wharton rarely dealt explicitly with “laws regarding women’s suffrage” or uses other “markers by which women defined their march through history between the 1840s and 1930s.” Banta argues that Wharton uses other “markers” – developments in women’s fashion, new technologies – to indicate narrative time and women’s changing restrictions and roles in society. Martha Banta, “Wharton’s Women: In Fashion, In History, Out of Time,” in *A Historical Guide to Edith Wharton*, edited by Carol J. Singley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 51.

of republican motherhood, dedicated to inculcating her son with American values even though it means sacrificing her own happiness. An exchange early in the story is telling. Durham assures Fanny, ““you’re still so good an American,”” to which Fanny responds, ““Oh, a better and better one every day!”” (218). On marriage, Fanny legally had become French, but her fidelity to American values transcends her official national identity, something that actually makes her a ““better”” American than Durham himself, whose ““Americanism,”” as Fanny calls it, has never been tested by the kind of experiences she has endured (216).

If the current public opinion of international brides was low, Fanny de Malrives might have been designed to appeal to American readers’ sympathies. The same could not be said of Undine Spragg, the central character of *The Custom of the Country* (1913), one of whose several socially ambitious marriages is to a French count.<sup>6</sup> The novel registers the post-1907 status of American women who marry foreigners. Madame de Trézac, a fellow title-heiress wife, tells Undine, ““a woman must adopt her husband’s nationality, whether she wants to or not. It’s the law, and it’s the custom besides”” (273). The utterly self-absorbed and self-interested Undine, however, refuses to become an obedient French wife in habit and thought not because of patriotism, feminism, or republican motherhood, but simply because continuing to behave as a wealthy, showy American better furthers her plans for social climbing.

In 1913, the year *Custom* was published, a challenge to the constitutionality of the 1907 Act made in the Californian courts, and later the Supreme Court, by a female-

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<sup>6</sup> Edith Wharton, *The Custom of the Country* (1913), with an Introduction by Anita Brookner, (London: Penguin, 1984; reprint, 1987).

rights campaigner who on marriage to a Scotsman discovered she had forfeited U.S. citizenship, finally kick-started a national debate about marital expatriation.<sup>7</sup> Ethel McKenzie lost her case but it signalled the start of the end for derivative citizenship. In 1922, the Expatriation Act was partially repealed (women who married men racially ineligible for U.S. citizenship, e.g. Chinese men, would still be stripped of their citizenship); Congressmen acknowledged the illogic of maintaining derivative citizenship now that the Nineteenth Amendment had recognised American women's claims to independent citizenship by awarding them the vote.<sup>8</sup>

Wharton began work on the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Age of Innocence* (1920) in September 1919, just a month after the passage through Congress of the Nineteenth Amendment.<sup>9</sup> Set in the 1870s, the novel is primarily a critique of the suffocating “manners and customs” of New York’s old-moneyed social elite, and in particular its sexual hypocrisy (161). Ellen Olenska returns to the city after ““a wretched marriage”” to a ““blackguard Polish nobleman”” (51, 54). She ““wants to become a complete American again”” by divorcing her husband (before and after 1907, women married to foreigners could resume American citizenship on divorce) but her extended family seeks to prevent her and send her back to Europe. They are eager to stifle the scandal that would come with a divorce, especially as rumours of Ellen’s own unfaithfulness would become public during the proceedings, and to stop Ellen’s apparently burgeoning affair with her cousin, the recently married Newland Archer.

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<sup>7</sup> Information on the Mackenzie case from: Candice Lewis Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own: Women, Marriage, and the Law on Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 65-79; Ann Marie Nicolosi, ““We Do Not Want Our Girls To Marry Foreigners’: Gender, Race, and American Citizenship,” *NWSA Journal* 13:3 (Fall 2001): 9-11.

<sup>8</sup> Bredbenner, 80-112; Nicolosi, 15-17.

<sup>9</sup> Edith Wharton, *The Age of Innocence*, with an Introduction by Penelope Lively (1920; London: Virago, 1982 reprint, 2002). Lee, 561.

