The Barbarian Invasion

Anti-Americanism in Edith Wharton's Transatlantic Marriage Novels

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IV

Abstract

This thesis is a study of Edith Wharton's *Madame de Treymes* (1907), *The Custom of the Country* (1913) and *The Buccaneers* (1938). These novels deal with transatlantic marriages in The Gilded Age and at the turn of the last century. They contain numerous incidents of Euro-American encounters and anti-American attitudes. The aim of the thesis is to show that the novels reflect anti-American sentiments that were widespread in European literature and society at the time they were set and written. The thesis also aims to prove that the anti-American sentiments in the novels can be divided into four categories: Prejudices based on 1) culture, history, domesticity and knowledge; 2) behaviour, morals and sexuality; 3) materialism and the display of wealth; and 4) political anti-Americanism. The thesis finally aims to show that the anti-American attitudes in the novels are more than a collection of isolated utterances; they play an important part in the narratives and affect the characters, relationships, plots and themes. The anti-American attitudes in the novels may be linked to the focus on 'types', which was a typical feature of the period. They may also contribute to the contemporary discussion about what it means to be an American.

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Introduction

Anti-American sentiments can often be seen most clearly in literature. In important literary works; from the Romantic period originating in Europe at the end of the eighteenth century to the present day, prejudices against America and Americans have been so prevalent that they do not constitute merely collections of individual and direct anti-American utterances. Anti-Americanism does in fact influence the very form of the literary work in terms of descriptions of setting, characters, conflicts and themes. Anti-Americanism thus becomes a literary strategy (Gulddal 9-10).

One genre in which negative attitudes towards Americans may play a key role is the international novel of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. An author whose works to a great extent are concerned with the international scene and comparisons of Americans and Europeans is Edith Wharton. Many of her novels are partly or entirely set in Europe and several of her works include marriages between Americans and Europeans. The first of these was "The Last Asset" (1904), a short satire about an ambitious and ruthless American mother, who manages to get her daughter married to a French nobleman in spite of her own sordid past. Another example is Wharton's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *The Age of Innocence* (1920), set in the 1870s; the beginning of a period that seemed obsessed with American heiresses marrying for titles. It tells the story of Ellen Olenska, an American whose unhappy marriage to a Polish nobleman brings her back to America, where she is ostracized for leaving her husband. Some of Wharton's works, like the 1928 novel *The Children*, although primarily set in Europe, present themes and concerns that are essentially American.

When contrasting Americans and Europeans, Wharton passes rather a harsh judgement on the American society and mentality of the Gilded Age and the turn of the last century. Wharton's reverence for European, and in particular French and Italian culture, art, architecture, literature, history and landscapes, is a contrast to her view of the Americans' lack of tradition, sophistication and close family ties. As a result, Wharton has hence been called the anti-American American. One of the reasons for Wharton's many European settings was to educate Americans; to take them from a form of cultural childhood to maturity by teaching them about European culture and customs. By writing *The Valley of Decision* (1902), for example, Wharton aimed to share her knowledge of eighteen-century Italy with her fellow Americans. Similarly, *French Ways and Their Meaning* (1919) was originally intended to teach American soldiers who participated in World War 1 about France and French culture.

These pedagogic intentions make many of Wharton's works a mixture of travel guide, historical novel and *Bildungsroman* and some see these attempts to educate her countrymen as Wharton at her most American rather than anti-American (Beer 55, 61).

According to Hildegard Hoeller, Wharton's definition of national identity is based on absence (4). In a comparison of French and American character traits in *French Ways and their Meaning*, Wharton sees taste, reverence, continuity and intellectual honesty as typically French traits and these are the qualities that in Wharton's eyes are absent in Americans. "We are a new people, a pioneer people. A people destined by fate to break up new continents and experiment in new social conditions; and therefore it may be useful to see what part is played in the life of a nation by some of the very qualities we have had the least time to acquire" (4). Wharton sees the United States as the young nation that needs to grow up and France as the mature nation which should be its role model. Thus she wrote many of her books as narratives of growth. This perspective can be related to my thesis in that Wharton seemed to describe Americans that were unfinished and underdeveloped and in need of improvement. This point of view indicates, too, that Wharton saw Americans as inferior to Europeans in general and the French in particular.

As it turns out, there is a strong link between Wharton's view of Americans and the anti-American sentiments prevalent in European literature at the time. I will claim that this connection and these attitudes can be seen also in my primary literature. The three works that will be the focus of my thesis are *Madame de Treymes* (1907), *The Custom of the Country* (1913) and *The Buccaneers* (1938). The reason why I have chosen these primary texts is that they all deal with transatlantic marriages. They contain numerous incidents of Euro-American encounters expressing European views of Americans, and there are many examples of what I want to focus on, namely anti-American attitudes. The three novels explore the cultural collision between America and Europe through the eyes of their main characters Fanny, Undine and Annabel, as well as through the eyes of secondary characters. These women's marriages to members of the European aristocracy – Marquis de Malrive, Marquis Raymond de Chelles and Ushant, the Duke of Tintagel – give us an insight into anti-American attitudes that were prevalent at the time in which these stories are set.

What these texts have in common is that they look into the personal and political implications of transatlantic marriages, and particularly investigate the consequences for the American brides. Considering that Wharton knew many of the real life "dollar princesses" personally and was herself pushed by her mother into marrying a man she didn't love, there is

reason to believe that she "empathised with the frustrations, feelings of disempowerment, and constricted emotional lives of women like Consuelo Vanderbilt" and consequently with her own heroines in the same predicament (Woolf 315). Judging by a statement made in her autobiography *A Backward Glance*, however, she was also rather sceptical of the American women who married into the European aristocracy:

> "The Americans who forced their way into good society in Europe were said to be those who were shut out from it at home; and the self-respecting American on his travels frequented only the little "colonies" of his compatriots already settled in the European capitals, and only their most irreproachable members!... And as for the American women who had themselves presented at the English Court – well, one had only to see with whom they associated at home!" (Wharton, *A Backward Glance* 62).

Wharton's conflicted view of her heroines is something I will return to in the course of my thesis.

My intention is to show that my primary literature reflects anti-American sentiments that were widespread in European literature and society at this time. Although Edith Wharton may not necessarily be labelled anti-American, she does capture the *Zeitgeist* in her portrayal of Americans. *Madame de Treymes*, *The Custom of the Country* and *The Buccaneers* to a great extent present Americans in a manner that is identical to contemporary European attitudes towards America and Americans. My claim, or hypothesis, is that the anti-American sentiments in these books can be divided into four categories: 1) prejudices based on culture, history, domesticity and knowledge; 2) behaviour, morals and sexuality; 3) materialism and the display of wealth; and 4) political anti-Americanism. I will also claim that these anti-American sentiments affect the characters, relationships, plots and themes of the books.

So what is the validity of my thesis? Why is it important to focus on anti-Americanism in Edith Wharton's books? I believe that it will lead to an increased understanding of how these works reflect society at the time and the thesis is thus founded on the theories of historicism. I also think that it will help to clarify the types of attitudes and prejudices the American characters are subjected to in these books; and whether, on the one hand, the American characters' actions, opinions and values lead to the negative attitudes or, on the other, the attitudes spring from the background or individual circumstances of the strongest critics of anything American in the books. Who is to blame and how do prejudices against the Americans influence the form of the books; the narrative, the characters and the overall themes? Although one should be careful to claim originality, I have not come across anything in my research that directly focuses on types of anti-Americanism in Edith Wharton's novels, the link between Wharton and European anti-Americanism or the effect of anti-Americanism

on the form of Wharton's works. I therefore believe that my thesis will contribute to the understanding of these books. Finally, I think that my choice of thesis and primary literature has carryover value - it could contribute to an increased understanding of other contemporary authors and literary works.

Edith Wharton was not the only American writer at this time who was concerned with the international scene and transatlantic marriages. The approximately four hundred and fifty marriages between Americans and British aristocrats that took place in real life between eighteen seventy and nineteen fourteen, were also reflected in other American authors. Mary Sherwood's *A Transplanted Rose* (1882), portrays the marriage of Sir Leyton Leycester and Californian heiress Rose Chadwick, a marriage based on love, contrary to popular conceptions of these marriages being based on a quest for titles and money. Leyton expresses what has been said about *The Buccaneers,* that it is a description of an American invasion of Britain, when he says "what can be better than that America should reconquer England in this way once more" (Woolf 164). Other books dealing with this phenomenon were Constance Cary Harrison's *The Anglomaniacs* (1890) and Gertrude Atherton's *His Fortunate Grace* (1897), in addition to plays like *The Title-Mart* (1905) by American writer Winston Churchill. They all criticize the title-heiress marriages for generally being based on money rather than love and thus choose to make their relationships between an English aristocrat and an American heiress end in love to show the superiority of such a marriage. Although Mark Twain ridicules the Americans' idolization of the English aristocracy in his book *The American Claimant* (1891), he ends up celebrating the marriage between American Sally Sellers and an English lord. In her novel *The Shuttle* (1907), Frances Hodgson Burnett compared two types of title-heiress marriages, one unhappy marriage between the shy Rosy Vanderpoel and Sir Nigel Anstruthers, an unscrupulous brute of a man and the other the loving marriage between her sister Betty and the stoic and heroic Lord Mount Dunstan. These marriages can be compared to Nan St. George's relationship to Ushant Tintagel and Guy Thwarte in *The Buccaneers.*

Henry James is probably the most acclaimed author within the international novel genre. Some examples of James's international novels are *Roderick Hudson*, *The American*, *Daisy Miller*, *The Europeans*, *The Portrait of a Lady* and *The Ambassadors*. In these books he focuses on and explores cultural differences and conflicts between Americans and Europeans and differences in their character traits and morals. Henry James was called the Homer of the

transatlantic marriage theme. He used the topic as a means to explore different national types and the question "what is an American?" He pondered whether there even was such a thing as an American character. This is often referred to as James's American or international theme. He also used these marriage stories to express his view of marriage in general, as an institution that could not provide personal freedom and self-expression. Up until 1884, he wrote so much about the topic that he had to leave it be for fifteen years in fear of being labelled the transatlantic marriage writer. His books greatly influenced the media's view of these marriages and *Daisy Miller* (1878) was often used as an example of the dangers of American heiresses chasing titles in Europe. *Daisy Miller* caused great debate on both sides of the Atlantic. The "Daisy Millerites" saw her as an innocent girl oblivious to the effect of her behaviour, while the "anti-Daisy Millerites" saw her as a flirtatious, immoral temptress. The book ignited debates about the behaviour of American girls in general (Goodman 1).

In *The American* (1877), James focuses on the different expectations for marriage in the United States and Europe, a theme which was also often in focus in the media. Like Nan in *The Buccaneers*, Bessie Alden in James's "*An International Episode*" (1878) is an intelligent girl who reads extensively and has an immense interest and admiration for anything British. With this character, James wished to give a better impression of American women than many got through Daisy Miller, who was perceived as being ignorant of culture and social conventions. She was thus laughed at by English readers as a typical American, while American readers saw James's portrayal of her as unpatriotic. James's next transatlantic marriage stories were "The Siege of London" (1883) and "Lady Barberina" (1884). In the latter, the gender roles are reversed and the wealthy American doctor Jackson Lemon marries the English Lady Barbarina Clement, initially bringing her to New York before having to return to London. In 1890 James returned to the transatlantic marriage in "Miss Gunton of Poughkeepsie", which reflected the real-life change in power between America and Europe and as opposed to his other books, the Americans get the better of the Europeans in this story. *The Wings of the Dove* (1902) was James's last book about Anglo-American marriages, but in his second to last completed book, *The Golden Bowl* (1904), he deals with the marriage between an American heiress and an Italian nobleman.

Susan Goodman focuses on James' exploration of the cultural and psychological differences between American and Europeans in her article "Henry James and the American Idea." In her master's thesis, Monica O.V. Ike explores the clash of cultures in Henry James and she refers to the cultural theories of Stephen Greenblatt. In her article "The Geopolitics of

Literature: the Shifting International Theme in the Works of Henry James," Priscilla Roberts describes Henry James's changing view of the relationship between Americans and Europeans and how this change is connected to the growing power of the United States. As Henry James was a major literary influence on Edith Wharton, I find it interesting and relevant to explore their views on and descriptions of the American theme, which again can shed light on the anti-American attitudes in their respective books.

In this introduction I have started by introducing my thesis topic, statement and hypothesis, and I have explained my choice of literary works and why I believe my thesis is valid. I have also briefly presented other authors and works that deal with the international theme and transatlantic marriages. I will continue by describing the methology of my thesis and what I will primarily focus on and how. I will then present some of the critics and facts that are relevant to the literary, historical and social setting of my thesis. I will end the introduction by presenting the structure of my thesis.

As I have consciously chosen three texts that involve marriages between American heiresses and European noblemen, the main aspect I wish to examine is the attitudes towards Americans that come forward in connection with these marriages. The main focus of my literary analysis will be prejudices held by members of the British and French aristocracy of the late nineteenth century and the turn of the century against Americans in general, and American women in particular. These attitudes may be presented by their husbands and mothers, by other family members and friends and even by the Americans themselves. I also wish to examine the way the American brides and their families are portrayed through actions, dialogue and thought; do they behave according to the preconceived notions of the typical American that European anti-Americanism is based on?

Although the transatlantic marriage is a prerequisite for my study of these books, it will not be the main focus of my study. I will present the phenomenon to increase the understanding of the historical setting and the characters and plot, and I thus have a historicist approach, but my main objective is to find textual evidence of anti-Americanism and examine how it is represented in my primary literature. This will be done through close reading and by comparing and contrasting the primary texts. I will also relate the primary sources to the secondary sources. Such a study of these books may contribute to knowledge about anti-Americanism at Edith Wharton's time and clarify whether or not Wharton was in tune with the way people were thinking.

One challenge with this approach is that it could lead to a simple scanning of the texts in search of anti-American statements and thus the study might end up being limited and sporadic rather than a full-fledged literary analysis (Gulddal 9-10). According to Gulddal, such a limited focus will underestimate the influence anti-Americanism may have on a work of literature. To avoid this, I will have to take into consideration who utters these statements, who they are communicated to, what their motives are, who contradicts the statements, what the historical and social setting is and how anti-Americanism is actually significant to the characterization and to the development of the plot in the books. Do the anti-American statements represent Edith Wharton's own personal views expressed through a focalizer or narrator or does Wharton simply portray the Americans in a way that reflects the common view of Americans when these books were written? Could it be said that Wharton, through these books, even contributed to the prejudices held against Americans at the time? These are some of the questions that will form the basis of my study of the primary texts.

Although I will primarily focus on the texts and their context, there is an undeniable biographical element to the setting, characters and plots of the books. Edith Wharton grew up in an old money environment in New York, among the so-called indigenous, aboriginal New Yorkers, the American aristocracy, who could trace their roots back to the very first Dutch and British settlers. This setting can be compared to the European aristocratic environments described in *Madame de Treymes*, *The Custom of the Country* and *The Buccaneers*. Wharton experienced first-hand the cultural collision between these original inhabitants and the new invaders of the city; the up-and-coming and often obscenely rich families that had built their new fortunes during the economic boom of the Gilded Age (Knights 29). The differences in values, behaviour and attitudes seen in the meeting of these two groups are reflected in the meeting of the American brides and their European aristocratic husbands and families in the books that I will examine. Wharton also had personal knowledge of the transatlantic marriage phenomenon, which was characteristic of this time, through the marriages of several of her friends and acquaintances to European noblemen, for example Consuelo Vanderbilt. Although I will not put too much emphasis on the biographical element, I will occasionally refer to it when I believe it to be relevant.

In addition to the theories of the Wharton critics that I will return to in the following chapters, I will pursue my inquiry based on theories on the already mentioned "international theme," and theories on transatlantic marriages and political and literary anti-Americanism. When it comes to transatlantic marriages, I will refer to theories by Maureen E. Montgomery,

who in her book *Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages 1870-1914*, focuses on the Anglo-American marriage market. She primarily writes about the perception of these marriages in the American and British public, and the consequences of these marital unions. She is particularly concerned with the cultural relationship between the United States and Britain and how this relationship was affected by the transatlantic marriages. Another interest of hers is the image of the American girl in London as represented in both literary and historical sources. I feel that Montgomery's book is highly relevant when it comes to my focus on literary anti-Americanism and the transatlantic marriage market. Another interesting and relevant source is David Cannadine's *The Decline and Fall of the British Aristocracy.* Studying parts of this mammoth of a book, gave me an insight into the influence of Americans on British society in general and the British aristocracy in particular. It presents the common view of Americans in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century and gives some possible explanations for the anti-American attitudes held by some of the characters in *The Buccaneers.*

More than a quarter of the European aristocrats who married American women between 1870 and 1914 were English (Woolf 167). According to Montgomery, sixty American women married heirs to British hereditary titles and forty married younger sons of peers. These constituted ten percent of all aristocratic marriages in Britain and half of the marriages between British peers and foreign women. This influx of American women was referred to as an invasion and was met by substantial scepticism in British society. But the "dollar princesses" are also estimated to have contributed approximately twenty five billion dollars to the British economy in today's currency and thereby helped to preserve stately homes like Highclere, the country house where the popular TV series "Downton Abbey" is set (Henderson).

The Anglo-American marriages reached a peak in 1895, when nine American women married into the British aristocracy, among them Consuelo Vanderbilt, who married the 9th Duke of Marlborough. Another marriage that year was between Mary Leiter and Lord George Curzon. Mary is the American bride who achieved the highest position in the British Empire. When her husband was appointed Viceroy of India in 1898, Mary became the Vicereine of India**.** When King Edward VII, who was known for his weakness for American women and for welcoming them at court, died in 1910, it marked the beginning of the end of the marriages between the American heiresses to British aristocrats. When he was still the Prince of Wales, Edward supposedly had an affair with Jennie Jerome Churchill, Winston's

Churchill's American mother, who married Lord Randolph Churchill in 1874. Edith Wharton knew both the Jerome sisters from New York and Newport and is said to have been inspired by Jenny's marriage when writing *The Buccaneers* (Montgomery 724). Another famous "dollar princess" was Nancy Langhorne from Virginia. She moved to London and in 1887 she married William Waldorf Astor, who was American-born, but had been brought up as a British aristocrat. She later became the second woman to be elected to Parliament, but the first who actually took her seat. A transatlantic marriage that linked the past to the present was the marriage between the American heiress Frances Ellen Work and Baron Fermoy. She was the great-grandmother of the late Princess Diana. The heir to the British throne, Prince William, can thus trace his roots back to an Anglo-American marriage. These marriages did continue on a smaller scale further into the twentieth century and the most famous of these later matches was the 1937 marriage between the twice divorced American Wallis Simpson to Edward, the Duke of Windsor. He was King Edward VIII for less than a year before he had to abdicate in order to marry Wallis Simpson. Simpson was consequently blamed for one of the biggest scandals in the history of the British monarchy and even the early death of Edward's younger brother, Prince Albert, who had to take over the throne as King George VI. "You will be amused to hear that Mrs Simpson has made my tale *de l'actualité,"* Edith Wharton said to a friend about *The Buccaneers* in 1937 (qtd. in Lee 721).

Montgomery particularly focuses on how these matches were perceived in British and American society at the time. She uses both historical and literary sources, among them works by Wharton, to get an impression of the image of American women in London society. Montgomery's reason for focusing on this topic, as is mine, is to contribute to the increasing amount of research in the field of American women's history, which she feels has ignored upper class women to a great extent. It is her goal to emphasize the influence of these American brides when it comes to changing the structure of the upper classes of Britain and the United States. The elites of these countries were broadened with the influx of a new class of people, and this affected the relationship between Britain and the United States.

According to Montgomery, the motivations behind these transatlantic marriages are often oversimplified. The men were not all poor and greedy aristocrats and the women were not all rich, title-hunting and frivolous. Some of the marriages were in fact love-matches, Jennie Jerome's marriage is said to have been one of them. Although the American women were generally better off than the British peeresses, many of them were not as rich as the newspapers claimed. Montgomery claims that we have been handed down these negative

stereotypes from newspapers and popular novels and this is where one could ask, even though Wharton offered insight into the difficult situation of the American brides, did she also possibly contribute to these stereotypes through her books?

What, then, were the motivating factors for the many transatlantic marriages at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth century? The answer to this question can be found in both American and European society. On both sides of the Atlantic, the improved quality and speed of steamships led to more transatlantic crossings and the *Grand Tour* of Europe became common for wealthy Americans. In addition, increasing numbers of European aristocrats crossed the ocean to explore America. This naturally led to more contact between rich Americans and European aristocrats (Woolf 177). In the United States, the quest for titled marriages was a result of the economic boom after the Civil War, particularly during the so-called Gilded Age, which spanned from the eighteen seventies to the turn of the century. The growth was first and foremost seen in the North and the West within heavy industry and the railroads. This lead to an enormous growth in wealth among the entrepreneurs and professions linked to business. Although they were exceptionally rich, they were still looked down on by the social establishment and there was fierce competition among *nouveaux riches* families to gain entry into the upper echelons of society. Being repeatedly rejected entry, they saw marriages to aristocratic Europeans as a way to achieve recognition among the established American upper class. The description of this conflict between old and new money is perhaps what Edith Wharton is best known for. Others, like the journalist William T. Stead, the man who invented the term "gilded prostitution," points out that the transatlantic marriages can be seen as a way for the Americans to extend their power throughout the world (Montgomery 10). He, in other words, sees American imperialistic ambitions as a possible explanation for this marriage phenomenon. This is a point of view that can be linked to my focus on political anti-Americanism in the primary literature. That the transatlantic marriages were an expression of American imperialism can, however, be contradicted by all the negative attitudes towards the transatlantic marriages in the United States, which I will get back to.

The economy of the aristocracy was an important factor that motivated many transatlantic marriages. The collapse of the agricultural economy in Europe in the eighteen eighties due to increased industrialization and import of goods from North and South America led to a drop in prices of goods and property, and the landed gentry suffered. In the two last decades of the nineteenth century, the price of land fell by a quarter in France and one of those who struggled was the Marquis Boni de Castellane, who married Anna Gould, an

American heiress with a three million pound dowry and the Marquis's estate was thus saved (Cannadine 25-26). Many European aristocrats followed his example and married wealthy Americans in order to salvage their stately homes.

In the United States, many looked with pride at the success of so many of their women in marrying European aristocrats. It was said that this was due to the American woman's "intelligence, quickness, freshness, animation, fullness of character, often her brilliancy, always her individuality" (Montgomery 78). These character traits were, according to some contemporary observers, the result of her democratic and republican upbringing and were bound to attract European men. Others explained the success of the American woman on the British marriage market as a result of her sense of equality; she was trained to be self-reliant and independent and was not afraid of people in high places. This would make her more open and at ease in social situations. American women were also praised for their part in the Americanization and modernization of the European aristocracy (Woolf 172).

My main concern with the transatlantic marriages, however, is how the American women were perceived in Europe, and how their behaviour and values may have affected the way they were perceived in Edith Wharton's books. It is interesting to compare anti-American attitudes in her books with attitudes in real life. There is substantial evidence in literature, memoirs, journals and newspapers, that many aristocrats despised anything American. Lady Randolph Churchill, Jennie Jerome, claimed in a biography about her that "In England, as on the Continent, the American woman was looked upon as a strange and abnormal creature, with habits and manners something between a Red Indian and a Gaiety Girl. As a rule, people looked upon her as a disagreeable and even dangerous person, to be viewed with suspicion, if not avoided altogether" (qtd. in Montgomery 137).

I will deal with two main aspects of anti-Americanism: the political and historical aspect and anti-Americanism in literature, the latter taking precedence. Much current writing on anti-Americanism focuses on the present and is related to the United States' role as a super power and to acts of terrorism. I will naturally focus on the period in which my primary literature was set and written. Brendon O'Connor defines anti-Americanism and presents its different phases in his article "A Brief history of Anti-Americanism: From Cultural Criticism to Terrorism." In "A Genealogy of Anti-Americanism," James W. Ceaser takes a slightly more philosophical approach and categorizes different types of anti-Americanism. Paul Hollander is a highly respected scholar within this field and is primarily known for his criticism of communism and left-wing politics. This clearly influences his definition and view

of anti-Americanism. He is referred to in both O'Connor's and Ceaser's articles and in a very comprehensive Wikipedia article which I have used as a source. Although Hollander's definition is based on modern political relations, I believe that his definition can be applied also to the period in which Wharton's books were set. According to Hollander, there are two types of anti-Americanism. One is found abroad and is either based on the increasing political, military and cultural dominance of the United States or consists of a more general resentment towards anything American. The response to American dominance may be increased nationalism in weaker or declining nations and social classes. The anti-Americanism expressed by the aristocrats in my books, may thus be understood as a consequence of the British and French aristocracy's declining power. Anti-American sentiments are generally seen as being stronger in Britain, Germany and France. This is due to these countries' historical status as super powers, and their gradual loss of global supremacy to the United States (Gulddal 8). The other type of anti-Americanism focused on by Hollander is domestic and can be explained by the critic's sense of alienation from her own country, political estrangement or a rejection of American society (Hollander 12). The rejection of and hostility towards one's own country is often more personal and is based on disappointment and disillusionment. Wharton's view of the United States, or certainly some aspects of it, can in my opinion clearly be classified as domestic anti-Americanism. Spending the majority of her life in Europe as an expatriate and expressing a clear preference for European culture and a frustration with the United States, is a strong indication of this. The fact that Wharton wished to educate Americans through her writing, indicates a condescending attitude. Americans were in need of improvement and she was going to provide it. It resembles a parent-child relationship, Europe or Wharton being the parent and the United States being the child that required cultivation and discipline. This can of course be viewed from a different perspective, i.e. that Wharton was the caring parent who wanted to help raise a young and inexperienced child.

In the 1940s, attitudes to Americans in Europe were recorded by social scientists. They were described as "vulgar and ostentatious, truculent and opulent barbarians, glorying in atomic bombs and the almighty dollar, pushy and arrogant, immature, too materialistic and immoral, too self-satisfied, loud spoken, too ignorant, politically backward, uncultured and half-educated" (Hollander 96-97). These attitudes towards Americans are still common in Europe today and were widespread in Wharton's time, as recorded by visitors to the United States, newspaper articles and in fiction. In fact, the stereotype of Americans as greedy,

materialistic, preachy, uncultured and fanatically patriotic was well-established in Europe by the end of the nineteenth century. According to Brendan O'Connor, criticism against America started to form into prejudices and an ideology of anti-Americanism in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The United States was no longer a colony and a religious outpost. In the beginning, the criticism was cultural. Americans were seen as lacking in taste, grace and manners, they were uncivilized brutes. What provoked Europeans the most, however, was that this alleged backwardness and lack of civility was combined with "cocksure arrogance" (O'Connor 3). In the beginning, anti-Americanism was based on the view that European culture was ideal and superior and America was its opposite. The European antagonism towards Americans is thus an expression of the battle between high and low culture. The opposite can be seen in American scepticism towards French culture in certain social classes today, where anything French is considered snobbish, elitist and effeminate – the opposite of American. In addition to cultural criticism, American materialism and industrialism were seen as a threat to the lifestyle and sensibilities of Europeans, who had different priorities and values, and therefore had to resist American influence. My claim is that this real life criticism of American culture, materialism and industry is reflected and plays an important part in my primary literature.

My main focus will be literary anti-Americanism, however, and for this reason I will primarily lean on the theories of Jesper Gulddal. In his book *Anti-Americanism in European Literature*, he traces the history of anti-Americanism in European literature and argues that "literature has played a crucial role in the development and dissemination of Anti-American discourse over the last 200 years" (1). Gulddal claims that anti-American literature is a genre in its own right. It typically describes the disillusionment of the European emigrant to the United States. Another characteristic is that there is a lack of development in the characters' views of the United States; they are negative from start to finish. The books tend to be encyclopaedic accumulations of stereotypes of America and Americans. This observation is comparable, but partly reversed in relation to Wharton's books in that in my primary literature, the anti-American sentiments come out in connection with the emigration of American citizens to Europe. It will be a part of my study of the primary literature to establish whether the characters' anti-American sentiments are permanent or whether their attitudes are altered and why.

Gulddal studied the anti-American content of books by more than fifty European authors, several of them Nobel laureates. Knut Hamsun, Rudyard Kipling, Charles Dickens

and Oscar Wilde are some of them. Unlike Hamsun's very aggressive anti-Americanism, Kipling was, like Dickens, more humorous and ironical. Although Kipling recognized positive aspects of the United States, particularly its women and nature, he generally viewed Americans as naughty children who misbehaved and lacked manners. He even referred to them as barbarians and savages. He saw their political system as one that had surrendered all authority and power to the public opinion of the masses and in addition he described them as peddling commercialists and their religious practises as a circus. He was also horrified by their destruction of the English language and their audacity to claim that their English was the real English. He also commented on their excessive patriotism. Kipling thus covers several of the anti-American categories that I will focus on.

Like Dickens and Kipling, Oscar Wilde spent a considerable amount of time in the United States, travelling the country on lecture- and reading tours. His criticism of America mainly focused on the country being a hostile environment for culture, art and beauty. With his characteristic wit, he mocked Americans with short and direct anti-American aphorisms like "We have really everything in common with America nowadays, except, of course, language" and "The youth of America is their oldest tradition. It has been going on now for three centuries" (Gulddal 73). In both *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1891) and in *A Woman of No Importance* (1893), which incidentally both include transatlantic marriages, Wilde pokes fun of Americans by the use of punchy aphorisms.

George Bernard Shaw was another writer with anti-American attitudes. This was based on his strong left-wing politics and one of his famous quotes is "England and America are two countries divided by a common language" (Gulddal 77). In his novel *Atlantis* (1912), the German dramatist Gerhart Hauptmann, a Nobel laureate, criticises the American metropolis, which he sees as a symbol of dehumanizing modernity. This would later become an important target of interwar anti-Americanism.

Through a close reading of my primary literature and Gulddal's five categories of anti-Americanism, some of which I will present in chapter 1, I was struck by the similarities in the perceptions of the American characters by Europeans in my primary literature and the stereotypes held by the European authors mentioned by Gulddal. This was the inspiration for my thesis: that Wharton's works reflect, reproduce and perhaps even spread anti-American sentiments and stereotypes that were commonly held by European authors as well as by Europeans at large at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Like Gulddal, I believe that the stereotypes of Americans in literature can be divided into

categories. Although I am inspired by Gulddal, I have redefined the categories according to my findings in Wharton's books and to what I find to be related topics in the descriptions of the American characters in the books.

Another scholar I will refer to extensively is Paul Jonathan Woolf. In his doctoral thesis "Special Relationships: Anglo-American Love Affairs, Courtship and Marriages in Fiction, 1821-1914," Woolf argues that literary transatlantic love stories reflect cultural, political, and economic changes and they describe the relationship between the United States and Great Britain during this period. Some books even influenced Anglo-American political relations. He also suggests that many authors in fact used the transatlantic marriages as a means to describe ideals of American national identity, and to either support or challenge prevalent attitudes about class, race, and gender. I believe this to be the case with Wharton. Woolf additionally looks at the differences and similarities between the British and Americans identified by the authors of the books that he studied, and how they used the comparisons to express a preference for the people, customs or political system of one of the two nations. I believe that Woolf's approach is relevant to the analysis of my primary literature. I will look at my primary sources from the perspective of changes in Anglo-American relations, and consider whether anti-American attitudes towards Wharton's brides can be linked to these changes. I will also refer to the extensive research Woolf has done on European authors and their attitudes towards the United States.

My thesis will consist of three main chapters. Each chapter is dedicated to the analysis of one of the three works that constitute my primary literature. The chapters are organized according to the texts publication date, from earliest to latest. All three chapters contain a brief introduction to the novel in question and a presentation of critical approaches that are relevant to my analysis. The chapters are subdivided according to my four categories of anti-Americanism. Under each heading I will present and discuss examples of statements, thoughts, actions, vocabulary, names, objects and imagery that may be interpreted as direct or indirect expressions of anti-American attitudes or reasons for such attitudes within each category. Integrated into this presentation and discussion are relevant historical, literary and biographical facts and references to the theories of the critics mentioned in the introduction.

Chapter 1 deals with *Madame de Treymes*. As the book is only seventy-nine pages long, this chapter is slightly shorter than the others. I have chosen to include a thorough explanation of my categories of anti-Americanism in this chapter, as it is the main focus of all

three chapters. Chapter 2 is an analysis of *The Custom of the Country* and chapter 3 is dedicated to *The Buccaneers*, Wharton's last and unfinished novel. In my conclusion, I will sum up my main findings and discuss to which extent my thesis statement was valid or not. I will also contemplate the limitations of my thesis and the possibilities for further study.

Chapter 1

Ignorant and Naïve, but Virtuous and Underestimated: The Innocent American versus the Cunning European in *Madame de Treymes*

Published in 1907, *Madame de Treymes* describes the destiny of Fanny de Malrive, formerly Fanny Frisbee, who is unhappily married to the French Marquis de Malrive, either due to his adultery or, as I interpret it, due to her husband's possible homosexuality. By the help of her close friend John Durham, whom she is hoping eventually to marry, and Madame Christiane de Treymes, her husband's sister, she is making plans to get a divorce and be released from a marriage in which she feels imprisoned. What holds her back is her eight-year-old son and the fear that if she gets a divorce, she will lose him forever and he will be under his father and his French family's cultural influence entirely. Believing that her sister-in-law is trying to help her, it actually turns out that her apparent helpfulness is just a part of a plot to keep Fanny's son in France with his French family as the future Marquis de Malrive.

Madame de Treymes has been interpreted in a number of ways and I now want to briefly survey some interpretations that are relevant to my analysis. Woolf sees this book and other books with a transatlantic marriage theme as an opportunity to display the unpatriotic behaviour of the American woman in giving up her national identity by marrying a foreigner instead of marrying an American. From this perspective, the main theme of the book is that of patriotism and national identity. The French are the villains, who try to lure American women into marrying them in order to gain access to their fortunes and thereby rescue their dilapidating stately homes and secure the future of the all-important family and its traditions, sacrificing the personal happiness of the American women in the process. This was also a common point of view in Henry James's books about international marriage at the beginning of his career. In fact, *Madame de Treymes* seems to be strongly influenced by James's novella *Madame de Mauves*, published in 1874. It deals with exactly the same situation: an innocent American woman, Euphemia, being taken advantage of by a cynical French family. A young, handsome American man, Longmore, tries to rescue her from her unhappy marriage to Baron de Mauves, "a frivolous, debauched, adulterous French aristocrat" (Woolf 215). According to James, the Americans were the victims in these marriages. His view of the relationship between the French and Americans seemed to alter in his later books, however.

Another related issue in books like *Madame de Treymes* and Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) is the American woman's struggle to maintain her American identity, her Americanness, when married to a foreigner (Woolf 29). This is a theme that can also be seen in *The Buccaneers*, particularly through the portrayal of Annabel St. George. Connected to this is the interpretation of *Madame de Treymes* as a contribution to the debate surrounding the 1907 Expatriation Act, which declared that an American woman marrying a foreigner would lose her American citizenship. The same did not apply to an American man marrying a foreigner. The act was strongly opposed by the women's suffrage movement, which protested against the dependent citizenship of women. The law was reversed by the 1922 Cable Act, which gave American women the right to keep their citizenship when marrying a foreigner with the exception of marrying Asian men. Not until 1934 were American women allowed to marry any man, independent of his ethnic origin, without losing her citizenship (Wikipedia, Cable Act).

There was extensive debate in American society at the time about American women entering into marriages with European aristocrats. In addition to a feeling of national pride, there was also resentment against the transatlantic brides in the United States. Some questioned their loyalty towards America and American values and saw them almost as unpatriotic traitors for marrying not only foreigners, but aristocratic foreigners, which was against American republican and democratic ideals (Woolf 18-19). In the 1880s, there was increasing opposition to the international marriages, as they were seen as a derogation of "the duties of American women," as President Theodore Roosevelt put it (Woolf 172). American newspapers also showed scepticism towards marriages based on money and ambition and always asked whether the transatlantic marriages were love-matches or not. In 1908, President Roosevelt stated that if the Constitution had allowed for such a decision, he would have made transatlantic marriages illegal (Woolf 196). In literature, there are several examples of transatlantic brides who are drawn between European and American values, and Madame de Malrive in *Madame de Treymes* is one of them. One could say that she is in search both of her personal and national identity. She has a sense of loyalty towards her French family, but at the same time she misses the simplicity of American life.

Many commentators were also convinced that the transatlantic marriages were mostly unhappy and doomed to be loveless. This was due to homesickness, cultural incompatibility, the Americans being treated as outsiders by their new family or the moral deficiencies or cruelty of their aristocratic husbands. The American woman was thus often seen as a victim,

sacrificed by her own family in its quest for titles, also sarcastically referred to as chronic titleitis. These concerns can in fact be said to be one of the main themes in *Madame de Treymes.* In addition, the fact that these marriages seemed to be arranged rather than companionate and based on love was seen as un-American, something belonging to the Old World rather than the New World. As there are no references to an initially happy and loving relationship between Fanny and her husband, this marriage may very well have been one of these arranged, loveless marriages. On the rare occasions that Monsieur de Malrive is mentioned, the focus is on his unacceptable behaviour. He is the one who is blamed for the divorce.

In contemporary reviews of *Madame de Treymes* it is pointed out that, as the title suggests, the main theme of the book is not the predicament of the American woman, but that of her sister-in-law, Madame de Treymes, who is seen as a product of French culture and its emphasis on family values and traditions. This is in opposition to the emphasis of the Americans on personal happiness and freedom and the book thus strongly contrasts the old civilization of France and the American new world. Hildegard Hawthorne claims that, "The book is intended to present the contrast of the solidarity of the French family with the individual freedom maintaining in America" (qtd. in Tuttleton 136). Mary Moss's review, on the other hand, claims that the book goes further than contrasting the two nations; "it touches the permanent human questions of honour and duty" (qtd. in Tuttleton 140). Based on French responses to the book, Harry James Smith questions whether Wharton's portrayal of the French and the French woman is correct, and his conclusion is that this question is debatable. This is a recurring question among modern French critics of Wharton's work. Vernon Atwood stresses that Wharton describes the typical attributes of French and American society and mentality without taking sides with any of the two (Tuttleton 141-3). Wharton supposedly objectively presents the fundamental differences between them. The Americans typically see it as their individual responsibility to be righteous and virtuous and personal happiness is their main aspiration. The French, on the other hand, put a higher value on the importance of family and family unity. The individual's main obligation is to be loyal to his family, even though this may imply sacrificing his or her personal happiness. I disagree with Atwood when he claims that personal happiness is the main goal for Americans in *Madame de Treymes*. John Durham in fact sacrifices his personal happiness at the end of the book. By intending to tell Fanny that she will lose custody of her son if she divorces and marries him, he will ruin his own chances of marrying her. Durham is clearly convinced that Fanny will choose her son

over him. They thereby both put the union of mother and child, the family, before their own personal happiness. By doing this, they do not behave in a manner the French expect of Americans. Their stereotypical views of the self-centred, individualistic American are thus contradicted.

When analysing *Madame de Treymes* and the other primary texts, I will, as specified in the introduction, focus on anti-Americanism within four main areas: 1) culture, history, domesticity and knowledge; 2) behaviour, morals and sexuality; 3) materialism and the display of wealth; and 4) political anti-Americanism. I will look at the anti-American sentiments expressed by the different characters and how these sentiments can be categorized: Are the Americans described as being uncultured, rootless, undomestic and ignorant? Is their behaviour, morals and sexuality criticized? Are they perceived as being excessive in their materialism and display of wealth? Are American democracy and policies under scrutiny? How may the anti-American attitudes influence the form of the work? As my categories are inspired by Gulddal's taxonomy of anti-Americanism, I will briefly present some of his categories in connection with my analysis of *Madame de Treymes*.

3.1 Culture, History, Domesticity and Knowledge

My first category of anti-Americanism in Wharton's books, relating to culture, history, domesticity and knowledge, is the equivalent of Gulddal's prejudices based on "historical and cultural deficiency" (Gulddal 20). I have, however, also chosen to include domesticity and knowledge, as these are topics that I consider to be closely linked to the culture and history of a country. There are also many examples of these topics in my primary literature. Anti-American sentiments within this category are based on the view that the United States suffers from historical rootlessness and is a historical void. Because of the country's foundation in the aftermath of a revolution and a war of independence, the United States by nature seeks to start from scratch and abandon tradition. The fact that the country's capital was planned on a drawing board is in itself taken as evidence of the country's lack of history. It has not developed naturally, it is a construction, according to the French philosopher Joseph de Maistre (Gulddal 20-25). By cutting their ties with Britain, the young nation cut the umbilical cord to Europe and, as Hegel described it, became a land of the future rather than the past. Another German philosopher, Friedrich Schlegel, viewed the United States as a plant nursery and an educational institution, a view which Wharton seems to be influenced by. The lack of history was linked to an absence of culture. The Irish poet Thomas Moore described the

United States as a historical and cultural vacuum, with no art and poetry. Whereas Italy is a cultural treasury, the United States is a cultural wasteland, "the place is nothing but raw, uncultivated nature" and the absence of culture turns the country's people into barbarians (qtd. in Gulddal 24).

On the first page of the novella, John Durham compares Paris and New York, Paris being a spectacle of enjoyment and New York a place of lamentable "unenlightened ugliness" (5). This clearly refers to an American deficiency in knowledge and culture. Although Durham is an American, he expresses a preference for European culture. This fascination with Europe may have been considered unpatriotic at the time, but it was not an uncommon attitude. It is an expression of American self-loathing and a sense of inferiority in relation to Europe. It is however made clear by a third-person limited omniscient narrator, who appears to know more about Durham than the other characters, that he is an inexperienced traveller with limited knowledge of Europe. His knowledge is primarily acquired through light fiction, and Paris's spell on him may come to an end through his personal involvement with Fanny de Malrive. This description of Durham in itself expresses a stereotypical view of Americans as uncultured, inexperienced and lacking in knowledge. This is also later expressed by Fanny, when she is confused by French law and customs: "My never knowing how they will do things is one of the secrets of their power" (18).

Durham goes on to be fascinated by the complexity in gender relations in a sophisticated society, as opposed to the relative simplicity of New York (7). Using the term *sophisticated* seems to imply the view that Europe is more advanced than the United States, but could also show a preference for the supposedly uncomplicated gender relations of Americans. Fanny de Malrive expresses a similar comparison in her longing for everything American. After spending time with Durham and his mother and sisters Katy and Nannie, she exclaims: "To be with dear, good, sweet, simple, real Americans again!" (9). She feels a real sense of safety when she is around fellow Americans. Again one gets the sense of America and Americans as innocent, simple and uncomplicated human beings, and although Fanny clearly perceives these as positive qualities, the American innocence and simplicity seems child-like and naïve. Fanny goes on to envision a childhood memory of going to a remote New England hill-top village, which she did not think was low or unsophisticated, but "beautiful – fresh and innocent and simple" (10). This longing back to an almost Garden of Eden-like place of childhood innocence, as opposed to her complicated present life in Paris underlines the stereotype of the sophisticated, complex, cultivated adult *Europe* as opposed to

the good, simple and natural child *America*. The portrayal of the Americans as innocent children may be interpreted as a positive quality in *Madame de Treymes*. Their innocence is a virtue, they are good, honest people. The child references in the other two novels, however, may to a greater extent be read as criticism of the ignorant and rootless Americans with no sense of history.

At the first visit of Durham and his mother and sisters to Fanny's stone-vaulted and stone-floored home, it becomes clear that the American women do not appreciate its history and beauty. "Well, if this is all she got by marrying a Marquis!", "It must be simply freezing in winter" is Katy Durham's response (24). This is virtually identical to Conchita Closson and Virginia St.George's impression of Allfriars in *The Buccaneers* and Undine Spragg's impression of Saint Désert in *The Custom of the Country*. They all thus represent the American who lacks an appreciation for culture, history and traditions. This is also an example of the American preference for the modern, in this case the installation of electricity and central heating. America's modernity became one of the new prominent motifs for anti-Americanism in literature towards the end of the nineteenth century and the consequences of commercial, industrial and technological developments were a concern. Knut Hamsun was one of the strongest critics of American modernity, which he considered to be rootless and culturally destructive. The noisy, busy life of modern America was not in keeping with his dream of a harmonious agrarian society. This type of conservative nostalgia and scepticism towards the modern can also be seen in Wharton's works and life, for example in her view of electricity, which she often refers to in her books; in her interest in gardening, antiques and architecture; in her escape to the countryside; and in her idealization of old New York and in her criticism of new New York. The fact that Durham's sisters comment on the temperature and thus the likely lack of electricity and central heating in Marquis the Malrive's house can thus be seen as an example of the much criticised American preference for the modern.

Another example of a lack of culture and history is when Durham's sisters later go to a charity bazaar and Mrs. Boykin, their cousin, describes how they bought lampshades from Madame de Treymes' stall, not because they necessarily admired them, but because "they thought it would be interesting to take home something painted by a real Marquise" (43). In addition to revealing a lack of appreciation for art and interiors, it illustrates the view of many domestic critics of Americans abroad, that they were too fascinated by and eager to please the European aristocracy and that this was unpatriotic behaviour. John Durham, on the other hand, realises that he has removed himself from his family's American perspective when his

mother comments on the dullness and pokiness of the Parisian streets and houses. Like Wharton herself and Nan St. George in *The Buccaneers*, he is fascinated by European history and culture.

At the first meeting between the Durhams and Fanny's sister-in-law Madame de Treymes, the French aristocrat is described as observing them critically, like "a civilized spectator observing an encampment of aborigines" (25). The choice of words here clearly imparts a view of Americans as primitive creatures in relation to the more evolved French. The French aristocrat is described as looking at the Americans like human beings would look at an animal in a zoo. It must, however, be noted that this is what Durham assumes that Madame de Treymes is thinking of them. The use of the term *aborigines* may therefore not express French views of Americans, but in fact express the way Durham initially looks at Americans in relation to the French. Durham seems fascinated by Madame de Treymes and observes that in her company, Fanny de Malrive becomes Fanny Frisbee again. She cannot compare to the French woman, which again is a comparison of American and French women where the prior do not quite measure up. Durham goes through a change during the novel, however. His eyes are opened to the negative aspects of French culture and society, and he turns into an American patriot who has come to rescue the poor American woman from her cynical and cunning French in-laws.

After Madame de Treymes' departure, Fanny tells the Durhams that they are the first Americans she has ever met, apart from herself. This shocks them, as she would have ample opportunity to do so with the large numbers of Americans in Paris. The fact that she has not indicates that Americans are not held in high regard in Parisian high society. It is made clear that Madame de Treymes has no desire to meet the Durhams again; she has already formed an opinion about them (27). Durham later assumes that to Madame de Treymes, he, as an American, "was a wholly new phenomenon, as unexplained as a fragment of meteorite dropped at her feet on the smooth gravel of the garden-path they were pacing" (36). The Americans are here compared to a natural phenomenon that comes crashing suddenly and unexpectedly from an unknown world into the civilized and cultivated setting of a garden-path.

John Durham first experiences the solidarity, closeness and uniformity in manners and attitudes of Fanny's French family and their social set in their home, the Hotel de Malrive. He has never before realised the meaning of an organized and inherited society and compares it to "the loose aggregation of a roomful of his own countrymen" (35). Here the close-knit French

family and their culture is compared to the American family, which seems more fragmented and competitive, lacking bonds and a sense of unity. Again, Durham is negative in his description of the Americans. When he later enters the Hotel de Malrive to talk to Madame de Treymes prior to the finalization of the divorce between Fanny and her husband, he feels like "a barbarian desecrating the silence of a temple of the earlier faith" (66). He wonders what the almost human-like house would think of his presence there. The word *barbarian* was frequently used to express anti-American sentiments and emphasises the contrast to the sophisticated French with their ancient history and culture. The fact that Durham even considers how the French perceive him as an American shows that he is aware of the differences between them and the stereotypes that are attached to Americans and that he has a reverence for French history and culture.