This is a world in which men tacitly congratulate each other on their extramarital affairs, but women will be shunned and shamed for any hint of sexual misdemeanour. The novel plays out a contest between the family's conventional belief that "a young woman's place was under her husband's roof," however badly she has been treated there, and Newland's exclamation, "'Women ought to be free – as free as we [men] are'" (224, 53). The result is a score-draw, with Ellen safely packed off back to Europe – scandal averted – but not to her husband. The inequality of gender relations leaves Ellen in limbo. She cannot remain with her "scoundrel" husband but nor, according to the social code of her "tribe," a word Wharton uses repeatedly, can she divorce him (256; 31, 46, 161, 281). Her family is suspicious that Ellen's time abroad has made her dangerously foreign – they think of her as that "strange foreign woman," who in Europe has tasted "mysterious joys," the implication being she has become sexually promiscuous – but they will not allow her to divorce and be re-Americanised (39, 101). They impose marital expatriation on Ellen even after her return to the U.S. Although the structural change in gender relations Wharton witnessed in the 1910s and 1920s – enfranchisement, the demise of derivative citizenship, and greater acceptance of divorce – comes too late to "free" Ellen entirely, there is a hint in the story of the coming of those changes. The novel is suffused with references to futurity – extended railroads, new industries, new museums. Amid these Ellen's friend Rivière enjoins Newland to persuade his family to allow the divorce as a means of protecting Ellen from the count's attempts to force her return to him. The scene takes place in Newland's law office, under the gaze of a portrait of the President, as if there might be official sanction for such a progressive action (213-219). Although Newland in the end fails to act (another inadequate American man) and the family

repels Ellen's foreign threat, the end of the novel, set a quarter-century later, shows that this social elite has had to change to survive, incorporating new ideas and new people with new money. Newland himself has been in the vanguard of social reform, and his son's generation seems to have relaxed the strict tribal rules governing who is acceptable to marry, and who not. It is a world in which Ellen's tragedy might be less likely to be repeated.

In 1931, Congress "repealed the last racial provisions of derivative citizenship" and new legislation enacted in May 1934 finally meant a woman's marital status and choice of husband made no change to her citizenship.<sup>10</sup> "Women of the United States had achieved independent citizenship," Bredbenner writes.<sup>11</sup> By this time, after a brief abeyance during and immediately after World War One, title-heiress marriages had climbed back to their pre-war numbers. However, with aristocrats in Britain and elsewhere in Europe still coming to terms with the upheaval the War had wrought and the consequent loosening of their hold on power, these marriages were not the stunning social events they once were. Montgomery writes that on both sides of the Atlantic title-heiress marriages had "lost some of their novelty and publicity value."<sup>12</sup>

Two years after Congress ended derivative citizenship, Wharton began work on *The Buccaneers*, the unfinished manuscript of which was posthumously published in 1938.<sup>13</sup> Set in the 1870s, it charts the experiences of four "lovely transatlantic

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<sup>10</sup> Nicolosi, 16. See also: Bredbenner, 238-242.

<sup>11</sup> Bredbenner, 241.

<sup>12</sup> Maureen E. Montgomery, *Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages 1870-1914* (London: Routledge, 1989), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Edith Wharton, *The Buccaneers*, with an Introduction by Janet Beer Goldwyn (1938; London: Penguin, 1995).



invaders,” young American women who “lay siege to London,” three making unhappy marriages with English aristocrats, and one finding greater happiness with an untitled politician-industrialist (204, 124).

One senses the novel is Wharton’s attempt to write the definitive inside story of high-society, Anglo-American marriages. Each of her four heroines is a different version of the stereotype of the title-heiress bride: the southern belle, the daughter of “Wall Street parvenus,” the exotic South American beauty, and Nan St. George, the novel’s central character, the girl misguidedly attracted by the romance of the English aristocracy, its history, and “magic castle[s]” (34, 209). Wharton drew on her knowledge of real title-heiress marriages. She based Conchita Closson on Consuelo Yzanga, the daughter of a Cuban immigrant to America who in 1876 wed the future Duke of Manchester – “a feckless philanderer who squandered her money” – and she modelled Nan’s miserable marriage to the Duke of Tintagel on Consuelo Vanderbilt’s to the Duke of Marlborough.<sup>14</sup> Just as Consuelo found life in the Duke’s Blenheim Palace stultifying, so Nan finds herself trapped like “a life-prisoner” in Tintagel’s cold, damp ancestral home (267).

Nan experiences marriage as a splitting of her personality, a painful self-alienation.

She watches her married self as if undergoing an out-of-body experience:

Annabel Tintagel was a strange figure with whom she lived, and whose actions she watched with a cold curiosity, but with whom she had never arrived at terms of intimacy, and never would ... [W]hat had caused Annabel St. George to turn into Annabel Tintagel?” (202-203).

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<sup>14</sup> Lee, 723. See also Ruth Brandon, *The Dollar Princesses* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1980), 105-115.