A direct description of Americans is expressed by Madame de Treymes when she reveals to Durham that she is in debt due to her affair with Prince d'Armillac and needs his help: "Your race is so cautious, so self-controlled – you have so little indulgence for the extravagances of the heart" (47). After pouring her heart out she exclaims: "Ah, even that does not move you" (47). This is an example of the conception that Americans were cold, calculating and driven by the dollar more than by the heart and it was the foundation of the resentment towards American transatlantic brides on both sides of the Atlantic: they did not marry for love, but elected aristocratic spouses that could provide them with a title and high social status. Madame de Treymes' words clearly illustrate the view that Americans are cold and calculating and lack a proper sense of family. Not only does she believe that Durham will conceal from Fanny that she will lose her son when marrying him. She also believes that Fanny will have no qualms about giving up her son in order to marry Durham. Why should she not when she can have another child by him? The Malrives show that they will do anything to keep Fanny's son within the family, but expect Fanny, as an American supposedly more focused on the individual than the family, to sacrifice her son to her own personal happiness. It can therefore be said that the entire plan of the Malrive family to support a divorce between Fanny and her husband, and then claim their son when Fanny marries Durham, is based on anti-American sentiments and stereotypes.

Divorce is one of the main topics of this story, and it was also one of the main critiques of Americans that they had no qualms about breaking up a marriage. Fanny is not opposed to divorce: "not in my case. I should like anything that would do away with the past – obliterate it all – make everything new in my life" (16). With this statement, she indicates

that she may be opposed to divorce in some cases, but accepts it when there is good reason for it. She does not embrace divorce like Undine Spragg does, however. She is fully aware of the difficulties of obtaining a divorce and she has serious qualms about the consequences of a divorce, but at the same time sees it as a necessity under certain circumstances. Fanny's thoughts about doing away with the past can be linked to the conception that Americans lack a sense of history and culture and that they put their personal happiness ahead of the unity of the family. There is supposedly a lack of domesticity in American women. Fanny does, however, make it clear that her main motivation for obtaining a divorce, is to save her son from French influence. This divorce can thus be seen as an expression of patriotism rather than of selfishness. It therefore has more in common with the divorce of Annabel Tintagel in *The Buccaneers*, than the divorces of Undine Spragg in *The Custom of the Country.* Madame de Treymes, on the other hand, states that "with us family considerations are paramount. And our religion forbids divorce" (39). The different views on divorce and family are also made clear in Durham's observation that when Fanny spoke about the divorce she used the plural pronoun *they* – "they will never consent to it" (17), as if the question of divorce involves the entire family and not just the married couple. This shocks Durham and his strong American individualism and strikes him as a feudal remnant. Here we see an example of the change that Durham goes through in the novel. He is now clearly on the side of American culture and habits, which Wharton also eventually came to be in the question of divorce.

Madame de Treymes makes one direct reference to the Americans' lack of knowledge. She asks one thing in return for her supposed assistance in the divorce proceedings, and that is for Durham to answer a question. When he says that that is not much to ask for, she replies "Don't be sure! It is never very little to your race" (68). Firstly, she comments on the lack of intelligence of Americans, inferring that they are incapable of answering questions. Secondly, the use of the word *race*, like her former use of the word *type*, indicates that she sees Americans as a particular breed of people with their own unique characteristics, and their *race* is different and inferior to the French.

3.2 Behaviour, Morals and Sexuality

My second category of anti-Americanism, behaviour, morals and sexuality, can be compared to Gulddal's "vulgarity." Gulddal mostly focuses on manners and language in his literary examples. I have also chosen to focus on descriptions of and statements about the typical characteristics and attributes of Americans. I have also included attitudes towards American women and their alleged flirtatious behaviour and promiscuity, their sexuality, which I find

relevant in relation to my primary literature. As a consequence of the Americans' perceived lack of history and culture, it was also naturally assumed that they were raw and primitive and had no taste or sense of propriety. Horrified European travellers to the United States described the Americans as boundlessly vulgar. According to Balzac, they were filthy animals both physically and morally (Gulddal 28). Some, like Charles Dickens and Fanny Trollope, particularly targeted the language of Americans and ridiculed their vocabulary and pronunciation, which they perceived as inferior to British English (Gulddal 28). Much attention was also given to their manners. Dickens published two books about his six month trip to the United States, *American Notes* (1842) and *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843-44), where he describes Americans as intrusive, excessively patriotic, prudish and hypocritical in discussions of freedom, equality and slavery (Gulddal 28). They are also stupid, ignorant, shallow and dirty, and Dickens and other European visitors were particularly appalled by the American habit of chewing and spitting tobacco. Additionally, Americans had no table manners, they ate too quickly and too much and didn't converse during meals. Although people behaved badly in Europe as well, there this kind of behaviour was associated with the lower classes. This may be linked to Wharton's portrayal of the *nouveaux riches* Americans as lacking in social graces. Although they may have climbed financially, their manners are still inferior.

In *Madame de Treymes*, Durham describes how Fanny has changed in terms of behaviour. Where Fanny Frisbee would have filled any gap in conversation with "a random fluency," the Europeanized Fanny de Malrive has become disciplined to deal well with conversational pauses (7). Using the term *European discipline* makes one think of the relations of adults versus children, the adult Europe disciplining or cultivating the unruly and chatty American, which is a common stereotype. Durham also observes that Fanny has lowered her voice and toned down her gestures; she no longer bounces and bangs things around. She has acquired a command of herself, which makes her blend into her surroundings and to Durham this makes her more graceful (23). Again, Durham expresses a negative view of Americans and a preference for French ways in the beginning of the book. Americans are loud, rowdy and vulgar and European behaviour is superior and is what one should aspire to.

The characters in *Madame de Treymes* that most clearly represent the negative qualities of Americans targeted in all my categories of literary anti-Americanism are Mr. and Mrs. Boykin. Their name *Boy – kin* illustrates that they are an inexperienced and childlike couple, thus representing the common view within anti-Americanism that America is the

child and Europe is the adult. They have lived in Paris for twenty-five years, but choose to distance themselves from French society and frequently express a derogatory view of the French. Mrs. Boykin is described as having remained American in her direct gaze and unrestricted, candid voice. This description of Mrs. Boykin represents negative views of American behaviour: she is too direct and loud. The Boykins are described as having created a phantom America in France, surrounded as they are by other Americans who are equally sceptical of anything French. They can thus be seen as overly patriotic. They show a lack of moral backbone in their hypocrisy towards the French aristocracy when claiming to want nothing to do with them. As soon as they get the chance, they grab the opportunity to mingle with them. All their apparent prejudices are suddenly cast aside. Their true aspiration to be accepted by the French aristocracy, and thereby their hypocrisy, is revealed. The Boykins thus appear to be pseudo-patriotic. This type of ambition and social climbing was seen by many Europeans as unsympathetic and typically American. Many Americans would view it as unpatriotic. The Boykins go out of their way to impress the French aristocrats with their lavish dinner parties and the interior of their house is described as being garish and ostentatious. Mr. Boykin is compared to an "American business man coming 'up town' after a long day in the office," which indicates that they are *nouveaux riches* (28). They may therefore also be seen as examples of American materialism and vulgar display of wealth.

In the negative description of the Boykins, the narrator does not appear to speak on behalf of John Durham, but appears to speak on her own behalf. The anti-American views expressed here may thus be the views of Edith Wharton. This impression is enhanced by a description of the interior of the Boykin's home, interior decorating being of great personal interest to Wharton: "Mrs. Boykin, from the corner of an intensely modern Gobelin sofa, studied her cousin as he balanced himself insecurely on one of the small gilt chairs which always looked surprised at being sat in" (29). Additionally, their house is harshly lit up by electricity in the American fashion. These observations describe the American, and thus the United States, as too modern and too showy. This was a common criticism of Americans and a view that seems to be expressed by the narrator here.

Durham spends a lot of money at Madame de Treymes' charity bazaar, which is presumably why she invites him to come to tea at "the heart of the enemy's country" (33). The narrator's use of the word *enemy* is an indication of the mutual animosity between the Americans and the French. That Madame de Treymes may have preconceived notions of Americans is made clear by Durham's pondering her motives for inviting him. Could it be

that she wanted to "permit herself another glimpse of an American so picturesquely embodying the type familiar to French fiction?" (33). The use of the word *picturesquely* makes one think of something unusual, quaint, innocent and cute, the way a tourist may look at a place that he visits, it is seen superficially and from the outside, without any knowledge of the realities behind or below the surface. This is how, according to Durham, the French may look at Americans. The use of the word *type* further stresses the point that Americans are not seen as individuals, but as members of a group possessing certain qualities, stereotyped through French fiction. The narrator then comments that Madame de Treymes' American visitor is "left in the isolation of his unimportance" (34), an interpretation and opinion that clearly indicates the presence of an extradiegetic, intrusive narrator.

In her first direct statement about Fanny, Madame de Treymes says to Durham that Fanny must have told him that the family has always given her their sympathy. Apparently Fanny has not done so, as Durham diplomatically states that she has inferred it in the way she has spoken about them. Madame de Treymes does not seem to be convinced by his answer. There clearly seems to be some discrepancy in opinion when it comes to how the French family has welcomed and treated Fanny (38). Madame de Treymes goes on to describe Fanny as extremely delicate: "It was a great surprise to us at first" (39). This direct utterance is a comment on Fanny's behaviour and expresses the French expectation that Americans are crude, rough and insensitive – a clear anti-American prejudice.

In *Gilded Prostitution: Status, Money, and Transatlantic Marriages 1870-1914*, Maureen E. Montgomery presents stereotypes of American women that can be divided according to my categories of anti-Americanism. Although Montgomery focuses on Anglo-American marriages, the economic situation for aristocratic families all over Europe was comparable, and her theories are therefore also relevant to France and *Madame de Treymes* as well. Anti-American attitudes linked to women's morality and sexuality could be seen in a number of ways. The British upper classes and the landed gentry, suffering the effects of the agricultural depression, now to a greater extent struggled to marry off their daughters and the American heiresses became competitors on the marriage market. It did not help the situation that marrying a foreigner for financial reasons was seen as less of a threat to the position and exclusivity of the British aristocracy than marrying the daughters of British industrialists and businessmen (Montgomery 87-88). Americans were seen as the main reason there was a shortage of eligible aristocratic bachelors. This was a concern for the mothers of the British girls in particular, and due to this female rivalry the American women were stereotyped as

"hussies and adventuresses" or "poachers" stealing British men (Montgomery 85, 99). Compared to the more timid and traditional British upper-class women, the Americans were perceived as being forward and lacking inhibitions and breeding.

As early as the 1870s, when American women began to appear in British court circles, accusations were made about their morality. Some even went as far as calling them gilded prostitutes. There was a fear among titled ladies that the American women had a bad influence on moral standards, for example in the Marlborough House Set around the then Prince of Wales. To stop what they saw as increasing hedonism and "moral rot," the titled ladies demanded that the Archbishop organized devotional meetings and a moral mission to aid aristocratic women in their attempt to stall the decline in moral standards caused by the Americans (Montgomery 78).

Focus was often put on the appearance of the American women, both in the American and British media. Beauty became a part of the heiress stereotype and this naturally led to increased resentment and envy among British girls and mothers, but was welcomed by British men. Their beauty and morals were connected and this lead to a view of American women as seductresses, who used their good looks to lure British men into immoral behaviour. One would assume that the American women were perceived in a similar manner in France.

Although Fanny is not portrayed as a flirtatious or sexually promiscuous woman, her beauty is specifically mentioned: "The beautiful Fanny was especially dashing; she had the showiest national attributes, tempered only by a native grace of softness, as the beam of her eyes was subdued by the length of their lashes" (22). Although Fanny is perhaps not deliberately flirtatious, her beauty gives her sexual power. To avoid portraying Fanny as a sensual temptress, her virginity and innocence is assured by her lashes subduing her beaming eyes. This may be interpreted as being coquette, however. Durham admires her beauty and charms when she is Fanny Frisbee, but she is only one of many equally beautiful and charming American women. It is not until she becomes Fanny de Malrive, that he really develops a fascination for her: "She was the same, but so mysteriously changed!" (23). Just like Ellen Olenska in *The Age of Innocence*, Fanny only becomes really intriguing to men after she has been transformed in Europe into a mysterious, mature, experienced and interesting European woman: "And it was the mystery, the sense of unprobed depths of initiation, which drew him to her as her freshness had never drawn him" (23). Durham's sister defines the change that Fanny has gone through when exclaiming "I never saw anything so French!" (23). The initial description of Fanny as fresh and inexperienced is an indication of

her virginity. Although she is beautiful, she is still a child. In this respect, she represents the newness and innocence of her country. Fanny resembles Undine Spragg in that her beauty is not enough to make her interesting. She needs to evolve and mature in order to become a woman. She cannot be said to be sexually promiscuous, as a stereotype of American women claimed. Although Fanny and Durham kiss each other, this does not happen until she is assured that her husband has agreed to the divorce. She seems determined to protect her sexual reputation. The fact that Durham prefers her when she is more experienced could be related to the fact that Wharton saw the innocence of American women as a problem. This can be connected to the sexual awakening Wharton herself experienced well into adulthood. Wharton can thus be said to be in disagreement with the anti-Americans who saw American women as too promiscuous. To her they were too innocent.

The most direct indications of sexuality in *Madame de Treymes* involves the Marquis de Malrive. He remains in the background throughout the book, partly, I would believe, to allow Madame de Treymes a larger role in the story in order to highlight the differences between American and French women. There are, however, indications that the Marquis is perceived as morally corrupt, which could be the reason for his absence. There are several references to his unfitness as a father and a husband. His case is described as flagrant and scandalous, and his actions are referred to as *ecarts*, deviations (38). He may have had an affair, but the use of such strong terms as 'flagrant' and 'deviations' makes me believe that he is homosexual. Even his own family admits that he is fully to blame for the divorce. This seems odd in a society that is accepting of extra-marital affairs and is another indication that conventional, heterosexual adultery is not the cause of the marriage break-up. The fact that the Marquis de Malrive is literally invisible in the book indicates that he has done something that was perceived of as being shameful at the time. Like Ellen Olenska's European husband, he has the potential to destroy his pure American wife. Fanny's attempt to divorce him, thus gives us the impression that she is a good, virtuous American woman. Fanny can thereby be seen as a symbol of American patriotism. However, this may also be seen as yet another example of the American woman's naïveté and sexual inexperience.

3.3 Materialism and the Display of Wealth

My third category of anti-Americanism, materialism and the display of wealth, which coincides with Gulddal's category of "materialism," targets what the Hungarian German poet Nikolaus Lenau called "the raging materialism of the Americans; the predominance of a commercial mind-set, the enthusiasm for business and moneymaking, and the subordination

of all moral, spiritual and aesthetic values to the dollar" (qtd. in Gulddal 26). Criticism of the Americans' materialism was a favourite topic among European Romantics. The French novelist Stendhal described a "cult of dollargod" in the United States and according to Honoré de Balzac it was a "sad country of money and selfishness where the soul is freezing" (qtd. in Gulddal 26). Tocqueville's travel companion in America, Gustave de Beaumont, claimed that "Money is the god of the United States, as glory is the god of France, and love, that of Italy" (qtd. in Gulddal 27). Charles Dickens similarly compared the United States to a large counting house and claimed that Americans worshipped "the almighty dollar" (qtd. in Gulddal 27). Americans' view of money was seen as what made them fundamentally different from Europeans and a popular stereotype was that Americans were scrupulous and utilitarian shopkeepers and Europeans were moral and philosophical poets and artists. Along with Jews, Americans were frequently blamed both for the increasing hedonism and materialism of the upper classes in England (Montgomery 78). The fact that the American brides were normally referred to as *heiresses* in itself emphasises the financial aspect of the marriages and the characteristic that was obviously seen as their most important asset: wealth. Many worried that the influx of rich American women would heighten the bar of expenditure in high society. This could lead to increased commercialization and make the older elite feel that their position was threatened, just like the older elite in Wharton's New York felt threatened by the influx of new money.

I have added *the display of wealth* to my category, because American women in Europe were often criticized for their excessive spending and showiness and for dressing in an exaggerated style. According to a fellow American, Frederick Martin, whose niece married the Earl of Craven, "they believe in the value of advertisement, they like to see society paragraphs about their jewels and their gowns" (qtd. in Montgomery 141). The women dressing to show off their father's or husband's wealth is what Thorstein Veblen refers to as an expression of pecuniary culture. The growing criticism of American materialism and their conspicuous consumption in the beginning of the 1900s in Great Britain and presumably also in France must be seen in connection with the increased general scepticism and distrust towards businessmen at this time. To some, the way Americans earned and spent their money was what constituted the main difference between them and the British. When the British media wrote about Americans at the turn of the century, they particularly emphasized their attitudes towards money.

Materialism and the display of wealth is not a main topic in *Madame de Treymes*, but there are some examples of anti-American sentiments within this area. Filtered through the narrator, Durham describes the Frisbees of his college years as bold, enterprising and dashing; all qualities that were particularly attached to Americans at the time and that were often interpreted negatively as being typical of risk-taking and showy businessmen and materialists. Another reference to materialism and consumption is when Fanny says to Durham that his mother has "charming quaint ideas about Europe" (incidentally another example of the naiveté of Americans), and that Americans regard Europe simply as a playground and a shop (9). In other words, Americans came to Europe to amuse themselves and to upgrade their wardrobes, not to study the culture and history. Another reference to Americans and money is in connection with Madame de Treymes' charity bazaar, the *ventes de charite* (29). Mrs. Boykin is insulted that the French are more than willing to involve the Americans in *these* events, where their money is sought after, and observes that the otherwise excluded Americans are eager to contribute their money in the hope of invitations to other, more prestigious social events. Madame de Treymes openly admits to taking advantage of the Americans' wealth (41). This of course gives an unsympathetic, grasping impression of the French, but also describes Americans as typically wealthy, socially ambitious and willing to use their money to achieve their goals, as well as again being gullible and naïve enough to let themselves be taken advantage of.

The narrator clearly expresses an opinion about the American display of wealth when he comments on their need to impress: "The national determination not to be "downed" by the despised foreigner, to show a wealth of material resource obscurely felt to compensate for the possible lack of other distinctions" (43). Since they are lacking in history, culture and manners, they have to compensate by flaunting their material resources. Mrs. Boykin does this in the form of putting on lavish culinary feasts, not to enjoy the art of cooking, but to impress her guests. When she invites Madame de Treymes to dinner, she does not openly express the admiration and respect Mrs. Boykin was hoping for. Durham in fact believes that Madame de Treymes is aware of the desire to impress and that "the crudity of the talk might account for the complexity of the dishes" (44).

Madame de Treymes directly comments on Americans' attitude to money and consumption when she proposes a deal where she will try to get the Malrive family to accept a divorce between Fanny and her husband in return for Durham paying her lover's gambling debts. "You Americans, when you want a thing, always pay ten times what it is worth, and I

am giving you the wonderful chance to get what you most want at a bargain" (48). Her assumption that Americans are willing to pay more than necessary for what they want implies that their consumption is conspicuous, and that they are extravagant and careless with their money. The fact that she believes Durham is willing to enter into such an agreement indicates that she believes Americans to be unscrupulous and devoid of morals. When it turns out that Durham refuses to "buy" the possibility of marrying Fanny and thereby proves Madame de Treymes' prejudices about Americans to be incorrect, she is shocked: "Ah, you are all incredible" (49).

3.4 Political Anti-Americanism

Although Romantic anti-Americanism was primarily based on snobbery and a sense of superiority and contempt for the, in their view, uncultured, ignorant, badly behaved and materialistic Americans, there was also a political aspect to the anti-American sentiments. This category includes criticism of the United States' political system and democracy, its policies and its alleged double standards. In the next two novels, it also includes the United States' international ambitions, i.e. American imperialism. My fourth and final category of anti-Americanism is equivalent to Gulddal's "democracy", which focuses on the flaws of the American political system and its hypocrisy. Americans claimed that their democracy was superior to that of oppressed Europeans, which naturally annoyed the Europeans, who became determined to find flaws in the American system. A major European criticism was the contradiction between the American ideals of liberty and equality for all and the practise of slavery in the Southern states. A mockery was made of the fact that even Thomas Jefferson, the writer of the Declaration of Independence, was a slave owner and had fathered several illegitimate mulatto children. There was also little respect for American politicians, who were said to be uneducated and corrupt and governed by dollars rather than morals. American democracy was thus an illusion; it was in fact a "mobocracy". In general, there was little faith in democracy among European conservatives at this time, it was viewed as an inferior system characterized by too much faith in a government by the irrational masses. As the United States was increasingly settled by poor, uneducated European immigrants who eventually went into politics, the European faith in the American democracy and American politics further decreased.

An example of political anti-Americanism in *Madame de Treymes* is when the titular heroine complements the Americans on their ability to speak French. However, she then inquires whether "they learned it, *las bas, des negres*" (26). This is a clear reference to

American slavery and is thus a comment on American politics and democracy, which would embarrass the Americans. Durham is in fact described as being astonished by her blunder. The fact that Madame de Treymes comments on *the negroes down there*, can thus be seen as an anti-American statement about the perceived flawed American democracy.

This comment can, however, also be linked to another anti-American motif that first appeared at the beginning of the nineteenth century, that of race and racial ideology. Again, Hamsun was a major critic. Unlike the Europeans who criticised the United States for their practise of slavery, Hamsun took the opposite stand. As expressed in his book *The Cultural Life of Modern America* (1889), he was sceptical of the racially diverse composition of America. This included both the large numbers of African Americans, who he considered to be racially inferior, and the intermarriage between European immigrants from different countries, whom he considered to have uneven racial value. America had in his eyes become a nation of mulattos and mongrels and a melting pot of simple minded, criminal and inferior immigrants, the castoffs of the Old World. Hamsun's view of Hitler and Nazism is well-known, and he must thus be considered to be extreme, but he did in fact represent common views of race at the time.

Wharton has been criticized for her alleged anti-Semitism, as seen in her portrayal of Mr Rosedale in *The House of Mirth.* Race does generally not appear to be an important topic in my primary literature, however. In *The Buccaneers* there is one reference to race. In an outburst against Americans, Sir Helmsley Thwarte refers to Conchita Closson as a "West Indian octoroon" (95). By this it is implied that he believes her to be partly African-American and a descendant of slaves, and he clearly sees this as a negative quality.

The characters in *Madame de Treymes* are not simply pro-American or pro-European, however. As in *The Custom of the Country* and *The Buccaneers*, some of the characters are drawn between the two continents. Like Nan Tintagel, Fanny de Malrive expresses mixed feelings about her native country and her new homeland. On one hand, she is fiercely patriotic. She is "tired of Americans who despise even their own asparagus" and is sympathetic towards Durham's mother who treasures what is American and prefers American asparagus (9). This statement is in clear opposition to the many Americans at this time who looked to Europe for culture, class and good taste. She is also terrified that her son will adopt his French family's customs and attitudes and that he will be limited and controlled by the family's expectations, prejudices, traditions and religion (14). Fanny claims that she has the

right to influence him with her American ideals and her son thus becomes a virtual battleground between European and American values. Similarly, Fanny herself is the battleground of her French family's struggle to maintain control of her and her son, and Durham's attempt to gain her back for himself and for America. At the same time, Fanny feels that her French family is a part of her and that she belongs to them. She is thus drawn between her Americanness and her loyalty to her French family. Fanny's surnames probably express her main point of view, however. As an American she is free, *Fri(s)bee*, but being married to a Frenchman in France, she is on the *Malrive*, the evil bank.