Assuming her husband's name, a tradition of coverture still with us today, Annabel finds herself also assuming a new outer life that she struggles to make compatible with her thoughts and emotions. She finds it impossible to mould herself into the shape of a duchess, an identity "nurtured in precedents" (152). There is no scope for individuality, only for performing expected duties. She calls becoming Duchess of Tintagel a process of getting "'to know my part'" (240). She commits frequent transgressions against the aristocratic code. Most notably, she is horrified by the living standards of her husband's tenantry and begs him for money so she can tend to a local family stricken with typhoid. Like Fleda Ringgan and Betty Vanderpoel, she voices an American disgust at the British class system, telling Tintagel she does not want their child, with whom she is pregnant, "to be taught, as you have been, that it's right and natural to live in a palace with fifty servants, and not care for the people who are slaving for him on his own land, to make his big income bigger!" (213-214). The Duke, however, is no progressive like Carleton or Mount Dunstan, and he refuses. When she is caught in a storm attempting to walk to the ill family's house, Nan loses her child.

Nan's mother-in-law, a woman who has long since suppressed any individual identity into correct form and obedience to tradition, frequently reprimands Nan for behaving like an American rather than an English woman. Nan at one point responds that she "is tired of trying to be English," to which the Dowager Duchess replies, "Trying to be? But you *are* English. When you became my son's wife you acquired his nationality. Nothing can change that now" (246). (At the time the novel is set, Britain, like America, practiced automatic marital naturalization for the wives of male

citizens.)<sup>15</sup> Like so many other characters in title-heiress fiction, the Dowager Duchess makes the mistake of assuming marriage alone can impose on a person a meaningful change of national identity. Here, Wharton again draws our attention to the laws of derivative citizenship. They pervade and shape her narratives, demonstrating how little control women have over their public identity, and how consequently they suffer an alienation of their public selves from their private ones.

Following her unsuccessful pregnancy, Nan refuses Tintagel's sexual advances. Tintagel is increasingly anxious Nan provides him an heir: "he was now far more concerned with Annabel as the mother of his son than for her own sake" (216). (It was Consuelo Vanderbilt who quipped that once the Duke of Marlborough had secured her father's money he only wanted from her "an heir and a spare.")<sup>16</sup> Tintagel is an awkward, insecure man and his only means of persuading Nan to have sex with him is asserting his marital rights under coverture: "'you are bound to obey your husband implicitly in...er...all such matters'" (247). Tintagel never forces himself on Nan, but his growing insistence on conjugal control over his wife's body means the threat of marital rape looms, and Nan departs for one friend's house after another, seeking emotional space and protection from Tintagel. The great irony is that Nan achieves all she desires – the 'fairytale' of life as a duchess, with a title and castles added to her American wealth – and yet, because of coverture, she still has little scope for self-determination, economic, political, sexual and national.

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<sup>15</sup> M. Page Baldwin, "Subject to Empire: Married Women and the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act," *The Journal of British Studies* 40:4 (October 2001): 522, 526.

<sup>16</sup> Cited in Gail MacColl and Carol McD. Wallace, *To Marry an English Lord: The Victorian and Edwardian Experience* (London: Sidgwick and Jackson, 1989), 212; no reference given.

By 1936, Wharton's popularity had waned. While she was writing *The Buccaneers*, however, that year's abdication crisis in the British monarchy – Edward VIII's renunciation of the throne so he could marry the American divorcee Wallis Simpson – made her novel unexpectedly topical and her publishers urged her to finish it quickly.<sup>17</sup> When the unfinished manuscript was published, though, American readers generally disliked it and it “sealed [Wharton's] reputation, then and for many years, as a representative of a vanished way of life.”<sup>18</sup> The controversy over title-heiress marriages had long since ended and women now had national identities independent of their husbands. In a world in which English kings could abdicate to marry glamorous American divorcees, even tales of title-heiress marriages seemed less racy than real events, and with the gathering threat of a second world war, they maybe also felt less significant than once they had.

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<sup>17</sup> Lee, 721.

<sup>18</sup> Lee, 721-722.

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## Television Programmes and Films

*American Princess*. Directed by Leslie Garvin. Granada Television / NBC, 2003.  
First broadcast: Women's Entertainment Network, August-October, 2005.

*The Grid*. Directed by Mikael Salomon. BBC / TNT / Fox. First broadcast in U.K.:  
BBC Two, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> September 2004.

*The Prince and Me*. Directed by Martha Coolidge. Lions Gate Films, 2004.

*The Princess Diaries*. Directed by Garry Marshall. Bottom of the Ninth Productions  
et al, 2001.

*The Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement*. Directed by Garry Marshall. Brown  
House Productions and Walt Disney Pictures, 2004.

*What A Girl Wants*. Directed by Dennie Gordeon. DiNovi Pictures, 2003.

## Legal Cases

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