John Durham can similarly be said to express sympathy both for the American and the French point of view. The attraction he feels towards Fanny only occurs when she has become French. As a young American girl, she is not interesting to him; her becoming less American is what encourages his feelings for her. Durham therefore clearly represents a negative view of American women and a preference for what is seen as the typical attributes of French women. It can be questioned whether there would have been a relationship between Fanny and Durham at all, if it had not been for the attraction of her "Frenchness." His negative view of Fanny as an American can therefore be seen as a premise for their connection in the narrative. On the other hand, Durham is patriotic when supporting Fanny's efforts to get a divorce. He even contrasts Fanny's coming liberation through the divorce to the mental slavery of her marriage to the Marquis de Malrive (64). Two of the main characters in *Madame de Treymes*, Fanny de Malrive and John Durham, can thus be seen as conflicted in their preference for their native country and France.

The gullibility, innocence and goodness of the Americans are a premise for the outcome of the book. They are easily duped by the calculating and more experienced and sophisticated French. This does of course give a negative impression of the French and could be read as an example of the sympathetic and inherently good nature of Americans, as Henry James might have interpreted it early in his career. From an anti-American perspective, it can be read as an example of a whole nation allowing themselves to be treated badly and taken advantage of due to their naiveté and ignorance of French laws and society. Although one does sympathise with Madame de Treymes for being trapped in a miserable marriage that she cannot get out of in a society that is strongly opposed to divorce, the fact that she is her family's instrument in taking a child from a naïve American woman makes her less sympathetic. She also appears to get some satisfaction from tricking the Americans, answering Durham in an ironic way and with a smile on her face when he is convinced that

she is trying to help him and Fanny and feels guilty about not offering her something in return. What he doesn't know is that securing the future Marquis de Malrive for her family is reward enough for her. Both the Malrive family, and probably also the reader, believe that the Americans are ultimately outsmarted through Madame de Treymes, whose name underlines this fact: she is a detriment, *détriment*, to the Americans. The twist at the end of the book is, however, that the French have misunderstood and underestimated the Americans. Their goodness and virtue stop the Malrives' devious plan.

There are several negative and unsympathetic descriptions of the French in this story. Some examples are their snobbery and exclusion of foreigners and their lack of individual freedom due to the strong traditions and uniformity of French society. *Madame de Treymes* can therefore by no means be said to be primarily an anti-American book. Even though the prejudices go both ways, there is nevertheless a continuous presence of negative stereotyping of Americans. The book directly and indirectly portrays the American characters in ways that are based on typical stereotypes about Americans at the time, and thereby conveys attitudes that can be interpreted as anti-American. In some ways, however, the book counters some of these stereotypes. One example is John Durham's initial scepticism towards Madame de Treymes gaining the support from her family to accept the divorce, which shows that the Americans are not as gullible as the French think they are. Madame de Treymes is also impressed that Durham never mentioned to Fanny their negotiations about helping with the divorce in return for monetary assistance, because he did not want to tarnish their future marriage. She can see that "you are good people – just simply courageously *good*!" (69). But she counters her own exclamation by stating that the goodness of the Americans is also their problem – they are too confiding, gullible, innocent and trusting, and she admits that the French in general and she in particular have taken advantage of this. So even here, when she admits to seeing positive qualities in Americans, she manages to twist it around to something negative. This is why one can say that anti-American stereotypes are at the heart of the relationship between the main characters of the book and it affects the narrative and its outcome. Whether the Americans themselves express or are examples of common perceptions of their *race*, whether the French directly or indirectly show their prejudices against Americans or whether the French are surprised that their prejudices about Americans are proved wrong – anti-Americanism is a central theme and motif in *Madame de Treymes.*

Chapter 2

The Attention-Seeking, Hotel-Dwelling Gold Digger: American Rootlessness, Vulgarity and Materialism in *The Custom of the Country*

Whereas Fanny de Malrive's destiny as an international bride may appeal to the reader, one cannot say the same about the main character of *The Custom of the Country*, Undine Spragg. Although she also has to adopt her foreign husband's nationality and feels entrapped in an aristocratic marriage, there are very few redeeming qualities to this woman, who, as her initials imply, in Wharton's eyes is the epitome of the socially ambitious nouveau riche American woman at the turn of the last century. Where Fanny shows signs of patriotism, feminism and republican motherhood, Undine is entirely self-obsessed, has no interest in politics, business or culture and is undeniably an uncaring, insensitive daughter, wife and mother.

In *The Custom of the Country*, Wharton mercilessly describes the *nouveaux riches* Americans as being extravagant, materialistic, ignorant and selfish. Newly arrived in New York from provincial Apex where her father has built his fortune, we follow Undine Spragg as she climbs the social ladder towards the apex of New York society. Once she gets there through her marriage to Ralph Marvell, she realizes it is not quite what she expected; she wants more glamour, money, entertainment and attention. After her divorce, her social climbing continues in Europe, where she marries into the French aristocracy. Once again her marriage ends in disappointment and disillusionment. After divorcing Marquis Raymond de Chelles, she marries the equally ambitious Elmer Moffatt, who turns out to have been her first husband. While seeming finally to have the life that she always wanted, the book ends with a hint at even higher aspirations: becoming an ambassador's wife. Like the modern United States and the newly rich Americans at large, Undine is never satisfied. She always wants more – more possessions, more status, more leisure and more happiness.

Being one of Wharton's most popular novels and a novel of strong social criticism, a lot has been written on *The Custom of the Country* and the interpretations are numerous. According to what I have found in my research, the criticism can be divided into three main areas: 1) Domesticity - the role of the American woman, divorce, marriage, motherhood and international marriage; 2) Culture and behaviour - shallowness, modernity, American versus

French culture, expatriation and national identity; and 3) Economy - materialism, consumerism, capitalism, ruthlessness, disposal, social climbing and imperialism. These are all incidentally areas that are the targets of European criticism of Americans in the book, and I have therefore included some of this criticism. I will cover all of my four categories of anti-Americanism in the analysis of *The Custom of the Country*. I initially intended to focus on one of the categories, but found all four to be of equal importance while analysing this novel.

Anti-American sentiments in *The Custom of the Country* are first and foremost expressed through the characterization of Undine Spragg and her *nouveaux riches* friends. As her initials indicate, Undine *is* the United States. She displays American materialism and shallowness and is a symbol of the commercialism, immorality, utilitarianism and superficiality that was increasingly prevalent in American society at the time, which Wharton seems very critical of. Everything Undine does and says can be interpreted as characteristic of a new type of American evolving at the turn of the last century. This is what Woolf refers to as ethnological typecasting or a treatment of individuals as national types, which was a typical feature of Henry James, who greatly inspired Edith Wharton (237). It is also striking how Undine's reception in and conception of the upper echelons of New York society is mirrored by her experiences in the French aristocracy. In my analysis of this novel, I aim to show that the direct and indirect characterization of Undine Spragg or the United States, as well as the explicit attitudes towards Americans expressed by Europeans in the novel, correspond with prevalent stereotypes of Americans at the time. I will also show that the characterization and attitudes can be organized according to my four categories of anti-Americanism.

Although there are not many direct statements about Americans expressed by Undine's French family or other Europeans, I interpret the Washington Square world of New York on the one hand and the Fabourg Saint Germain area of Paris and the Saint Désert estate in Burgundy on the other to be very similar in terms of class, culture and values. In their encounter with the new invading Americans, both American and French settings represent the European view of most Americans as being uncultured and lacking in history, knowledge and morals. I thus see the French aristocracy and the American upper class as a reflection of each other, and the attitudes expressed by the "aboriginal" Americans towards their invading fellow countrymen can be seen as expressions of anti-American sentiments in the same way as if they were expressed by Undine's French husband and in-laws.

The parallels between American old money and the French aristocracy are numerous. Even the name of the Dagonet family, of which the Marvells are a part, has links to European

aristocracy, as Sir Dagonet was one of the mythical King Arthur's knights. He saw himself as a fierce warrior, but in fact he avoided any provocation or danger (Wikipedia, Dagonet). This could perhaps be a comment on how this social class dealt with the newcomers in society: They just ignored them and hoped they would go away. Both the Dagonets and the de Chelles live several generations under one roof in their ancestral homes, which makes Undine and her mother question whether they cannot afford separate housing. The interiors of their homes are perceived by Undine to be dowdy and stuffy, without any unnecessary luxuries. Their houses have no central heating, electricity or other modern amenities. The two families' frugality is evident both in the way they decorate their houses and in the way they dress and live. Their money is not to be wasted on the supposedly urgent needs of the individual, but used to help the family and invest in the future. Their houses and minds are filled with literature and art of the more serious kind, although they are not necessarily intellectual, and they are genuinely interested in theatre, opera and politics. Both husbands are artistically inclined, Ralph through his writing and Raymond through his painting. Interesting and polite conversation and spending time with the family is more important than entertainment, amusements and attention. Their view of traditions, history and family values is the same and divorce is equally frowned upon by both families. This makes Undine feel like a foreigner in both worlds; she is not compatible or acceptable, they do not understand her. Her disrespect for family heirlooms is what ultimately makes both Ralph Marvell and Raymond de Chelles reject her. She alters her engagement ring, which was passed down to Ralph by his mother, and she suggests selling the ancient de Chelles tapestries. Both the Dagonets and the de Chelles, through their similarities, constitute a united front against the monstrosity the contemporary United States has created: Undine Spragg. They can therefore both be said to be expressing anti-American attitudes.

4.1 Culture, History, Domesticity and Knowledge

The characterization of the United States as a country lacking in culture, history and knowledge and a country with disintegrating families is what first and foremost strikes me in my analysis of *The Custom of the Country*. This national characterization is done through the characterization of Undine Spragg, who symbolizes the United States, and the characterization of her diametrical opposites Ralph Marvell and Raymond de Chelles, who can both be seen to represent the values of the old world, Europe. In the introduction to the novel, Stephen Orgel claims that Undine's unwillingness to adapt to the life of her French family becomes a symbol of the ignorance and destructive cynicism of modern America (xxi).

I would like to expand this claim also to include Undine's reluctance to embrace the lifestyle of the Dagonets and Marvells and thus being symbolic of modern America's rejection and ignorance of culture and history.

Undine shows a distinct lack of interest in culture. On her and Ralph's honeymoon to Europe, she finds the wandering from one remote Tuscan hill-top town to the next utterly purposeless. What draws her to Europe is not the art, architecture, ancient buildings, museums and beautiful scenery, which is what appeals to Ralph, but the glamorous and ostentatious settings of St. Moritz, Paris and Deauville. Undine doesn't seek the genuine, unique and quaint; she seeks other Americans that share her values and aspirations. She is not there to learn, but to use the world as a stage on which she can show off her assets, like a modern-day jetsetter. In this respect, she represents the type of tourist that Wharton expressed strong antipathies towards in her travel literature. The attitudes of the modern American travellers are made clear in a conversation between Undine and Indiana Frusk: "'I don't know as I care much about meeting foreigners', she [Indiana] said indifferently." "'Oh, some of them are awfully attractive; and *they'll* make you meet the Americans'" [Undine responds] (220).

When Undine brings her parents to Paris for the first time, they seem utterly out of their depth. Although her father shows some interest in museums and galleries, he seems to spend most of his time comparing the technical and numeric aspects of hotels and the hotel business in America and France. Mr. Spragg seems oblivious to the beauty and history of the Parisian hotels. To him their lack of a cold-storage system proves Europe's inferiority to the United States. Even to Undine, his focus on profitability and modern amenities becomes tiresome in the end. Mrs. Spragg becomes like a helpless, insecure child in Paris. Scared of the foreigners speaking another language and behaving differently, she is completely dependent on her daughter. Instead of immersing themselves in French and European culture, all three Spraggs choose to stand on the outside looking in, passing judgements based on their American customs and culture rather than trying to understand and be accepting of another culture.

There is considerable emphasis on the lack of roots, history and traditions among the modern Americans in *A Custom of the Country*. This can be seen through direct statements, characterization and through the use of metaphors and symbolism. Undine Spragg and her set are described as favouring continuous change and mobility, disregarding and disrespecting what is linked to tradition, permanence and stability. On their honeymoon, Undine says to Ralph that, "'I don't like Europe…it's not what I expected, and I think it's all too dreadfully

dreary!'… 'It's dirty and ugly – and all the towns we've been to are disgustingly dirty. I loathe the smells and the beggars. I'm sick and tired of the stuffy rooms in the hotels. I thought it would all be so splendid – but New York's ever so much nicer!'" (96). To Undine, Europe seems dead, almost like a cemetery. Incidentally, this is also how she views both the Dagonet residence in New York and Saint Désert, the de Chelles estate in Burgundy. Even Undine's mothers-in-law, Mrs. Marvell and Madame de Chelles are compared to ruins, dressed in old clothes that Mrs. Spragg would never be seen in. What is old and historical is seen as outdated and dull. There is no apparent appreciation for history and traditions and if you dislike something, you just change it or get rid of it. Undine's alteration of her engagement ring, a family heirloom, is contrasted with Ralph's cousin Clare giving her nephew Paul "'a battered old Dagonet bowl that came down to me from our revered great-grandmother'" (133). Undine's eagerness to sell the de Chelles tapestries and Elmer Moffatt's eagerness to buy them is shocking to a family that treasures family, history and traditions. In both cases Undine is oblivious to the hurtfulness of her actions, as these historic objects are of no importance to her. In a confrontation between Undine and Raymond, between the United States and Europe, their contrasting views of history are made perfectly clear. When Undine suggests selling Saint Désert, "the suggestion seemed to strike him as something monstrously, almost fiendishly significant: as if her random word had at last thrust into his hand the clue to their whole unhappy difference" (330).

Having no sense of roots is another characteristic of modern America according to its critics and this is naturally linked to a lack of history. In the most passionate argument between Undine and Raymond, Raymond pinpoints his view of Americans and their rootlessness:

> You come among us from a country we don't know, and can't imagine, a country you care for so little that before you've been a day in ours you've forgotten the very house you were born in – if it wasn't torn down before you knew it! You come among us speaking our language and not knowing what we mean; wanting the things we want, and not knowing why we want them; aping our weaknesses, exaggerating our follies, ignoring or ridiculing all we care about – you come from hotels as big as towns, and from towns as flimsy as paper, where the streets haven't had time to be named, and the buildings are demolished before they're dry, and the people are as proud of changing as we are of holding to what we have – and we're fools enough to imagine that because you copy our ways and pick up our slang you understand anything about the things that make life decent and honourable for us! (341-42)

This rootlessness manifests itself in how the new Americans live and think. There is a temporariness and a lack of continuity in everything they do. They come from new towns that no one has ever heard of. Elmer Moffat appeared in Apex, one of these new towns, and no

one knew who he was. These people would rather live in hotels than buy apartments and houses, because it is believed to be fashionable. The Spraggs never settle down in one place, but keep going from hotel to hotel. Before they moved to New York they seemed to spend every summer in a new place, driven by their daughter's whims and social aspirations.

Undine is always on the move, continuously crossing the Atlantic, travelling around Europe, moving between the city and country estates. She moves geographically and socially, horizontally and vertically. Her continuous dissatisfaction and craving for more are indications of her restlessness and lack of stability and roots. Through what seems to be an interior monologue where Undine refers to her conversations with her French family, their view of this constant travelling and restlessness is expressed:

> Since wedding-journeys were the fashion, they had taken them; but who had ever heard of travelling afterward? What could be the possible object of leaving one's family, one's habits, one's friends? It was natural that the Americans, who had no homes, who were born and died in hotels, should have contracted nomadic habits; but the new Marquise de Chelles was no longer an American, and she had Saint Désert and the Hotel de Chelles to live in, as generations of ladies of her name had done before her. (321)

Not only is Undine on the move geographically and socially, she is also on the move emotionally. She always wants something new, and when she gets it she wants something else, whether it be a dress or a piece of jewellery or a new husband. In her constant pursuit of happiness, her parents, husbands and son suffer. They become victims of her restlessness and rootlessness. Her parents, however, are both the partial cause and victims of this emotional and geographical detachment. Back in Apex, parents and children never seemed to interfere much in each other's business. Undine was free to do what she liked, which seemed to encourage a moral relativism and carelessness in the young woman. Her parents also gave into her constant material demands and requests to move and travel and thus encouraged her rootlessness. To Ralph and Raymond, Undine's constant need for change and her lack of roots is what stands out as one of the main differences between them and ultimately leads to their divorce. Divorce in turn is symptomatic of a rootless and restless society, which always chases something more, something better.

Undine's son Paul is perhaps the biggest victim of Undine's rootlessness. He is shipped across the Atlantic to a mother he has not seen and barely heard from for six years and he is later sent away to boarding school. Upon his return to Paris, he does not know where Undine and his new step-father are, he never does as they are constantly travelling from one place to the other. He cannot find his things in the new house and all the servants are new to

him. The fact that he has to learn about his own mother through newspaper clippings, that he has lost contact with his American family and does not even know who his biological father is is the ultimate confirmation of his mother's and consequently his own rootlessness.

As previously mentioned, the United States was seen as a new, inexperienced and ignorant child and this was also Wharton's view. The use of child references and the description of child-like behaviour in *The Custom of the Country* are therefore striking. The way I see it, the use of child metaphors and characterization in relation to Undine Spragg emphasises the view of the United States as being immature and not having or revering history. Undine is on numerous occasions referred to as a child: "She seemed as yet – poor child! – too small for New York"; and again on the same page a similar phrase, "'She's so lonesome, poor child – I can't say as I blame her'" (9). Mr. and Mrs. Spragg are described as caring but over-indulgent parents; their main objective in everything they do, whether it be the move from Apex to New York or the money-making on Wall Street, is to please their spoilt and demanding child. This also applies to Undine's husbands Elmer Moffat and Ralph Marvell. They will, like her parents, do anything to please her. If she does not get what she wants, she throws tantrums and turns to tears to manipulate them into getting her own way.

This behaviour clearly resembles that of a child. Like a child, Undine's moods quickly change when new temptations occur; her "ill-humour was soon dispelled by any new distraction" (112). It is said that Undine's first struggle "after she had ceased to scream for candy, or sulk for a new toy" was to leave Apex in the summer (34). This is a description of her as a child, but one could say that the screaming and sulking continues into her adult life. Wanting and demanding clothes, jewellery and amusements like a spoilt child unaware of the cost and sacrifices that are required to provide her with what she wants, Undine remains a child. "It was always hard to make her see why circumstances could not be bent to her wishes" (107). In a child-like manner Undine just wants what she claims everybody else has. Another direct description of Undine as a child is when she is trying to get her father to pay for her trip to Paris; "she nodded at him with closed-pressed lips, like a child in possession of some solemn secret" (152). When Undine gets what she wants she is full of glee, excitement and high spirits, like a child clapping her hands with joy. When getting to go where she wants, whether it be to her own box at the opera, St. Moritz or Paris, she is like an overjoyed child at a fairground.

Undine's tendency to mimic and imitate others also seems infantile. When she is socially insecure, she imitates those she aspires to be like, just as a child is socialized by

observing its surroundings. Like Undine, her close friend, the rich and showy Peter Van Degen is described as a spoilt child: "'Young Peter must have what he wants when he wants it'" (46). When Undine later meets him in Paris, he is described as having immature features, "his face was still the face of a covetous bullying boy with a large appetite for primitive satisfaction" and he is later compared to an animal (181). Undine also treats Peter as a child, claiming that because he was in love with her he "could be managed like a child" (185).

Undine not only behaves like a child, she is also treated like a child. Ralph's main motivation for marrying her seems to be his aspiration to influence and change her. She is still young enough to be moulded by someone more cultivated and experienced, such as himself. Ralph's mission is to protect her virgin innocence and shield her from the influences of, in his eyes, inferior and morally corrupted people like Mr. Claude Walsingham Popple and Peter Van Degen. While on honeymoon in Europe, Undine continuously complains about the heat, the food, the boring Tuscan hillside villages and so on. She behaves like a child that does not get what she wants and Ralph constantly tries to accommodate her: "'We'll go wherever you please – you make every place the one place,' he said, as if he were humouring an irresistible child" (91). In a rare outburst of emotion, Ralph also tells Undine off like a child when she insists on continuing her friendship with the infamous Baroness Adelschein: "'No, you can't, you foolish child. You know nothing of this society you're in; of its antecedents, its rules, its conventions; and it is my affair to look after you, and warn you when you're on the wrong track'" (101).

In one sentence, then, Ralph summarizes some of the key criticism against Americans in Europe. Undine is a child who needs adult supervision and she is ignorant of history, culture and manners. Ralph, in other words, takes on the role of a father in relation to Undine. In this respect, I interpret Ralph to represent the adult Europe, as a Europeanized American, trying to bring up the unruly, ignorant and uncultured new American. Charles Bowen, a focalizer in the novel, also stresses this point when claiming that American women, unlike their European counterparts, are excluded from business life and all important matters (129). They are in a sense treated like children and this is why American marriages fail.

Undine's asexuality also accentuates her child-like personality. She does not at any time express sexual desire; she in fact seems to be repulsed by physical contact. She is either incapable of seeing the sexual motivation of some of her male acquaintances, or when she sees it, she tries to avoid it all together. One example is when Popple expresses a wish to paint her and Undine says to Ralph "'I'd love to have him do me.'" Ralph replies "'My poor child –

he *would* "do" you, with a vengeance'" (64). Undine seems unable to grasp the sexual connotations of Ralph's reply; she has the innocence of a child in that respect. With Ralph "she had never shown any repugnance to his tenderness, but she was remote and cool, like her name implies" (95). She in other words accepts her marital duties, but without any personal enjoyment or feelings of love and affection; "he felt her resign herself like a tired child" (95). Although she loves the attention and admiration she gets from men because of her beauty and is willing to use this power to achieve her social aspirations, she seems very reluctant to take things any further. Undine's asexuality contradicts those Europeans who accused American women of being sexually promiscuous. Instead it contributes to the characterization of Undine and the United States as a child. Princess Estradina directly comments on the innocence and gullibility of American women: "'My dear, it's what I always say when people talk to me about fast Americans; you're the only innocent women left in the world…'" (323). She here refers to the fact that American women are believed to be promiscuous, but in fact they often are not. As sex is clearly not on Undine's mind, having an affair is out of the question and it does not even cross her mind that her husband might be unfaithful to her. Undine's obvious lack of maternal instinct can also be linked to her immaturity. She is still a child herself in so many ways, as Ralph puts it, "she was still in the toy age," and is clearly incapable of caring for and bringing up a child (193). I will go further into this when writing about domesticity below.

The Custom of the Country has by many critics been seen first and foremost to criticize the prevalent American attitude to marriage and divorce in which men seem merely to be regarded as useful objects who, when they no longer satisfy a woman's needs or aspirations, can be disposed of. In a 1914 issue of the *North American Review*, F.M. Colby refers to a Frenchman's comment on international marriages. The Frenchman puts all the blame for the failure of these marriages on the American wives, who he describes as being "cold, indifferent, restless, impertinent, aggressive, lacking in grace, reserve, and modesty, incapable of self-sacrifice, having no interest in their husband's affairs, and ever seeking the new, the extravagant, and the morbid" (qtd. in Tuttleton 212-6). He compares this to a French marriage, which is a union of two people with common interests that have duties towards each other. When a French aristocrat is captured by an American woman "by methods resembling red Indian stratagems," she expects to be flattered and indulged and to be given freedom, but she gives nothing in return.

Colby claims that the French marriage is more equal and that American women are incapable of adjusting to this equality. This attitude was also held by Wharton. Colby also refers to a Dr. Andrew McPnail, who claimed that the term "American wife" had become a proverb and a symbol of the magnificent divorcée, who mistreats her husband and just keeps climbing the social ladder. He refers to the American wife, as "a Hanoverian rat, a San José scale, a noxious weed, a jade, a giantess, and potato-bug." He also claims that, "she was sterile and would soon die out; a monstrous and unwholesome growth sure to overspread and kill the rest of the species" (qtd. inTuttleton 212-16). Like the previously mentioned English critic, Colby here expresses some of the anti-American stereotypes that I discuss. These attitudes were a part of a widespread foreign criticism of American wives. I will therefore claim that the marriage question in *The Custom of the Country* and the criticism of the lack of domesticity among American wives and mothers is connected. They are a part of a general tendency to criticize America and Americans around the turn of the last century.

In *Edith Wharton's Argument with America*, Elizabeth Ammons calls *The Custom of the Country* Wharton's "tour de force on the marriage question" (97). She sees it as a satire on the institution of marriage and in her opinion it is possibly Wharton's best novel. Ammons also sees the connection between this novel and Wharton's personal life at the time the novel was written. The completion of the novel coincided with the break-up of her own marriage to Teddy Wharton, with whom she was sexually and intellectually incompatible. Although Wharton was on principle against divorce, she was equally sceptical of the institution of marriage. In *The Custom of the Country*, she got the opportunity to criticize both (Ammons, *Argument* 99). In this novel, marriage is described in unsentimental terms; it is a financial agreement rather than a romantic union. According to Ammons, Wharton was clearly torn in her feelings about Undine. Ammons agrees with both R.W.B. Lewis and Cynthia Griffin Wolff when they point out that Undine is both Wharton's opposite and twin. Where Wharton was intelligent, anxious and introspective, Undine is ignorant, unintrepid and lacks self-knowledge. At the same time, these critics see the resemblance between the two in Undine's energy, ambitions and pride, in her love of travelling and beautiful garments and in her non-acceptance of shabbiness and failure (Ammons, *Argument* 98). Based on this perspective, Wharton's mixed view of Undine can be interpreted as representing her mixed view of *nouveaux riches* Americans; on one hand, she dislikes them intensely; on the other hand, they have qualities that she admires. This subsequently modifies the claim that Wharton was an outright anti-American American.

It must, however, be noted that many critics, like Louis Auchincloss and Blake Nevius, are, unlike Ammons, of the opinion that the quality of *The Custom of the Country* is severely compromised by Wharton's one-sided feelings of hatred or even disgust for Undine. This view would imply a stronger conviction that Wharton was in fact anti-American. My personal opinion is that it is hard to see that Wharton expresses any sympathy for Undine. The closest she gets to it is when she expresses Undine's feelings of imprisonment in the French countryside, surrounded by women who do the things that have always been done by women in the family. What convinces me of Wharton's predominantly negative view of Undine is that on the few occasions that you think that she has some redeeming qualities, the impression is almost instantly reversed by Undine showing her true colours. One example is when Undine appears to be upset about the distance between her and Paul: "It was dreadful that her little boy should be growing up far away from her, perhaps dressed in clothes she would have hated" (253). She does not truly miss her son; she is worried that he may not be dressed in clothes that are up to her standard and reflect badly on her!

According to Ammons, it is marriage in the leisured classes that is the main target of Wharton's satire in this novel and not the selfish and uncaring Undine Spragg (*Argument* 101, *Business* 338). In my opinion, on the other hand, Undine and her values and behaviour in general are the main focus of the novel. Undine's views on marriage, divorce and motherhood are only a part of an overall characterization of Undine as a personification of the United States. The reactions she provokes through her marriage to Ralph and through her transatlantic marriage makes anti-Americanism an important aspect of this novel. The topics are in fact interconnected, since the American wife and mother and American marriage and divorce customs are common targets of anti-American sentiments.

There are numerous and often shocking examples of Undine's lack of motherly feelings for Paul. She is utterly disappointed and devastated when finding out that she is pregnant, as it will ruin her figure and interfere with her life. She forgets about his birthday, because she is too busy being admired at a gallery. She unscrupulously leaves him in the country when he is ill to seek amusements in the city and she abandons him to go to Europe without showing any concern for his well-being in her rare letters. It never occurs to her to claim custody of her son after the divorce. Undine, in other words, always puts her own needs first, which could be a comment on the lack of solidarity and family unity in the United States and the lack of domesticity among American women. In her marriage to Raymond, Undine does not conceive a child and this only seems to bother her because it gives her French family

a bad impression of her and not because she expresses a wish to have a child by her French husband. In fact, the only reason she is reunited with Paul is that her French friends and family expect it of her and that she can use him to her own benefit. When mother and son are finally reunited, her son does not recognize her and has to learn about her through newspaper clippings. She seems to have no interest in him and his life: "'Mother, I took a prize in composition.' 'Did you? You must tell me about it to-morrow. No, I really must rush off now and dress – I haven't even placed the dinner cards'" (368).

Through her neglect of Paul, Undine shows a lack of reverence for the past and the future, she lives for the moment and for instant gratification. This portrayal of Undine as a mother can be linked to common contemporary European views of Americans as mothers. By the beginning of the nineteen hundreds, anti-American sentiments seemed to emphasise American women's lack of potential as wives and mothers. In a 1904 article, H.B. Marriott-Watson described American women as "cold of heart and cool of head" (qtd. in Montgomery 138). Because their personal ambitions were more important to them than love, sexual relations and motherhood, he was pessimistic about the future of the British aristocracy. Other critics joined him and claimed that American women shirked motherhood and this would have a devastating effect on the peerage due to the lack of male heirs (Montgomery 138). Undine is an obvious example of the reluctant American mother and differs from Madame de Malrive, who appears to be the perfect example of a warm and caring republican mother. An example of a combination of these two types of American mothers in *The Buccaneers* is when Nan refuses to have Ushant's child, but in her case it is a response to his heartlessness and lack of compassion, which she considers un-American. Both Undine's asexuality and her lack of maternal instincts exemplifies that my anti-American categories sometimes intertwine. They can be linked to a lack of history and to domesticity, as well as to behaviour and sexuality.

Undine's view of divorce is shocking both to Paul's and Raymond's family. At Undine and Ralph's engagement dinner, she supports her friend Mabel Lipscomb getting a divorce. "'He's been a disappointment to her. He isn't in the right set, and I think Mabel realizes she'll never really get anywhere till she gets rid of him'" (60). A husband can, in other words, be tossed aside like the dresses she no longer finds fashionable or rejected like jewellery that needs alteration. Her friend Indiana Frusk, incidentally named after one of the new divorce states, shows the same cynical behaviour, as she divorces Undine's ex-fiancé Millard Binch to marry James J. Rolliver, who in turn pays almost a million dollars for his

own divorce. Marriage and divorce has become a business like any other business in the United States, and husbands are consumed like any other commodity. Undine's multiple relationships, engagements and marriages are evidence of her and the United States's rootlessness, lack of close family bonds and solidarity and of their conspicuous consumption.

Undine shows no love or compassion in her marriages. She is attracted to what Elmer, Ralph and Raymond might give her in the form of wealth or status and not to the romantic or erotic aspect of marriage. Undine shows no empathy when Ralph is ill or when he or Raymond express concern about their financial situation. She just wants to spend her husbands' money, not worry about where the money comes from. Undine is simply not an equal partner for her spouses. One observer figure in the novel itself, Charles Bowen, blames American society and the men for this, because they prefer to put the women on a pedestal and do not appreciate and respect their wives enough to include them in their lives. In the case of Undine, this seems like a ludicrous accusation, as she shows absolutely no interest in business, economics, politics or any other topic that is of interest to her husbands. She chooses to exclude herself from their lives, because they bore her. Bowen's speech about the typical American marriage as opposed to the French, the latter being a more companionate relationship based primarily on duty and obligation, does however clearly take the side of the French and can thus be seen as an anti-American argument (129-131). Undine feels morally superior to the French when it comes to their view of marriage and divorce. For them, it is better to keep a mistress than to marry a divorcée or to get a divorce. "'We don't look at things like that out at Apex'" is her cold response when it is suggested to her that she becomes Raymond's mistress rather that pursue marriage with him (253). Here one might question whose side Wharton would be on, as someone who finally divorced after many years in an unhappy marriage, while at the same time being involved in an extramarital affair. It is not unlikely that Wharton felt divided between Undine's point of view and the French view.

To Undine, her family seems like a burden. Her parents, husbands and in-laws serve their purpose as providers of material goods and social status, but as soon as they disappoint her and no longer provide her with what she wants, she has no more use for them. She always seems reluctant to visit and spend time with her in-laws and is unwilling to live with them or comply with their wishes and traditions. The way she sees it, they have no individuality or freedom, they are just "minor members of a powerful and indivisible whole, the huge voracious fetish they called The Family" (321-22). This statement illustrates the view of Americans as individualists and Europeans as collectivists. The alleged American

individualism was criticized by Europeans and through Undine it is also criticized by Wharton. Undine's refusal to submit to her husband's and his family's wishes could be seen as an example of the obstinate, independent and liberated American woman, but the way I see it Undine does not have a feminist agenda. She is simply fighting for herself and her right to be entertained, amused and provided for.

In this respect, Undine Spragg can be seen as being a part of the contemporary debate about American women and their position within the family and in American society. American women became a particular target of anti-American sentiments in literature as well as in European society as a whole at the turn of the century. Two opposing views of American women seemed to co-exist in the nineteenth century. They were usually portrayed as either being excessive or inadequate in some way or another. Whereas some thought them to be too emancipated, intelligent, pretentious, unwomanly and sensuous, others thought of them as being too subdued, dumb, dull, uninteresting and frigid. They were either too much or not enough. This is a view that can be easily recognized in the portrayal of the American women in my primary literature in general and in the figure of Undine Spragg in particular. Particularly European opponents of female emancipation, like Knut Hamsun, would point to the American woman as a bad example and claim that they were masculine and that American men had been emasculated as a consequence of women's liberation. This view is present in Wharton's books, where men are often portrayed as passive, weak and silent. An example of this is the relationship between Undine and Ralph Marvell in *The Custom of the Country*, where he seems to be the weaker party, a subservient and overly gracious man.

A number of well-known European writers shared Hamsun's critical views of the United States and Americans. In her book *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832), Frances Trollope is very direct in her attack on Americans: "I do not like them, I do not like their principles, I do not like their manners, I do not like their opinions" (qtd. in Woolf 62). This book and Charles Dickens's book *American Notes* (1842) are considered to be archetypes of anti-Americanism in nineteenth-century Europe (Woolf 64). In *The Refugee in America* (1832), Trollope describes American women as silly, uneducated and tedious, and they do not compare favourably to more intelligent, articulate and independent English women. The reason for this difference, according to Trollope, is the exclusion of American women from public life and their inadequate education. Unlike Hamsun, though, who thinks they are too emancipated, Trollope does not think they are emancipated enough. She is thus in

agreement with Thorstein Veblen. Charles Bowen seems to represent Trollope's and Veblen's views in *The Custom of the Country* itself.

Trollope's view of American women as uneducated, tedious and unintelligent is confirmed by the portrayal of Undine. Her lack of knowledge is closely linked to her lack of interest in culture and history, but is also linked to what type of knowledge she seeks, if any. In her first meeting with Ralph's sister Laura Fairford, it becomes apparent that they have very little to talk about. Undine was not familiar with the artists, plays, actresses and books that were mentioned during the dinner party conversation. Her concept of good art, like the rest of the social set she aspires to be a part of, is not based on theories of art. It should simply be life-like, look nice in a drawing-room and be big enough for their big houses. Undine reads less demanding and more light-hearted books, what would probably be referred to as "chick lit" today, and she does not go to galleries, theatres and the opera to experience art. She seems to be more interested in the dresses of the soprano than her singing and she is there to see and be seen, not to experience culture or to learn. In conversation, Undine is accustomed to personal allusions and gossip and is confused and bored when literature, art and politics became the topic: "Her mind wandered in spite of the desire to appear informed and competent" (59). In other words, she does not want to be informed and competent, but just appear as if she is. On their honeymoon, Undine is, unlike Ralph, disadvantaged by her lack of languages and therefore chooses to mix only with other Americans. In Paris Ralph prefers classical performances that confuse Undine, who according to Peter Van Degen pines for the light entertainment at the Folies Bergère. She seems to have more in common with Van Degen and his "contempt for everything he did not understand or could not buy" (120). During their honeymoon, Ralph comes to see Undine as primitive, lacking in substance, depth and a finer sense of values, just like her French family comes to see her later in the novel. Ralph's determination to change her comes across as highly arrogant and unrealistic and may in fact be a comment on the European sense of superiority towards Americans. The Americans' unwillingness to change due to national pride may be reflected in Undine. If this is the case, Undine can in fact also be interpreted as a symbol of American patriotism.

Undine's lack of interest in books and reading is satirised in the novel. "Ralph had often wondered at her verbal range and her fluent use of terms outside the current vocabulary. She had certainly not picked these up in books, since she never opened one" (192). When Undine is alone and feeling ill on the Riviera, she is "driven by despair to an inspection of the hotel book-shelves" (227). It strikes Undine that Raymond resembles Ralph, and when they

are in the library he wants to read aloud to her. At first he tries "to tell her about what he is reading, or what was happening in the world; but her sense of inadequacy made her slip away to other subjects, and little by little their talk died down to monosyllables" (317). Undine's lack of interest in learning and in him is slowly driving them apart. In the beginning she had tried to impress Raymond, but "instead of wasting more time in museums and lecture-halls she prolonged her hours at the dressmaker's and gave up the rest of the day to the scientific cultivation of her beauty" (339-40). She makes herself the main object of her study.

By the end of the novel, the interior of Undine and Elmer's new Paris apartment is described in all its opulence. While Paul is there alone he tries to find a book to read, "but the bookcases were closed with gilt trellising . . . Mr Moffatt's secretary kept them locked because the books were too valuable to be taken down . . . Not a single volume had slipped its golden prison" (363; ellipses mine). The contrast between the gilt and the golden versus the books is a clear indication of the values of this household. Knowledge and learning are inferior to the monetary value of the books, which are there as possessions and symbols of wealth. They are there to be admired, just like Undine.

A lack of knowledge and intelligence is ultimately what gives Undine a bad reputation in Paris. She is no longer invited or included and does not understand why. Her friend Madame de Trézac, an American who has also married a French aristocrat, enlightens her:

> "You don't work hard enough – you don't keep up. It's not that they don't admire you – your looks, I mean; they think you beautiful; they're delighted to bring you out at their big dinners . . . But a woman has to be something more than good-looking to have a chance to be intimate with them; she's got to know what's being said about things. I watched you the other night at the Duchess's, and half the time you hadn't an idea what they were talking about." (339)

Even after this blunt description of the problem, Undine still thinks that people are critical of her because of the way she looks and her style, and Madame de Trézac has to clarify: "'You're as handsome as ever; but people here don't go on looking at each other forever as they do in London'" (340). In other words, Undine is viewed by the French as an uncultivated, uninteresting bore and thus confirms Frances Trollope's view of American women.

4.2 Behaviour, Morals and Sexuality

My second category of anti-Americanism, behaviour, morals and sexuality, focuses on the manners, language and alleged vulgarity of Americans and the flirtatiousness and promiscuity of American women. European observers in the middle and end of the nineteenth century

commented on the rawness and primitiveness of the Americans, which was explained by their country's lack of history and culture. Later reviews of *A Custom of the Country* would come to the same conclusion when commenting on Undine Spragg and other characters in the novel. In a 1913 issue of the *New York Times Review of Books*, Undine is described as "the most repellent heroine we have encountered in many a long day. She is merely greed personified – without conscience, heart, sense of honor, or sense of humor" (qtd. in Tuttleton 203-06). Frederic Taber Cooper describes the portrayal of Undine as "a brilliantly cynical picture of feminine ruthlessness" (qtd. in Tuttleton 211-12). A 1913 English review published in the *Saturday Review* has a distinctly harsher tone in terms of anti-American attitudes. Here they describe the novel as a collection of "as many detestable people as it is possible to pack between the covers of a six-hundred-page novel." The novel introduces "a set of vulgar Americans, blatant and pushing, whose only standard of values is the dollar" (qtd. in Tuttleton 210-11). This critic in fact seems to express the very types of anti-Americanism that I focus on in this thesis. The same review suggests that Undine is "symbolic of a certain type of American woman whom Mrs. Wharton desires to hold up to scorn and reprobation" (qtd. in Tuttleton 210-11). I tend to agree more with this critic's point of view, that the character of Undine Spragg and her type of American is the main target of the novel, than with Maureen Montgomery and Elizabeth Ammons, who see marriage as the main topic.

Undine's ruthlessness and pushiness, which was seen by many critics to be a typical American characteristic, is obvious in a number of ways. Her lack of empathy for her parents, husbands and child and her total disregard for their feelings is obvious. Without any sense of decency, she will stop at nothing to get what she wants. The fact that Undine at one point in the novel actually feels shame, when using the pearls she was given by Peter Van Degen at the opera while still being married to Ralph, but still chooses to sell them rather than give them back to him, is further evidence of her lack of a moral sense. Her main objective and passion seems to be to get even with people, to prove them wrong, to conquer, to win and end up on top – at the apex of society. This can be seen in her competitiveness with other American transatlantic brides, like Madame de Trézac and Looty Arlington.

As Montgomery points out, the British, and I assume also the French, tended to not see the distinctions between different types of Americans; they were all the same in their eyes. Their views of Americans were thus based on stereotypes and a lack of knowledge of social and geographical differences. American women who were considered to be vulgar parvenus at home were sometimes welcomed with open arms in Belgravia, Mayfair and the Fabourg

Saint-Germain, but at the same time members of the New York "Four hundred" were rejected simply because they were Americans. American expatriates in London, such as the Duchess of Marlborough and Roxburghe, Mary Curzon, and Jennie Cornwallis-West, were said to "resent being classified with some other Americans, who come over and try to push themselves into the inner circles" (Montgomery 146). This reflects Undine Spragg's attitude to other American brides and thus competitors and confirms my impression from my primary literature, that a lot of the criticism against Americans is in fact expressed by Americans and reflects a battle for territories and positions and a lack of national solidarity.

As early as 1883 in *The Siege of London*, Henry James commented on the tendency of the more established American expatriates to make it harder for the brides who followed them. Undine's response when told by Raymond that her brother-in-law, Hubert de Chelles, is marrying the American Looty Arlington is an example of the rivalry between American women: "'An American? He's marrying an American?' Undine wavered between wrath and satisfaction. She felt a flash of resentment at any other intruder's venturing upon her territory – ('Looty Arlington? Who is she? What a name!')" (312). "'Do you know where her people come from? I suppose she's perfectly awful.'" "'They come from some new state – the general apologized for its not yet being on the map." "'She must be horribly common'" (313). Here Undine takes on the role of the European aristocrat condemning Americans and criticizing their lack of history, roots and manners. Another example of this is when she calls her own son a savage, a term often used to criticize the alleged primitive nature of Americans: "'They've turned him into a perfect little savage!'" Where upon Raymond responds: "'He won't be a savage long with me'" (299). This attitude is an example of both the behaviour and morals of the new Americans in the novel. They clearly put the individual and themselves in front of not only the family, but also the nation.

Undine clearly loves being the centre of attention, she wants to be seen and admired, as the following passages show: "a crowd was what she wanted" (92); "She was aware of attracting almost as much notice as in the street" (31); "What was the use of being beautiful and attracting attention if one were perpetually doomed to relapse again into the obscure mass of the Uninvited?" (33). This affects the way she behaves, talks, dresses and thinks: "She thought it the correct thing to be animated in society, and noise and restlessness were her only notion of vivacity" (15). She is loud and conspicuous, because she mistakenly believes that that is the norm in society, but she has clearly got this impression from observing the wrong kind of society, the *nouveaux riches*, who behave in this manner. Undine seems to prefer

activities that involve loud and rowdy behaviour and big crowds that provide her with an audience, something that both Ralph Marvell and Raymond de Chelles object to. “It was a point of honour with him [Ralph] not to seem to disdain any of Undine’s amusements: the noisy interminable picnics, the hot promiscuous balls, the concerts, bridge-parties and theatricals” (98). Undine, however, is aware of different standards and sees the flaws in the behaviour of her friends, whose social background is the same as hers: “Undine was perfectly aware that he [Elmer] was a vulgar over-dressed man, with a red crease of fat above his collar and an impudent swaggering eye; yet she liked to see him there” (260). “Undine had already become aware that Mabel . . . was somehow out of scale and out of drawing . . . No one else was wagging and waving in that way: a gestureless mute telegraphy seemed to pass between the other boxes” (41). Undine is aware of Mabel not being classy enough and that she stands out in comparison to the Washington Square set, but she seems unable to see that she herself is also a social outcast. “It had become clear to Undine that Mabel Lipscomb was ridiculous.” Mabel was “monumental and moulded while the fashionable were flexible and diaphanous, Mabel strident and explicit while they were subdued and allusive.” “She had a way of trumpeting out her ignorance that jarred on Undine’s subtler methods” (42). In reality, Undine is as ignorant as Mabel, but she is more observant, she imitates and pretends to be something she is not. “Her quickness in noting external differences had already taught her to modulate and lower her voice.” She changed her language into “more polished locutions.” “The part was not hard to play” (58-59). Undine is, in other words, trying to be perceived as less vulgar by changing the way she speaks. This incidentally coincides well with Trollope’s and Dickens’s criticisms of the language and accent of Americans.

The number of references to light in *The Custom of the Country* is striking and is consistently linked to Undine and other *nouveaux riches* characters. From my perspective, this can be linked to the behaviour of these Americans, always demanding the spotlight and wanting to shine in order to attract attention and admiration. The glaring light is harsh and cold, like the people who live in it and are drawn to it. It represents and highlights the vulgarity of the new American and the modernity of American society, which was a target of anti-American opinions, both in Europe and at home. Undine is described as having a beauty “as vivid, and almost as crude, as the brightness suffusing it” (14-15). She is radiant and “might have been some fabled creature whose home was in a beam of light” (15). She glows, sparkles and shines in bright and illuminated locations. When Undine is invited to dinner by Laura Fairford, Ralph’s sister, she is disappointed not only by the lack of gilding, but by the

dim lighting and lack of gas or electric heating. When Undine has finally persuaded her father to get her an opera box, she feels that she has finally reached her goal of being with the people she aspires to be among. "Her consciousness seemed to take in at once the whole bright curve of the auditorium, from the unbroken lines of spectators below her to the culminating blaze of the central chandelier; and she herself was the core of that vast illumination, the sentient throbbing surface which gathered all the shafts of light into a centre" (39). Undine requires the light to be noticed and admired and to be entertained and amused, which seems to be her main objective in life. Ralph has recognized this side of Undine's personality: "He told himself that there is always a Narcissus-element in youth, and that what Undine really enjoyed was the image of her own charm mirrored in the general admiration" and he is hoping that "she will soon learn to care more about the quality of the reflecting surface" (98). This quote is a reference both to Undine and America's youth or childishness and its self-obsession.

It seems to be no coincidence that the meeting place of Undine and her crowd in Paris is called the Nouveau Luxe. As well as meaning luxury in French, *luxe* also means light in Latin. I interpret both translations to refer to the vulgarity and conspicuous consumption of the Americans who frequent the place. This restaurant is where the pleasure-seeking Americans gather in lavish, shining, bright, ornamental and gilded surroundings. The clientele eagerly display their wealth with their exclusive apparel and expensive jewellery and the behaviour and appearance of the Americans also stands out: "The American laugh rose above the din of the orchestra as the American toilets dominated the less daring effects at the other tables" (175). Charles Bowen has never seen anything like it and observes the gathering of a new class of people, preoccupied with imitating the class they have superseded, trying to be something they are not and believing in "the sham they have created" (171).This place, through its interior and guests, symbolises the new Americans' need to see and be seen and their conspicuous consumption. They are indeed the new light. In this scene Charles Bowen observes, judges and comments on the setting and the characters. He is a puzzled spectator at this ostentatious exhibition of the new America.

Undine's obvious narcissism, as indicated by her name, vanity and obsession with how she appears to others, is also relevant in this context, since she cannot see her own reflection without light. The description of Undine when she is painted by Mr. Popple includes the mentioning of light in different forms in the interior, her outfit and her jewellery: "She was dressed for the sitting in something faint and shining, above which the long curves of her neck

looked dead white in the cold light of the studio; and her hair, all a shadowless rosy gold, was starred with a hard glitter of diamonds" (118). Sitting for a painting in all her finery is clearly linked to Undine's narcissism, as it is the ultimate way to be seen, admired and displayed. Hanging on a gallery wall, her beauty is exhibited for the whole world to see. The narcissistic element can also be linked to Gulddal's category of political anti-Americanism. If Undine *is* the United States, her self-obsession could represent the criticism of Americans as being overly patriotic and nationalistic, and to further link narcissism, patriotism and light, the United States has historically viewed itself as a beacon or a torch to the world.

When it comes to the flirtatious and promiscuous behaviour that American women were accused of by real life British aristocrats, *The Custom of the Country* shows a different side to them. The French aristocrats in the novel in fact seem to perceive American women as quite prudish. As I have already pointed out when writing about the child analogies in the novel, Undine's asexuality can be seen as emphasizing the view of the United States as a young, inexperienced child. She continuously expresses distaste for sexual advances: "His [Peter's] nearness was not agreeable to Undine" (183). She permitted Peter to kiss her for the first time, but "felt a moment's recoil. But her physical reactions were never very acute; she always vaguely wondered why people made 'such a fuss.' A cool spirit within her seemed to watch over and regulate her sensations" (184). "The pleasures for which her sex took such risks had never attracted her, and she did not even crave the excitement of having it thought that they did. She wanted, passionately and consistently, two things . . . amusement and respectability" (222; ellipses mine). What Undine seems to do is to take advantage of her beauty in order to achieve what she wants. She is not driven by sexuality in itself. Flirtation is just a means to an end and is a part of Undine's cynicism, ruthlessness and ambitions. "What she wanted for the moment was to linger on in Paris, prolonging her flirtation with, and profiting by it to detach herself from her compatriots and enter doors closed to their approach" (180). Her beauty gives her power over men, she has a hold on them, and as Charles Bowen observes Undine at the Nouveau Luxe, he is "amused by Undine's arts" and notes her skill (175).

Undine seems to be a risk-taker when it comes to her own reputation. She seems to like the idea that people may think she is not a lady. She visits dubious establishments where the opposites of ladies, prostitutes, may be seen and Mrs Heeny even reads in the gossip column that she is "'seen daily and nightly in all the smartest restaurants and naughtiest theatres'" (197). Back in Apex, "she had gone on a 'buggy-ride' with a young gentleman

from Deposit – a dentist's assistant – and had let him kiss her, and given him the flower from her hair. She loathed the thought of him now" (36). When Undine secretly meets up with Elmer in New York, it is pointed out that "The habit of meeting young men in sequestered spots was not unknown to her: the novelty was in feeling any embarrassment about it" (68). This clandestine meeting makes her remember others, a "remembrance of similar meetings, far from accidental, with the romantic Aaronson. Could it be that the hand now adorned with Ralph's engagement ring had once, in this very spot, surrendered itself, to the riding-master's pressure?" (68-9). She drives around with Peter Van Degen late at night, making Ralph wonder whether something has happened between them. Her continuous flirting with Van Degen in Europe even makes me as a reader question the nature of their relationship. Did they or didn't they? Undine has given into Peter's sexual demands while living with him in Europe for two months, justifying her actions by telling herself that she really was his wife. Again, she seems to have done this in order to persuade him to get a divorce and marry her, not because of her sexual needs. "To yield to him seemed the surest means of victory" (229). All her risk-taking and apparent promiscuousness seems to be a part of Undine's ambition to be noticed and appear exciting and interesting. It does not reflect genuine sexual promiscuity.

Undine is in fact appalled when it is suggested that she become a mistress or that she should feel free to enter into affairs as a married woman. She is shocked and disgusted by Princess Estradina's openness about her relationship with a married man and the fact that she is used to cover up the princess's affair in Nice. Estradina, on the other hand, is surprised by the prudishness of American women, whom she believed to be more "open-minded" because of their eagerness to divorce. "Undine guessed that the princess had expected to find her more amusing, 'queerer,' more startling in speech and conduct. Though by instinct she was none of these things, she was eager to go as far as was expected; but she felt that her audacities were on lines too normal to be interesting, and that the Princess thought her rather school-girlish and old-fashioned" (245). Undine thus becomes determined to protect her reputation and not to be perceived as one of "those" women. There is something slightly schizophrenic about Undine's cynical flirtatiousness and visits to dubious places and her asexuality and determination to be perceived as a virtuous woman. She seems to be drawn between the innocent and the experienced, between the United States and Europe. This duality of innocence and experience is expressed by Raymond de Chelles when he comments to Charles Bowen that "your young girls look so experienced, and your married women sometimes so – unmarried" (174).This contrast also incidentally makes me think of Wharton's personal issues

with sex in her marriage to Teddy Wharton, as opposed to her passionate sexual affair with Morton Fullerton. In conclusion, it can be said that the stereotype of the American woman as a promiscuous temptress is challenged in *The Custom of the Country*. Instead she is portrayed as cynical and frigid.

4.3 Materialism and the Display of Wealth

My third category of anti-Americanism, materialism and the display of wealth, is one of the main topics in *The Custom of the Country*. It is therefore natural that one of the critical approaches to the novel is American capitalism, perhaps the most important target of anti-Americanism. According to Beverly R. Voloshin, Undine is Edith Wharton's female equivalent of the capitalist hero. With her beauty as her capital and marriage as her business, she is an up and coming capitalist and is thus Elmer Moffatt's feminine counterpart as they climb the social ladder side by side. Like him, she is ambitious, cunning, bold and energetic and is attracted to power and independence. Where he speculates in stocks, she speculates in husbands. Ralph Marvell describes his wife as having business shrewdness and compares marriages among the leisure class to transactions on the Stock Exchange. Like a man in search of a good job or a good business deal, she is searching for the ultimate husband as if it was a commercial enterprise. Edmund Wilson goes as far as calling her "the prototype in fiction of the 'gold-digger,' of the international cocktail bitch" (qtd. in Ammons, *Argument* 101). Undine's desire to have more reflects capitalism's ambition to increase production and profits. Voloshin describes Undine's world as a "gilded void," an empty world where desires continually change and where there is an absence of satisfaction. I agree with Voloshin in her view of Undine and Elmer, but would add that the two of them do not just represent capitalism in general, but American capitalism in particular. Elmer symbolizes the ups and downs of capitalism as opposed to the stability of the old American upper class and the European aristocracy. Both he and Undine come from a small town in the middle of nowhere, ironically called Apex, and through their ruthless ambition they climb socially and financially until they reach the apex of society together, as symbols of modern America and the new American. They are almost exclusively described in negative terms, with the exception of some redeeming qualities in Elmer, and this leads me to the conclusion that they, as symbols of capitalist America, show that the novel promotes a negative view of American capitalism and materialism.

Capitalism and divorce have been seen by some critics to be linked. Debra Ann MacComb describes the turn-of-the-century divorce industry and also refers to Lawrence

Selden's comment to Lily Bart in *The House of Mirth*, that women of her class are brought up to have marriage as their vocation. Marriage and divorce are thus a business like any other. MacComb compares divorce to the mechanisms of capitalism, where women, like businesses, aim to expand their market by successive and successful deals and unions. The women's progress was supported by the ever increasing western state divorce industry, which was both profitable and notorious. This industry is described in *The Custom of the* Country, where Undine goes west to get her divorce from Ralph Marvell.

In *Edith Wharton: The Contemporary Reviews*, one can find evidence that a certain type of American woman, the one who is characterized by her excessive consumption, her focus on enjoyment and her determination to climb socially, is a type of woman who is very much present in American literature (Tuttleton 201-2). The theory is that there are so many characters like this that they have to be based on reality. Men and women are separated in different spheres, where the men spend their time earning what the women spend. The American man puts a woman on a pedestal and spoils her. This view has a clear class perspective, as this description of American men and women at the time would apply more to the upper class than the working class, where both sexes out of necessity maintained more of the hard-working pioneer spirit. The *nouveaux riches* would aspire to spoil their women in an attempt to show chivalry and protection, because it would previously not have been possible for them to do so. The spoilt, well-dressed woman living a life of leisure became a symbol of her husband's success. Undine is in many ways a very good example of Thorstein Veblen's theory about the role of leisure-class women put forward in *The Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. Her husband, her owner, should support her idleness, uselessness and expensive habits, and she would thus become valuable to him by displaying his wealth. This view of the American leisure class represents one of the main criticisms against them in European literature, as well as in *The Custom of the Country.* Based on Voloshin's theories, however, I would say that Undine Spragg is not entirely a woman of leisure, as she has made a business out of her ambitions and her marriages. Everything she does seems to have an ulterior motive, to add to an impression or an assumption about who she is. She appears to be too cunning and shrewd simply to be a lady of leisure; there is something too business-like about her.

As Stephen Orgel points out in the introduction to the Oxford World's Classic edition of the novel, Undine's proposal to sell the Boucher tapestries, the de Chelles heirlooms, is the final straw in Undine and Raymond's marriage breakdown (xxii). What Raymond sees as an

important part of his heritage, Undine only sees as potential cash. When Elmer finally buys the tapestries, Undine only appreciates them because they "made her ballroom the handsomest in Paris" (369). This is only one of many examples in the novel of the importance of money and consumption in Undine's life. There is a constant demand for new and prettier dresses and jewellery. She has no understanding for women who do not place the same emphasis on these objects, like the female members of Ralph and Raymond's family. Because they have different priorities and put their families ahead of themselves, personal consumption becomes less important. Through her incessant need for new things, Undine becomes a representative of American overindulgence and conspicuous consumption: "To have things had always seemed to her the first essential of existence" (337). Undine is not the only American woman who is a big spender in the novel. Mrs. Rolliver, formerly Indiana Frusk, is another prime example, here described at the Nouveau Luxe: "Her striking dress was totally unsuited to the hour, the place and the occasion. She still did and was all that Undine had so sedulously learned not to be and to do." "She wound her big bejewelled hand through her pearls – there were ropes and ropes of them" (216-17). The American conspicuous consumption is clearly presented as an example of a vulgarity that Undine tries to avoid; she has realized that it is frowned upon in good society. A statement that directly and sarcastically comments on the vulgarity of excessive materialism is made by Clare van Degen, the Dagonet who crossed class lines by marrying the very rich Peter van Degen: "I've brought him [Paul] a present: a vulgar expensive Van Degen offering… When I look for a present nowadays I never say to the shopman: '"I want this or that" – I simply say: "Give me something that costs so much . . ."' 'Where's the victim of my vulgarity? Let me crush him under the weight of my gold'" (132). Undine does realize that she spends too much money, but she has a habit of buying things when she is bored. Her extravagant consumption thus seems to fill a void in her life, a void perhaps created by the lack of purpose and the eternal quest for entertainment and amusement in modern society in general and in modern American society in particular.

An important part of the characterization in *The Custom of the Country* and in Wharton's books in general are the descriptions of architecture and interiors. These topics are clearly linked to the materialism and display of wealth of the new Americans; some would even say their vulgarity. Because conspicuous materialism is one of the most common areas of criticism of Americans, the descriptions of interiors can be linked to anti-Americanism. Particularly in the beginning of the novel, where we are acquainted with the settings of old money and new money, the use of the words *gilded* and *mahogany* is striking. Gilding is on

the surface only, it is fake, pretentious, ostentatious and showy; basically what Edith Wharton disliked in people and in interiors. Mahogany, on the other hand, is old, solid, durable and inconspicuous. Gilding is continuously mentioned in connection with the families of newly acquired wealth. In the Spragg hotel suite, there are gilt armchairs, gilt tables and gilt baskets. The Spraggs do not even talk about certain things in the gilded privacy of their bedroom and Undine has a white and gold room. She even has reddish-gold hair. Mr. Spragg is described as glancing at the gilded void which is their home – a hotel, which Undine believed to be fashionable. It has a gilded surface, but there is a void in their lives, there is no soul or inner life. The Fairford house, where Paul Marvell's sister lives, does not impress Undine because there is no gilding. It has mahogany doors, mahogany furniture and mahogany bookshelves. The Spragg home also has some mahogany, but the one time it is mentioned, it is described as highly-varnished, which is shinier and more conspicuous. They are imitating the upper classes, but overdo it and get it wrong. The gilding could be seen as a symbol of Undine's emphasis on the outer world and the mahogany could be symbolic of Ralph's focus on the inner world. He respects the genuine and solid, rather than sham elegance.

The way Undine totally disregards her father's, Ralph's and Raymond's financial worries and just spends, spends, spends and emotionally blackmails them to get what she wants is proof not only of her materialism, but also of her lack of empathy. "Ever since she could remember there had been "fusses" about money; yet she and her mother had always got what they wanted, apparently without lasting detriment to the family fortunes" (29). Ralph is described as Undine's opposite in respect to money, feeling "disdain for mere money-getting" (48). "Material resources were limited on both sides of the house, but there would always be enough for his frugal wants – enough to buy books, and pay now and then for a holiday dash to the great centres of art and ideas" (49). Ralph thus spends money on his mind, whereas Undine spends money on her appearance. Ralph also has qualms about asking other people for money to cover Undine's material needs, whereas she herself feels no shame in that regard. Ironically, they are both dependent on other people for their income however. Without the living provided for them by Ralph's grandfather, mother and father-in-law, they would be destitute. It can be questioned how Ralph's determination to live like a gentleman, without talking about money or having to work, in some ways makes him just as much of a leech as Undine.

Undine's attitude towards shopping in Paris also shows her cynicism and selfishness. "Over here they're accustomed to being bargained with – you ought to see how I've beaten

them down!" (105). She takes advantage of others and pressures them financially without thought for the losses that they may suffer because of her. As Ralph observes: "She had learned to bargain, pare down prices, evade fees, brow-beat the small tradespeople and wheedle concessions from the great – not, as Ralph perceived, from any effort to restrain her expenses, but only to prolong and intensify the pleasure of spending" (113). Undine also seems unaware of the hard work that is required to cover her extravagances, and the fact that her spending is to a great extent the reason for her father's and Ralph's declining health. Charles Bowen comments on the relationship of men and women in America when saying that "to slave for women is part of the old American tradition . . . Then again, in this country the passion for making money has preceded the knowing how to spend it, and the American man lavishes his fortune on his wife because he doesn't know what else to do with it" (129). Bowen clearly expresses sympathy with the over-consuming American women: "Poor deluded dears, when I see their fallacious little attempts to trick out the leaving tossed them by the preoccupied male – the money and the motors and the clothes – and pretend to themselves and each other that *that's* what really constitutes life! Money and motors and clothes are simply the big bribe she's paid for keeping out of some man's way!" (130). Personally, I cannot see how this applies to Undine. Bowen seems to be as blind towards her as Ralph and Raymond are, and this makes me question his reliability as a focalizer. Undine is the one who pushes both her father and Ralph to work excessively in order to pay for the luxuries she takes for granted. She never expresses an interest in business or politics and seems to be more than happy to lead a life separate from the men in her life. I do not see Undine as a victim of men's preoccupation with work; she is in fact the cause of it.

It is their different view of money and spending that seems to be the biggest problem between Undine and Raymond: "She was beginning to see that he felt her constitutional inability to understand anything about money as the deepest difference between them. It was a proficiency no one had ever expected her to acquire" (310). The main cultural difference between the *nouveaux riches* Americans and the French aristocratic family is that the former are primarily concerned with instant individual gratification, whereas the latter see money as "the substance binding together whole groups of interests, and where the uses to which it might be put in twenty years were considered before the reasons for spending it on the spot" (310). A trivial example of these two opposing views is the consumption of fire-wood at Saint Désert, which has never been higher than after the arrival of Undine. Undine is more concerned about feeling cold than her frugal French family, who doubtlessly consider the

expense and the consequences for the economy of the estate and the family before their own needs. Both Raymond and his mother comment on Undine's wastefulness: "I'm sure my son has frequently recommended greater prudence" (354).

4.4 Political Anti-Americanism

An aspect of the novel that can be linked to political anti-Americanism is the frequent use of war terminology and words that may be associated with imperialism. Ralph Marvell refers to his mother and grandfather as the "Aborigines": "doomed to extinction with the advance of the invading race" (47). "The daughters of the Invaders bought their husbands as they bought an opera-box" (51). The invaders are the newly rich Americans, threatening the social status and values of the Europeanised American upper class. The invader Undine Spragg, a symbol of the United States, can thus be seen as an invader of the old world. Mrs. Marvell was the strongest opponent to Undine and Ralph's marriage, "but the conflict over, the air had immediately cleared, showing the enemy in the act of unconditional surrender. It surprised Undine that there had been no reprisals, no return on the points conceded. That was not her idea of warfare, and she could ascribe the completeness of the victory only to the effect of her charms." Ralph's sister Laura, on the other hand, was viewed by Undine as "either a strong ally or a determined enemy" (58). When Undine is seated next to Ralph at the opera the night after their engagement, she feels that she has now got even with those who look down on her, her enemies. This is her victory. She feels a "pleasure as might have come to some warrior Queen borne in triumph by captive princes" (63). Ralph is her catch, her possession, her prisoner of war.

The role of Charles Bowen is interesting in this context. He moves freely between the two opposing social classes and the United States and France; from the inner circles of the Dagonet clan, as the confidant and attendant of Laura Fairford, to the Nouveau Luxe in Paris, as a visitor and observer of the *nouveaux riches*. He mostly seems to hover in the background, but his monologue about the custom of the country when it comes to the relationship between men and women can be interpreted as a defence of Undine, and he can therefore be seen as a diplomat negotiating between two warring parties. Bowen himself uses war terminology when it is expressed through the third-person narrator that, "it had so long been clear to him that poor Ralph was a survival, and destined, as such, to go down in any conflict with the rising forces" (176).

Interestingly enough, Undine later refers to someone of a similar background to her own as an intruder. Seeing her new found position in the French aristocracy as threatened, she questions the background and breeding of her brother-in-law's new American bride, Looty Arlington. "She felt a flash of resentment at any other intruder's venturing upon her territory" (312). The use of the word *other* is an indication of a moment of rare self-insight on Undine's part, realizing that she is in fact an intruder herself. The name Looty Arlington may also be interpreted as a reference to war, as looting is common during wartime and Arlington is the American national cemetery for soldiers. Looty's father also happens to be a general who is later responsible for completely redoing and modernising the de Chelles residence in Paris. They literally send in the troops and take over the house. Undine's comment on the occupation of Looty's father is that her father, Mr. Spragg, is also a general, a General Manager, "whatever that may be," revealing and ridiculing Undine's ignorance of business and professions and the possible imperialistic motives of her fellow Americans. The only time Undine seems to be the victim of invasion is in relation to sex, where she is described as surrendering and yielding, albeit reluctantly. The end of the novel, where we find out that the stereotypical American businessman and a representative of new American money, Elmer Moffat, has bought the de Chelles tapestries, can be seen as the ultimate victory of America over Europe and the triumph of American imperialism.

Wharton emerged as a prominent writer at the same time as the emergence of neo-colonialism in the United States. Ambitions of world domination based on increasing patriotism lead to a rapid expansion of American territories at the end of the nineteenth century, and the United States fast became a financial, military and economic power to be reckoned with. This affected Wharton. The world traveller is very much present in her fiction, whether it is in the form of newly rich jetsetters, which Charles Bowen refers to as "a new class of world-compellers" in *The Custom of the Country*, or as enterprising engineers or plantation owners making a fortune in developing countries such as Brazil, like Guy Thwarte and Mr. Closson in *The Buccaneers.* Another example is Lucius Harney in *Summer*, an architect exploring poverty-stricken areas with the intention of developing them.

Wharton herself expressed her support for the colonization of countries like Morocco and Cuba, but strongly opposed the American threat to take up arms against Spain in a conflict in connection with the Cuban War of Independence in 1898. In a letter to Sara Norton, the daughter of her close friend Charles Eliot Norton, who was a passionate anti-imperialist, Wharton called herself a rabid imperialist. She was in favour of the interference or

influence of what she saw as culturally and historically superior nations, such as France, Spain and Britain, in less developed countries. In her eyes, that would lead to progress and development. According to Wharton, "the universal infiltration of our American plumbing, dentistry, and vocabulary has reduced the globe to a playing-field for our people; and Americans have been the first to profit by the new facilities of communication which are so largely of their invention and promotion. We have, in fact, internationalized the earth'' (qtd. in Wegener 803). While Wharton realizes that this has happened "to the deep detriment of its picturesqueness, and of many far more important things, the deed is done, the consequences are in operation, and however lamentable such effects might be, it is useless, at least for the story-teller, to deplore what the new order of things has wiped out, vain to shudder at what it is creating" (qtd. in Wegener 803). Although she appears to have accepted the situation, my claim is that through the widespread use of war terminology and references to imperialism in *The Custom of the Country*, Wharton *does* express strong scepticism towards American imperialism. She does not seem to condone the newly rich Americans' imperialistic attitudes towards great historical and cultural powers like France and Italy in *The Custom of the Country* and, as will become evident in the next chapter, towards the British in *The Buccaneers.* Wharton can thus be said to have antipathies towards this particular type of American and their view of themselves and the world. In this respect she is in agreement with European critics of America at the time.

One very noticeable feature in *The Custom of the Country* is the use of water imagery. It can be linked to all four of my categories of anti-Americanism. In literature, water can symbolize a number of things, for example purification, birth, strength, thirst, cold and change. I see a clear connection between the water imagery used in the novel and negative views of Americans. The novel describes a changing America, with a new set of people invading the old and changing the country for the worse. There is a change in values, morals, family structures and social hierarchies. Everything seems to be temporary: homes, locations, marriages, and friendships. Jewellery and dresses are altered when they no longer satisfy their owners and heirlooms are sold for the purpose of instant gratification. The incessant shopping and preoccupation with fashion can also be linked to the need for change. The constant travelling across the ocean also indicates a restlessness and movement and is in itself linked to water. This is in stark contrast to the established American upper class and its European equivalent, represented by the French aristocrat Raymond de Chelles. They do not move, they

travel less, they value the permanent over the temporary, family and marriage over divorce and mind over matter. Water imagery and the interpretation of it as a reference to change could also be linked to the modernism of American society, which was received with scepticism by many domestic and European critics of American society. The fact that Raymond de Chelles' sisters are afraid that their children may be contaminated by Undine, Paul and his secular tutor makes one think of fear of contaminated water. The up-and-coming *nouveaux riches* are thirsty for dollars, possessions, attention, amusements and status, and through the characterization of Undine they appear to be cold and lacking in empathy. The water imagery in the novel can thus reflect criticism of the new Americans within all my four categories of anti-Americanism.

The first and most obvious example of water imagery is Undine's name. It has a clear mythological reference to the water nymph Undine, who according to the myth could only get a soul when she married and had a child. This is clearly ironic, as Undine does not seem to develop a soul during either of her marriages or after the birth of her son. In fact, some of the most heart breaking scenes in the novel describe Undine's cruel treatment of Ralph and their son Paul. There are several references to her name and to water in the book: "She might have been some fabled creature" (15); -"'You look as cool as a wave'" (88); -"his eyes softened as they absorbed in a last glance the glimmering submarine light of the ancient grove, through which Undine's figure wavered nereid-like above him" (90); -her response to Ralph's tenderness "was remote and Ariel-like, suggesting … the coolness of the element from which she took her name" (95) and "they were fellow- victims in the noyade of marriage, but if they ceased to struggle perhaps the drowning would be easier for both" (141).

The fact that Undine and her parents do not seem to be aware of the mythological connotation of her name is also of relevance. Whereas Ralph initially has a romanticized view of this beautiful nymph-like creature, it turns out that her parents named her after a hair-styling product: "'We called her after a hair-waver father put on the market the week she was born'" (51). While they are on their honeymoon in Europe, Ralph says to Undine that "'You never looked your name more than you do now. . .'" "She smiled back a little vaguely, as if not seizing his allusion," apparently having no knowledge of the meaning of her own name and showing no interest in finding out what he means (90). This shows the Spraggs' lack of knowledge, culture and depth. By naming their only child after a product, something that can be bought, they become symbols of the soulless materialism that destroyed Wharton's old New York. Undine's name can therefore be interpreted as criticism of the ignorant and

uncultured new American (Olsen 8-9). In addition to being unaware of her name's mythological connotations, Undine is incapable throughout the novel of seeing her own reflection in the sense that she is unaware of how she appears to others and cannot see her own part in what happens to her. She is however more than capable of seeing her reflection in the form of her beauty, and her self-obsession and narcissism is another water connection.

The description of Saint Désert, the country estate of Undine's French husband, is literally saturated with water imagery. In this context, you get the impression that water symbolizes drowning and death and thus also change. It is November and it rains heavily, the gutters are gurgling "with a perpetual overflow," the moat is "peppered by a continuous pelting of big drops." "The water lay in glassy stretches under the trees and along the sodden edges of the garden-paths," "Everything in the great empty house smelt of dampness" (307). Not only does this reflect Undine's mood and impression of the place and the contrast to the bright, sparkling and amusing Paris, it is also a premonition of what is to come. With Undine comes a change, a change that may ultimately drown them all. Her view of Saint Désert, this beautiful and ancient ancestral home, as a mouldy, depressing and dull place, illustrates one of the main differences between her type of American and the French. This description can thus be seen as a criticism of a certain type of American's lack of history and culture.

It is important to point out that the characters of *The Custom of the Country* may by no means simply be divided into two types of people: the materialistic, uncultured, ignorant and pleasure-seeking Americans, who would be the target of the anti-American sentiments that I focus on; and the traditional, conservative, intellectual and elegant European aristocrat. First of all, there is a close link between the European aristocrats and the established American upper class in this novel, which is the premise of my interpretation of the book. These two groups are, in spite of their different nationalities, basically identical in terms of values and opinions and can both be seen to express negative attitudes towards the type of American that Undine Spragg represents. Secondly, a number of the characters in the novel are not simply for or against this new type of American; they are drawn between this modern and lavish American lifestyle and the more conventional European lifestyle. Thus the characters are not just black and white, with some being typically American and some being typically European.

Although Mr. and Mrs. Spragg have climbed the social ladder and are ambitious on behalf of their daughter, they are distinctly different from her. They represent the stereotypical immigrant who goes west with his pioneer spirit and protestant work ethic, experiencing hardship and struggles and attains the American dream through diligence and a frugal

lifestyle. Although Mr. Spragg is a businessman, he primarily seems to enjoy the work and how it allows him to be himself. Personally, he seems not first and foremost to be driven by money and consumption and is in fact discouraged when his job simply becomes a way of supplying luxuries for his daughter. Like Ralph Marvell, he also appears to have moral qualms in relation to his job. He does therefore not represent the stereotypical dollar hungry, ruthless American business man. In my opinion, Undine is not her father's daughter, as Ammons claims in *The Business of Marriage.*

Where Undine is clearly an appalling mother, Mrs. Spragg, although overindulging and spoiling her daughter, ultimately seems to be a caring and loving mother and grandmother. She thus cannot be said to be lacking in maternal feelings, as American women were often accused of. The Spraggs have no need to display their wealth or to travel the world spending and amusing themselves. Their main objective is to give their daughter a better and easier life than they have had, and that is where things go wrong. Whereas her parents have experienced poverty and have had to work hard for what they have, Undine belongs to a new generation of Americans who has had things handed to her on a plate. She expects to be looked after and taken care of and is essentially a spoilt child, indulged by parents who in their attempt to accommodate her social ambitions ultimately contribute to her unsympathetic character traits and lack of roots, culture and values. The way I see it, this is an important part of the criticism against America in this novel: What have we allowed ourselves to become? Is this who we are as Americans? What kind of monster have we created?

Elmer Moffat appears to be the quintessential American businessman: driven, cunning and ambitious. He seems to do what it takes to succeed, whether it is lying, blackmailing or plotting. He uses his charms and wits to get what he wants and seems occasionally to cross the borders of good business ethics. Like Undine, he aspires to reach the apex of society. They both enjoy an extravagant lifestyle and appear rather ostentatious in the display of their wealth at the end of the book. In this respect, both Undine and Elmer can be said to represent the materialism and vulgarity that Americans were criticized for. Elmer does however have some redeeming qualities. He is hard-working and good at what he does and he tries to help people out of difficult situations with advice and business deals, although they are usually to his own benefit as well. Even though he appreciates the amusing and material aspects of life, he has kept the work ethic and attitude of the early pioneers and is similar to Mr. Spragg in this respect. Unlike Undine, he realises that you have to work hard to get what you want. Elmer also appreciates art and ends up as one of America's biggest art collectors. He seems to

genuinely have a love for beauty and historical objects, unlike the shallow and culturally ignorant Undine, who finds museums and galleries dull. Elmer thus appears to contradict the view of Americans as lacking in history, culture and knowledge. This may be true to some extent, but he also seems to be driven by an ambition to have what he cannot get, to buy what is not for sale, just as Undine always wants more and is never satisfied. In this respect Elmer represents the stereotypical ambitious and modern American. At the same time as he appreciates the beauty of the de Chelles tapestries that he finally is able to purchase, he seems to be oblivious to the emotional, historical and cultural attachment their previous owner had to these tapestries. It breaks Raymond de Chelles' heart to sell them, but Elmer is just pleased to have acquired something that he wanted badly. I therefore believe that Elmer is more like Undine than his art collecting may imply. Elmer, however, does see how Undine's son may be upset by his mother's lack of interest in him. He realises that his wife is not a great mother. Elmer can consequently be said to be a stereotypical new American, but with elements of empathy and some sense of culture and history.

Both Ralph Marvell and Raymond de Chelles, who, the way I see it, represent traditional European values in the novel, are drawn to the beauty and charm of Undine Spragg and the *nouveaux riches*. Although Ralph appears to be very conservative and typical of his class, he is also different in some ways. He secretly longs for freedom from his stuffy upper-class background and dreams of becoming an author, an occupation that would have been perceived as bohemian and too public in the eyes of his social set. In this respect, Ralph reflects how Wharton's own aspiration to become a writer was perceived by her class and family in general and by her mother in particular. Ralph and Raymond both being attracted to and marrying Undine is in itself unexpected and unlikely for someone of their social background and shows that there is some development and mobility even among the leisured classes. The fact that both their marriages to this monstrosity of an American fail could be a comment on the incompatibility of new and old money and of America and Europe. Raymond first meets Undine at the Nouveau Luxe, the meeting place of the rich and showy Americans in Paris, a sign that he is in the habit of visiting such kinds of establishments, at least prior to their marriage. Ralph is eventually forced to go into business, to the great dismay of his grandfather, who sees this as unsuitable for a gentleman. Similarly, Raymond is forced to sell some tapestries, an ancient family heirloom, and is thus unwillingly pulled into the business world. Both Ralph and Raymond can thus be said to be drawn to or partially assimilated by the new Americans.

There are several European aristocrats in the novel that differ from the more traditional and conservative type. They are all scandalous in one way or another. The bohemian and liberal Madame Adelschein seems to be feared by both Ralph and Raymond for her possible bad influence on Undine. She appears to have been involved in something that has ruined her reputation, possibly an indiscrete affair. Princess Estradina, Raymond's cousin, is shunned by the family and Raymond does not want Undine to associate with her. She is open with Undine about her extramarital affairs, which are not unusual or unacceptable in themselves, but like Madame Adelschein, her biggest sin seems to have been to have made them a public scandal. Hubert de Chelles disgraces his family and causes great financial difficulty through his gambling, his debts and his irresponsible behaviour. All three of them have qualities that are stereotypically associated with Americans in anti-American rhetoric: They are pleasure-seeking, materialistic and sexually promiscuous and they show that the characterizations in the novel are not black and white, with good Europeans and bad Americans.

Conclusively, the diverse characterization of Americans and Europeans in *The Custom of the Country* makes it harder to claim that Wharton is purely anti-American and pro-European in *The Custom of the Country*. There is, however, no doubt that prejudices towards Americans within all my categories of anti-Americanism are present in the novel, whether through direct statements or through the characterization of Undine Spragg in particular.

Chapter 3

The Battle of Britain: American and European Values and Behaviour

Clashing and Merging in *The Buccaneers*

The Buccaneers is set in the 1870s and follows four young American women through their quest for titled English husbands and their consequent marriages, the majority of which are unhappy. The heroines represent the different stereotypes of the so-called "American dollar princesses." Annabel (Nan) St. George is the innocent, romantic girl who is fascinated by British history, architecture and literature, the fairytale version of Britain. She is the central character of the novel along with her governess, Laura Testvalley. The southern belle is another stereotype, here represented by Nan's sister Virginia St. George. The third type is the beautiful daughter of a Wall Street parvenu, Lizzy Elmsworth. Last but not least, there is the free-spirited and promiscuous South American beauty Conchita Closson. Wharton used her own personal knowledge of title-heiress marriages when creating these characters. Conchita Closson is said to be based on Consuelo Yzanga, the daughter of a Cuban immigrant who married the future Duke of Manchester in 1876. Nan's unhappy marriage to Ushant, the Duke of Tintagel, was modelled on Consuelo Vanderbilt's marriage to the Duke of Marlborough. Just like Consuelo felt trapped at Blenheim Palace, Nan feels imprisoned at Tintagel.

These four young women and the prejudices they face in their new aristocratic families will be the main focus in my study of this novel. Who express antipathies towards them due to their Americanness? What kind of anti-American sentiments are expressed? What do the American brides do to provoke these feelings? Or can the antipathies be explained by the personal situation of the critics or by the political situation at the time? To what extent do these prejudices affect the form of the novel? As in the previous chapters, I will structure the discussion based on my four categories of anti-Americanism.

Wharton started writing *The Buccaneers* in 1933, but died before it was finished. The unfinished manuscript was posthumously published in 1938. In 1993, the novel was republished, this time completed by Marion Mainwaring. In addition to minor changes to Wharton's text, she continued where Wharton had stopped writing, in the middle of chapter twenty-nine, and added another twelve chapters (Sigelman 271). These are based on Wharton's own plan for the novel, which was attached to her original manuscript. In addition

to the unfinished version by Wharton and the completed version by Mainwaring, the novel was altered and completed by screenwriter Maggie Wadey when turning the novel into a BBC series which aired in 1995. Another version of the novel, published as a companion to the TV series and based on the screenplay, was written by Angela Mackworth -Young. I will limit my analysis of the novel to Wharton's unfinished version that ends in the middle of chapter twenty-nine, but will also refer to the other versions when relevant.

The novel became topical due to the abdication of Edward VIII in 1936, which enabled him to marry the American divorcée Wallis Simpson. It was not received well by the American public, however, as it was seen to establish Wharton's reputation as a writer of past times and of a world that was very remote to most readers. Another view was expressed by Lily Norton, Wharton's close friend, who claimed that the reason why Americans disliked the novel was that "it's not a story that commends itself to Americans; they never can bear to see themselves as others possibly have seen them" (qtd. in Lee 721). This supports my view that Americans are to some extent portrayed negatively in *The Buccaneers.* In the opinion of many critics, however, it would rank among Wharton's best works, if it had been finished.

As is the case with the other works, there have been numerous critical approaches to *The Buccaneers*. One of them is a feminist approach, which focuses on the rights of American women to keep their nationality when marrying foreigners. As Woolf points out, Wharton again draws our attention to derivative citizenship. Just like the United States at the time, Great Britain practiced automatic marital naturalization through marriage to British citizens; in other words, when an American woman married a British man, she automatically lost her American citizenship and became British. An example of this is when Nan says to her mother-in-law, the Dowager Duchess, that she "is tired of trying to be English," and the Dowager replies "Trying to be? But you *are* English. When you became my son's wife you acquired his nationality. Nothing can change that now" (244).

Some see the novel from a more nationalistic perspective, as describing the first American invasion of England. The American women's conquering of England through their marriages can be seen as revenge for the British colonization of the new world and their mistreatment of the colonists. This view reflects the increase in patriotic feelings and the development of American imperialism in the Gilded Age. In line with this nationalistic point of view, critics focused on the cultural clash between American vitality and the stuffiness of the old world. Edmund Wilson claims that in contrast to *The Custom of the Country,* which compared the culture and tradition of Europe to the vulgar rich Americans and where the main

character Undine is ambitious and hard-boiled, *The Buccaneers* describes a group of young, enthusiastic Americans who revive and revitalize an ignorant and conservative aristocracy (qtd. in Tuttleton 552-3). The fact that Nan, in Mainwaring's version, elopes with Guy at the end, the most imaginative and enterprising of the English characters, is seen as the ultimate victory of American vitality, compassion and entrepreneurship over the coldness, decadence and old ways of the English aristocracy. I will argue against this point of view to some extent in the sense that my perspective will be that the portrayal of the American brides in the novel is not all positive, romantic and idealistic. They can in fact be interpreted as being representatives of anti-American stereotypes, rather than as American patriotic ideals. For example, the American women's conquering of England can be seen as an expression of American imperialism rather than of American patriotism.

Unlike Edmund Wilson, Adeline Tintner focuses, as I will, on the prejudices the American women faced. She compares the attitudes of Nan's husband Ushant, who despised anything that was not British, to the husband of Consuelo Vanderbilt, the Duke of Marlborough. In her autobiography *The Glitter and the Gold*, Consuelo said of her husband that "the arrogance of the Duke's character . . . created in me a sentiment of hostility. He seemed to despise anything that was not British, and therefore my feelings were hurt." She writes too that "sarcastic comments on all things American" were expressed by the Duke. "His archaic prejudices were inspired by a point of view opposed to my own" (qtd. in Tintner 15). According to this approach, Nan St. George can be said to be Consuelo Vanderbilt's fictional alter ego and their marriages to British noblemen both end in a scandalous divorce.

However, a substantial part of the criticism of the novel is concerned with the quality of Mainwaring's completion of it. To what extent do the 33,000 words that Mainwaring added fit together with Wharton's 89,000-word draft when it comes to style, and did the end of the book turn out as Wharton would have wanted (Sigelman 271)? The happy ending of the book, with Guy and Nan eloping together, is certainly very different from any of Wharton's other books. Although this ending was described in Wharton's layout for the book, it was not uncommon for her to change her plans during the writing process, so we will never know if she would ultimately have changed the ending. According to Viola Hopkins Winner, the ending reflects both the social changes that took place during her lifetime from Victorianism to modernism, and Wharton's new sense of freedom and sexual and intellectual fulfilment, which her affair with Morton Fullerton had given her (xxvii). Some claim that Laura Testvalley is given too major a role in comparison to Nan's role, whereas others are of the

opinion that Miss Testvalley is the main character and heroine, not Nan. Tintner in fact calls Testvalley the "agent provocateur" of the novel (18) and many see her as Wharton's own voice in the novel, which is a point of view that I share to a certain extent.

Janet Beer points out that it is apparent that Laura Testvalley is on the side of the American girls in this novel (64). Because Laura herself has been born in exile, as an Italian immigrant in Great Britain, she tends to sympathize with the social intruders rather than the social elite. Laura becomes their advisor and guide to British aristocracy. Since some critics claim that Laura is Wharton's voice in the book, it can be said that Wharton herself was on the side of the American women. I do not disregard this point of view, but I want to show that Laura Testvalley also passes negative judgements on the girls based on their class and nationality. It is possible to see Wharton's possible attitude in the novel from two perspectives: either she was negative towards the American girls and wanted to educate them or she sympathized with them and wanted to help them. Regardless of whom Wharton supports in this novel, my claim is that *The Buccaneers* can be interpreted as a display of anti-American attitudes and the basis for these attitudes.

Another critic who focuses on Laura's role as an outsider and enabler for the girls is Carol Wershoven. She also stresses the unity of the girls. This is something I will argue against, because as I see it, the novel is marked as much by the differences between the girls as by their unity. Although they do occasionally support each other and Conchita stresses that they must face the enemy with a united front, they drift apart as the novel progresses. The St. George sisters, for example, are diametrical opposites. I see Virginia as the type of American that Wharton was very critical of: a superficial woman with no appreciation of tradition and culture, whereas Nan represents Wharton's ideal American woman in many ways. Although she is initially portrayed as innocent and infantile, she has a passion for history, architecture, art and poetry and she eventually becomes a mature and independent woman. I see her as what Henry James would call a Boston girl, in many ways more European than American (Woolf 230). Wershoven also points out that Nan is a typical Wharton heroine: an isolated, rejected woman in a hostile society, in this case a society saturated with prejudices against Americans. Like Lily Bart in *The House of* Mirth, Ellen Olenska in *The Age of Innocence* or Undine in *The Custom of the Country*, she is alone and ostracized. Because they are different and unwilling to conform, they are rejected by the intolerant and closed society they are an unwilling part of. My claim is that the hostility and ostracism the heroine experiences in *The Buccaneers* is based on anti-American attitudes. Like Beer, Wershoven also seems convinced

that Wharton is delighted with the young girls and their youthful enthusiasm, but where Wershoven sees Wharton's descriptions as evidence of her sympathy for them, I interpret many of these descriptions as typical anti-American portrayals so often seen in European literature at the time.

Before I can proceed with an analysis of anti-American opinions in *The Buccaneers* and give examples of the behaviour and statements of the American characters that may explain or justify these anti-American attitudes, I have to stress that the transatlantic brides do not constitute *one* type of American in this novel. In that respect, it is more complex in its portrayal of Americans than *The Custom of the Country*, which, although some of its characters are conflicted, to a greater extent divides Americans into old money and new money. In *The Buccaneers* there are more dynamic characters who change and have doubts about who they are. This is particularly obvious in the characterization of the static Undine, who remains a child throughout the novel, as opposed to Nan, who goes through a transition in the novel from child to adult. Characters in the novel are drawn between American and British culture and between obligation and duty to history and the family and the expression of individuality and a need for freedom. In fact, I believe change and development as well as entrapment to be important themes in this novel, whether it be among the American women, in British society and the aristocracy or in the world at large.

5.1 Culture, History, Domesticity and Knowledge

Nan St. George seems to be diametrically opposite to Undine when it comes to her interest in foreign culture. Whereas Nan is literally trembling in anticipation at the thought of visiting English stately homes like Honourslove and Allfriars, her sister Virginia, who I see as the female character that most resembles Undine in *The Buccaneers*, is less impressed. When they first see Allfriars, Virginia's response is that it looks like a jail, whereas Nan thinks it looks like a palace (99). Conchita agrees with Virginia, and tells her mother-in-law that "she'd as soon spend a month in the family vault" than stay at Allfriars (82). She would rather stay in the more modern and entertaining London. This can be compared to Undine's view of Saint Désert and her constant need to go to Paris. In real life, Winston Churchill's American heiress mother Jennie Jerome was known to feel the same about Blenheim Palace, the Churchill's family estate. A dialogue between Nan and Virginia clarifies their different views about England and a foreign culture. Nan does not mind that the dinner table conversation at Allfriars is limited because

> ". . . it gave me a chance to look," Nan rejoined. "At what? All I [Virginia] saw was a big room with cracks in the ceiling, and bits of plaster off the walls. . . ." Nan was silent. She knew that Virginia's survey of the world was limited to people, the clothes they wore, and the carriages they drove in. Her own universe was so crammed to bursting with wonderful sights and sounds that, in spite of her sense of Virginia's superiority – her beauty, her ease, her self-confidence – Nan sometimes felt a shamefaced pity for her. It must be cold and lonely, she thought, in such an empty colourless world as her sister's. (110)

Virginia, in other words, represents the shallow American who is not interested in culture or architecture, she cares more about the lack of comfort and practical amenities and what she perceives as the shabbiness of the place. This strongly resembles Undine's view of Europe while she was on honeymoon in *The Custom of the Country* and the view of John Durham's mother and sisters while visiting Paris. As a contrast, the depiction of Nan's first encounter with Honourslove is, in my opinion, the most beautiful part of the book. It is almost poetic in its description of the house and picturesque surroundings. It is truly the fairytale version of England: "Nan found herself suddenly at ease with the soft mellow place, as though some secret thread of destiny attached her to it" (113). The same can be said about Nan's visit to Tintagel Castle, where she feels spellbound and engulfed in British history. It makes her think of King Arthur, Avalon and Excalibur and "the idea of living in that majestic castle by the sad western sea had secretly tinged her vision of the castle's owner" (206). She feels so strongly about the place that it impairs her judgement of her future husband, the Duke of Tintagel. She thus has more in common with John Durham, Ralph Marvell and Guy Thwarte than any of her fellow heiress brides. They all have the ability to see the beyondness of things; they have an internal world and appreciate beauty, art, poetry and architecture. Unlike Undine, Nan immerses herself in the foreign culture and is thrilled to see and experience new things:

> The prospect of seeing new places stirred her imagination, and she seemed to lose all interest in the gay doings at the cottage when Miss Testvalley told her that, on the way, they would stop at Exeter, where there was a very beautiful cathedral. And shall we see some beautiful houses too? I love seeing houses that are so ancient and so lovely that the people who live there have them in their bones. (133)

Like John Durham's mother and Undine Spragg's parents, Mrs. St. George becomes helpless in Europe. She is clearly out of her element and does not enjoy or appreciate experiencing a new culture. She ends up seeking out other Americans whose company she had abhorred back in America, like Mrs. Closson and Mrs. Elmsworth. What now joins them together is their scepticism of a foreign culture: "The ladies were mingling their loneliness, their perplexities,

their mistrust of all things foreign and unfamiliar, in an ecstasy of interchanged confidences" (121).

When Nan quotes *The Blessed Damozel* by Dante Gabriel Rossetti in front of the Rossetti painting at Honourslove, presumably the painting by the same name that illustrates the poem, Guy is clearly impressed and suggests that his father, Sir Helmsley, would enjoy talking to her as much as he enjoys admiring Virginia's beauty. Helmsley's response, however, is not quite as enthusiastic, saying "So the Fleshly School has penetrated to the backwoods," which is clearly a derogatory comment on American society and culture (116). Helmsley is initially sceptical of Nan's interest in English culture: "Miss Annabel asks so many questions about English life in town and country, about rules, customs, traditions, and their why and wherefore, that I sometimes wonder if she is not preparing for a leading part on the social stage" (193). In other words, he questions whether she has an ulterior motive: to marry an English aristocrat. This in itself is an expression of a prejudice against Americans, that they are cunning and manipulative. He later changes his mind and replaces this prejudice with another: that she is probably innocent enough, because all Americans ask a lot of questions: "I remember that all her country-people are merciless questioners, and conclude that she has the national habit." He then admits that she "exercises it more intelligently than the others. She is immensely interested in the history of this house, and has an emotional sense at least of its beauties" (193). It is obvious here, that Sir Helmsley's view of Americans is evolving. In the very last chapter that Wharton wrote, he has undergone a complete change of heart and even expresses a wish that English women were more like Nan:

> "I see Miss Testvalley was right, Duchess – she always is. She told me you were the only foreigner she'd ever known who cared for the real deep-down England, rather than the sham one of the London drawing-rooms." Nan flushed with pride. . . . "I'm afraid I shall always feel strange in London drawing-rooms," Nan answered; "but that hidden-away life of England, the old houses and their histories, and all the far-back things the old people hand on to their grandchildren – they seem so natural and home-like. . . . We English are spoilt; we've ceased to feel the beauty, to listen to the voices. But you and she [Laura] come to it with fresh eyes and fresh imaginations. I wish more of our Englishwomen felt it all as you do. (287)

As in *The Custom of the Country*, the Americans' lack of history and roots and the United States's childishness is a topic in *The Buccaneers*. At the beginning of the book, while the setting is still Saratoga and New York, it becomes apparent that the American girls and their families are *nouveaux riches*. Their fathers are all businessmen on Wall Street; in fact, Laura Testvalley at one point refers to them as Wall Street *parvenus* (33). They stay in hotels in Saratoga for the summer, rather than in their own summer houses at the more prestigious

Newport, where the old money moved when Saratoga was invaded by "the new people." Nan keeps losing her handkerchiefs, as "she never knows where they are because they keep moving from hotel to hotel" (45). This resembles how Paul Marvell feels at the end of *The Custom of the Country*, when he cannot find his things in the new Paris apartment. Miss Testvalley is appaled by this "nomadic wastefulness," not because they stay in hotels, but because she herself is a nomade and sees the need for order in that situation (45). The socially ambitious mother, primarily represented by Mrs. St. George, tries to distance herself from the people she considers vulgar, such as the Elmsworths and the Clossons, in order to gain entry into the upper echelons of society. Just like the Spraggs, she fails to get her daughters accepted in the highest circles of New York society, even if they eventually buy a house in the city. Ironically, she is the one who questions the history and background of the other new families as she asks her husband where the Elmsworths come from. "If you were to begin by telling me where *we* do" is her husband's response, clearly indicating that they are no better than the others, as they come from humble beginnings in the South (5).

Also in this novel, the view of historic houses and old things, as briefly mentioned when writing about culture, is what makes most of the Americans differ from the British. Conchita's father-in-law, Lord Brightlingsea, "thinks God made Allfriars for him to live in" (102). Guy Thwarte temporarily moves to Brazil and at one point even intends to stay there, but is drawn back to Honourslove because it is in his bones: "Tradition, as embodied in the ancient walls and the ancient trees of Honourslove, seemed to him as priceless a quality as it did to Sir Helmsley" (90). Nan understands this. What she cannot understand is how anyone can leave a place like Honourslove as Guy does (114). In a letter to Guy, his father expresses what he believes to be the different views of the Americans and the British:

> ". . . at this moment I am viewing Longlands, not as a familiar and respected monument, but as the unheard-of and incomprehensible phenomenon that a great English country-seat offers to the unprejudiced gaze of the American backwoodsman and his females.". . . "Their guests cannot grasp the meaning of such institutions or understand the hundreds of minute observances forming the texture of an old society." (189)

He also stresses "their importance as custodians of historical tradition and of high (if narrow) social standards" (189). Nan is different, however. She initially feels a strong sense of rootedness in relation to the stately homes, which the other American girls do not feel about their homes. Nan can therefore be said to be more European in her view of history and roots, which is another reason why she may have been perceived as anti-American and unpatriotic

by American readers. Nan has plenty of opinions and qualities that are more in tune with American values, however, which could make her a symbol of American patriotism. She does, for example, try to make some changes to the Corregio room at Longlands by removing some paintings, just to find them all put back the next day. "The Corregio room had always been the Duchess's boudoir, and the Corregios had always hung there." "It has always been like that," was the Dowager's invariable answer to any suggestion of change" (203). As time goes by, Nan no longer just sees the magic of these historic houses. In Wharton's last chapter, Nan feels a desperate need to get away: "it was her first escape from the long oppression of Tintagel and Longlands" (283).

Something that causes conflict between Helmsley and Guy Thwarte is the father selling the very valuable Titian painting. '"I'd have shot myself rather than sell the Titian,' Guy used to think in moments of bitterness" (90). The selling of the painting, clearly due to financial difficulties, sparks gossip among other aristocrats. Lord Brightlingsea was well aware of the value of his tapestries and that he could get a lot of money for them, but "I'm not sunk as deep as Thwarte" (104). This is a clear parallel to Raymond de Chelles's initial refusal to sell his tapestries. Both Raymond's tapestries and the Titian are sold to a rich American, giving a sense of selling out to the Americans and that the American dollar is becoming more powerful than European history. Yet another example of this takes place at Longlands. Nan, the Duke and an art expert, Mr Rossiter, admire an incomplete Greek marble bas-relief in the sculpture gallery. When Rossiter says that the present whereabouts of the missing part is unknown, the Duke replies that it probably is in America. "Probably, pirates that they are over there!" (216). Mr Rossiter's reply is incidentally a reference to the title of the novel and infers that the Americans are buying up Britain. This is not just an issue related to history, the Americans purchasing a history which they do not have themselves, it also relates to American materialism and imperialism and thus political anti-Americanism. Nan's brilliant reply to the Duke's claim that the relief should not have been allowed to leave England is "but why should it not be returned to Naxos?" (216). She here reveals the double standards of the British and indirectly criticizes British imperialism; they are no better than the Americans, they are pirates too.

Like Undine, Nan is repeatedly referred to as a child. She *is* only sixteen years old at the beginning of the novel, and in many ways acts like a child, but the child references continue as she gets older and are quite conspicuous. The other American girls keep referring to Nan's age and how she might outshine them when she grows up. Because of her

inexperience, she feels uncomfortable when they talk about flirtation and marriage. She is excluded from certain things, like the Assembly ball in New York, because of her age. Her tantrums and emotional outbursts seem childlike, and her excitement at seeing the English stately homes can also be seen as evidence of her inexperience and immaturity. What attracts Ushant to her in the first place is her childish innocence. "I should make it my business to shield her from every contact with life" (185), he thinks. Laura admits that "Nan in some ways is still a child. She judges many things as a child would" (184). Laura reminds Ushant that she may turn out "to be a woman who didn't want to be shielded" (185). He wants someone he can mould; "the great thing is that I shall be able to form her," he says to his mother on the day their engagement is announced (201). This is incidentally just what Ralph Marvell wants to do with Undine.

> A great English nobleman of his generation could hardly conceive that he had anything to learn regarding the management of his estates from a little American girl whose father appeared to be a cross between a stock broker and a professional gambler, and whom he had married chiefly because she seemed too young and timid to have any opinion on any subject whatever. (201)

I interpret Ushant's view of Nan to also represent his view of the United States. He has nothing to learn from this young, inexperienced nation without any knowledge or traditions. He, Britain, wants to be in charge and will not be told what to do. He wants Nan "to remain a loving and adoring looker-on. He did not expect his wife to help him, save by looking her part as a beautiful and angelically pure young duchess whose only duties consisted in bestowing her angelic presence on entertainments for the tenantry and agricultural prize-givings" (207).

It is when Nan starts to speak her own mind and rebels through her insistence on helping sick tenants, which ultimately leads to a miscarriage, that the marriage starts to disintegrate. Her rebellion literally kills the Duke's heir and this can be seen as symbolic of the United States's independence from Britain. Nan, like the United States, goes from childhood to an adolescent period where she tries to find out who she is – "who is Annabel Tintagel?", and then on to adulthood where she follows her own heart and becomes herself (198). Nan reacts strongly when Guy calls her a child: "Please don't send me back to the nursery." "Little girls shouldn't ask questions. You'll understand better when you're grown up.". . . How much longer am I to be talked to like that?" (238). The way I see it, these statements are not just about Nan, but about the United States. In addition, the change in her name, from the infantile pet name Nan in the first half of the novel to the grown up Annabel at the end, is not just an indication of her new status as a Duchess, but of her growing up.

Towards the end of Wharton's manuscript, Guy "had wanted to take the child in his arms and comfort her with kisses" (267). Nan, however, is no longer a child: "the angry child had been replaced by a sad but self-controlled woman" (267). I would therefore claim that *The Buccaneers* is a coming-of-age novel on several levels. It is not only Nan who grows up and evolves, but the American woman, the United States and Wharton's portrayal of her native country and countrymen.

Marriage, motherhood and divorce are also important topics in *The Buccaneers*. The American women's attachment to home and family, their domesticity, is scrutinized. As in the other two novels, marriages between American girls and European aristocrats fail. They are unhappy and incompatible. Some choose to remain in the marriage, whereas others get a divorce. In Mainwaring's ending, the only marriages that seem happy or seem to have the prospect of being happy are Mabel Elmsworth's marriage to a fellow American, Caleb Whittaker, her sister Lizzie's marriage to a *nouveau riche* British "commoner" and Nan's future marriage to Guy, the most unusual and modern of the British aristocrats in the novel. His refusal to marry a woman because of her money makes him stand out in comparison to the other aristocrats, and his embracing Nan's personality and interests, "being the finest instrument he had ever had in his hand," differs from Ushant's ambition to mould her (227). It is made clear that to these aristocrats marriage is a duty. "In those great houses it's a family obligation for the heir to marry," Laura Testvalley amusedly explains to Mrs. Closson, who seems to think that it is an individual choice (57).

There seems initially to have been love between Lord Richard Brightlingsea and Conchita, but he has financial difficulties and they soon appear to lead separate lives. Virginia "was enslaved to that half-asleep Seadown," who is in need of money to keep up the family estate (217). This is revealed by his mother, who is clearly intrigued by the wealth of the American girls. Nan appears to be more in love with the romantic image of England than in Ushant himself. As already mentioned, Ushant seems to primarily be drawn to Nan because of her innocence, and the warm feelings he has for her soon change: "Though he had married for love only a few months before, he was now far more concerned with Annabel as the mother of his son than for her own sake. The first weeks with her had been very sweet – but since then her presence in his house had seemed only to increase his daily problems and bothers" (213). Nan's fascination with the sensual Corregio paintings and Rosetti's poetry, which according to her are all about love, shows that she is ultimately seeking love in a marriage. According to Ushant, she is not interested in his title and money. Nan is thus very different

from Undine in her motivation for marriage, and the view of anti-Americans that American women are driven by a cynical quest for status and money and that they are too dominant in their marriages does not apply to Nan. It does apply to her ambitious mother, however. In my opinion, she is the woman who in relation to marriage most resembles Undine in this book, through her eagerness to get her daughters married to nice young men that will increase her own social status. Nan tries to adapt and has a certain respect for the British aristocracy's way of life, but she ultimately rebels and demands a divorce. She thus becomes the American woman criticized, for example, by Charles Dickens and Knut Hamsun.

When Nan mentions that she is considering leaving the Duke, his mother is shocked. "The absurdity of the idea that any woman, let alone a little American parvenue, could envisage leaving a ducal marriage proved that Annabel had only wanted to annoy" (268). In this respect, Nan is an example of the view among anti-Americans that Americans do not respect the sanctity of marriage and get divorced whenever they feel like it. But unlike the superficial reasons Undine has to want a divorce from Ralph and Raymond, Nan and Madame de Malrive want a divorce due to basic incompatibility and mistreatment. Their desire for a divorce is therefore more understandable and likely to evoke sympathy than Undine's ambition for more money and amusement and higher social status. These characters can thus not be said to represent the stereotypical American divorcée. To the Dowager Duchess, marriage and sex is something you just endure; it is your duty as a woman. These feelings make me sympathize with the Dowager who, like Nan, has clearly felt trapped in an unhappy marriage, but saw no other option but to stay. To her, Nan's thoughts of divorce are unheard of and make her think that "these American girls are brought up differently from our young women. You'd probably say they were spoilt" (272).

The American women in *The Buccaneers* cannot generally be said to represent the view that American women are unwilling mothers and lack maternal instincts. All the girls who marry English men, with the exception of Nan, have a number of children and thus do their wifely duty, which is to produce "an heir and a spare." When Nan does not do this, Ushant loses interest and starts resenting her. According to him, getting a son is why "dukes make the troublesome effort of marrying" (213). His mother cannot understand why "this barren upstart" that does not appear to know her duties, does not fall pregnant again after her miscarriage (244): "If only Ushant had listened to her, had chosen an English wife in his own class, there would probably have been two babies in the nursery by this time, and a third on the way" (242). For Nan, this is a conscious decision. When Ushant refuses her to help their

sick tenants, which indirectly leads to her miscarriage, the differences in their values and morals become apparent. The Duke feels that this incident robbed him of a son. “He would have had a son, if this woman’s criminal folly had not destroyed his hopes” (214). In a heated argument about her charity work while she is pregnant, Nan says that she would “rather be dead than see a child of mine taught to grow up as – as you have!” (210). She also tells him “that I don’t think I want to be a mother of dukes” (245). Nan’s refusal to have children is not based on selfish and superficial objections, such as Undine’s fear that a pregnancy will ruin her figure and that the child will limit her freedom. Nan’s reason is that she cannot have a child with someone who has no empathy for others or any sense of obligation to his tenants. Nan is a social reformer, and she does not wish to contribute to the continuation of an ancient family and a hierarchical system that has no heart and seems to promote selfishness; that is willing to sacrifice the well-being of others in order to secure the future of the family. Nan is disappointed in Ushant for not living up to her expectations and ideals of *noblesse oblige* and decides to leave him. The stereotype of the socially responsible aristocrat is revealed not always to be true. Nan’s rejection of motherhood can thus be seen as an expression of ideology, morals and patriotism and a defence of American democracy and not due to a lack of maternal instincts, as American women were accused of. In relation to motherhood, Nan resembles Madame de Malrive, who as a good republican mother wants to shield her child from the influences of her French husband and his family.

Frances Trollope’s view of American women as uneducated, tedious and unintelligent is both confirmed and challenged in *The Buccaneers.* When Laura Testvalley asks Mrs. St. George about the level of Nan and Virginia’s studies, she seems helpless and admits that “I have always left these things to the girls’ teachers” (41). What has been important to her is that they learn how to behave like ladies, what Laura refers to as “drawing-room accomplishments” (41). Laura believes that Mrs. Parmore, her former employer in New York, is eager to show Lord Richard Brightlingsea, “that there are American girls comparable to his own sisters in education and breeding” (55). She thereby implies that American girls are assumed to be less educated and feels that they have something to prove to the English aristocrat. Mrs. Closson shows her lack of knowledge when she asks if the Marquess of Brightlingsea is in business, clearly not knowing that that is unheard of in his social class. She just assumes that everyone would be like the Americans she is familiar with.

When they arrive in England both Lizzy Elsmworth and Nan St. George are described as being intelligent and Sir Helmsley is impressed by Nan’s knowledge. Nan appears to have

a quick mind, and loves it when Laura reads poems to her. Her knowledge of art, literature and history and her inquisitiveness, however, seems to have been further cultivated by the intellectual Laura, who is of Italian origin. According to Sir Helmsley, "the young lady seems to understand something of her environment, which is a sealed book to the others. She has been better educated than her sister, and has a more receptive mind. It seems as though someone has sown in a bare field a sprinkling of history, poetry, and pictures, and every seed has shot up in a flowery tangle" (192). This shows how Nan's education has been improved under European influence. The fact that English tutors were in fashion at the time suggests that American education was viewed as inferior, also among Americans. In spite of her knowledge and intelligence, Nan comes to think of England as "perpetually muffled. The links between these people and their actions were mostly hidden from Annabel; their looks, their customs, their language had implications beyond her understanding" (256).

Nan spends a great deal of her time writing invitations and letters in the right manner and she struggles to follow protocol, for example when she is reprimanded by Ushant for her familiarity with the servants: "I wish you would not call Armson by his Christian name; I've already told you that in England head grooms are called by their surnames" (209). The Dowager thinks that Nan makes inexcusable mistakes when asking the wrong servants to do various things. "It's not that she is *stupid*," she tells Miss March, "but she puts one out, asking the reason of things that have nothing to do with reasons . . . I often find her with a book in her hand. I think she thinks too much about things that oughtn't to be thought about" (204-5). She clearly sees Nan as too inquisitive and intellectual, questioning things that have always been done a certain way. Virginia, on the other hand, whom Trollope would probably see as the prototypical silly and uneducated American girl, "had to rely on the length of her eyelashes and the lustre of her lips" (87), but seems to be better than Nan at mimicking and adapting to the aristocrats' behaviour and customs. Miss March, the American matchmaker in London, still considers this "untaught transatlantic beauty" to have a good chance against Lady Idina Churt in becoming the wife of Lord Seadown (85).

Wharton herself had great knowledge of England and felt closely connected to the country. She considered moving there, but decided on France instead (Knights 5). There were rumours that Wharton's real father was her brothers' English tutor and she supposedly expressed to her close friend Margaret Chanler "during her anti-American moods" in the 1920s and '30s, pleasure at the thought of having an English father (Lewis 535). Wharton went on yearly visits to England and may have been inspired to write *The Buccaneers* on a

visit to Cornwall in 1928, where she visited the real Tintagel Castle (Winner xviii). She was also personally acquainted with the English aristocracy. She frequently visited Lady Jeune, later Lady St. Helier, when she was in London, in addition to her old friend Adele Grant from New York, who married and became Lady Essex (Wharton, *A Backward Glance* 50-51, 220). Wharton also often stayed with Lady Wemyss at Stanway House in Gloucestershire, which was the model for Honourslove in *The Buccaneers* (Montgomery 406-7). As much as Wharton loved this place, she did remark on the lack of intellectualism at Stanway. "If anything were ever needed to teach me to value the precious gift of *la vie intérieure* it is the old age of some of my English great lady friends, with minds unfurnished by anything less concrete than the Grand National," she wrote about Lady Wemyss in 1936 (Montgomery 727).

5.2 Behaviour, Morals and Sexuality

Behaviour, morals and sexuality are clearly linked, but I will attempt to deal with them separately. As in the other novels, Americans in *The Buccaneers* are described as behaving in a certain manner, and the descriptions can often be interpreted to be critical of the Americans. When Mrs. Parmore says to Laura that, "I suppose, dear Miss Testvalley, that among the people you're with now there are no social traditions" and Laura wants to answer, "none except those they are making for themselves," they are both passing judgement on the new Americans (53). They do not know how to behave and they have had to invent their own norms. Laura questions whether the real Americans are found in Mrs. Parmore's social circle, however, which could indicate that she believes the *nouveaux riches* to be more representative of the American spirit and behaviour.

The first meeting between Laura Testvalley and the girls, when they are all grouped together to welcome her at the railway station in Sarratoga, can be interpreted as symbolizing American unity. I, however, first and foremost notice how the girls' behaviour is an example of how Americans were often perceived in Europe. They do not exit their carriage gracefully, but "were pouring out of the vehicle" (38). "Miss Testvalley found herself in a circle of nymphs shaken by hysterical laughter," and "the dancing nymphs hailed her with joyful giggles" (34-35). They are loud and make a spectacle of themselves, which Laura incidentally finds charming, but Mrs. St. George is embarrassed by their lack of dignity, as Mrs. Parmore would have been and even says that they are behaving like savages (45). The only other reference to *savages* in the book is when Nan thinks that "to all his people it was as if Ushant had married a savage" (257). This shows that the ones who criticize the behaviour of the girls

are just as often American as European. Laura, on the other hand, "was amused by the showy garb of the gentlemen and the much flounced elegance of their ladies" (34). She does not mind these new people, after all "she had not come to America in search of distinguished manners" (31). Although Laura here expresses sympathy with the new Americans, she simultaneously expresses stereotypes: they are showy and flaunt their wealth, and they do not have distinguished manners.

The reason why Laura applies for the job as governess for Nan in the first place is that "the "new people" would give "almost anything" for such social training as an accomplished European governess could impart" (31). Mrs. St. George sees that Nan is in need of some social discipline and wants her to learn how to behave like a lady in order to attract aristocratic husbands. That the Americans hired European governesses for this purpose indicates that both the Europeans and the Americans looked at their manners as inferior; they have to be taught by a European. This is also indicated by how Mrs. St. George feels when Richard Brightlingsea has dinner with them: "It was the first time she had ever sat at table with anyone even remotely related to a British nobleman, and she fancied the young man was ironically observing the way in which she held her fork" (29). She is expecting him to be critical of her manners. He is in fact too busy staring at Conchita. "I thought they were better brought up over in England," she thinks, clearly anticipating a certain behaviour from an Englishman (29).

Once the girls arrive in England, on the other hand, Sir Helmsley clearly expresses some common objections to Americans and their assumed vulgar behaviour when asked by his son Guy to invite them to tea: "I suppose it's because you know how I hate the whole spitting tobacco-chewing crew, the dressed-up pushing women dragging their reluctant backwoodsmen after them, that you suggest polluting my house, and desecrating our last few days together, by this barbarian invasion – eh?" (95). Guy, on the other hand, does not recognize his friends from this description.

Just as the concept of light has been linked to the behaviour of the new Americans in *The Custom of the Country*, noise and chattiness is repeatedly mentioned in connection with the new Americans in *The Buccaneers*. At the Assembly ball in New York, where Virginia and Lizzy are very silent while pretending to be Lord Richard's sisters, a Mrs. Englinton comments that, "she hoped it would teach their own girls that they need not chatter like magpies"(68). They clink their glasses, rattle their cards, play loud music and gallop rowdily through the stately homes. At Runnymede, there are screaming pillow-fights and Miss March

believes that all the noise and the nonsense simply bewilders him [Ushant]. Laura is not bothered by the noise as she seems to believe it is part of a mating ritual: "they were obviously in pursuit of husbands, and had probably hit on the best way of getting them" (132). She believes all this is too much for Nan's sensitive mind and takes her away. Some mixed feelings are expressed when Lord Brigtlingsea exclaims "why can't our girls talk like that?" on the American girls' first visit Allfriars. '"You've never encouraged them to chatter,' replied Lady Brightlingsea" (112). According to the Dowager, "they toss about so – they're never still" and "speak so fast that she cannot understand them" (81). The latter is a reference to what was often ridiculed by anti-Americans: their language. It was described as nasal, incorrect and impossible to understand. In literature, Americans were often portrayed through dialogues full of grammatical errors in order to underline the view that they did not fit in. According to Laura, the men would be amused by being around these "talkative girls, who said new things in a new language" (129). Conchita dislikes how little the English talk, "You must get used to an ocean of silence," and when asked by Nan who it is who talks, she replies "well, I do; too much so, my mother-in-law says" (129).

The chatting and noisiness, or rather what is *perceived* as such, can at times seem rather infantile and out of control. This could be interpreted as another example of the alleged immaturity of the United States. The young American women behave like children in need of attention and discipline, whereas the aristocrats behave like stuffy and dull parents, who cannot bear all the noise. Nan is perceived by Ushant to make less noise than the other girls at Runnymede and willingly leaves the place for some peace and quiet in the countryside. She also feels out of place in the hustle and bustle of London. This could be interpreted as a sign of her superior maturity in comparison to the other girls; under the influence of Laura she has become more Europeanized. In this respect, she resembles Fanny Frisbee in *Madame de Treymes*, who through European discipline has learned to control her chattiness. The point made about the noisiness of Americans could also be a criticism of the new and increasingly important role of the country on the international scene at this time. There is a sense in Europe that the United States is taking over, surpassing the old powers, and the Americans themselves may thus be seen as being too loud and drawing attention to themselves, like the country they come from. This would be an expression of political anti-Americanism.

The behaviour of the American girls generally tends to be the opposite of the English aristocrats. Where the Americans tend to be portrayed as impulsive, emotional and joyous, the English are portrayed as restrained, dutiful and serious. The girls run towards each other in

joy of being reunited at Allfriars; laughing, giggling, smiling and embracing. They love dancing and entertaining, they smoke and drink alcohol and they play cards and silly games. A contrast to this behaviour is Ushant and his obsession with clocks. Even his name is an indication of the limitations to his expression of individuality: you shant. The clocks could symbolize history and tradition, time going by at a regular pace. There is no room for impulsiveness or individual freedom; you just do things in the way they have always been done. You do things because they are your duty, not because you enjoy it. As the Dowager expresses it: "There's only one way for an English duchess to behave – and the wretched girl has never learnt it . . ." (276).

As in *The Custom of the Country*, certain aspects of the Americans' behaviour can make the reader question their morality and motivations. Both Undine's and Mrs. St. George's main ambition seems to be to avenge their rejection by the upper echelons of New York society, to get even with them and flaunt their achievements: "All that London could give, in rank, in honours, in social glory, was only, to Mrs. St. George, a knife to stab New York with – and that weapon she clutched with feverish glee. "If only her father rubs the Brightlingsea's into those people he goes with at Newport,' she thought vindictively" (180-81). Both these women are socially ambitious. As Undine grooms herself for higher places, Mrs. St. George is grooming her daughters. This is an indication of a pushiness and calculatedness, which was seen as typically American. The hope is that by being received in the highest circles in England, they will gain access to the equivalent circles in the United States: "You know perfectly well that if we get on there we'll be invited everywhere when we get back to New York," Virginia says to her mother before setting out for Europe (88). Whereas her mother shows some doubt and insecurities, Virginia knows exactly what she wants. This resembles the relationship between Undine and her mother.

Another rather unsympathetic feature of some of the Americans both in this book and in *The Custom of the Country* is the rivalry between them. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Henry James saw this as being typical of the American transatlantic brides. Like Undine pulls the ladder up from the Americans who come to France after her, judging them to be vulgar and insignificant, Mrs. St. George in particular expresses the competitiveness between the Americans. She puts down the Clossons and the Elmsworths as dubious and vulgar and concludes after close inspection that her daughters are more attractive and better behaved than their daughters. "A good many hours of Mrs. St. George's days were spent in mentally cataloguing and appraising the physical attributes of the young ladies in whose

company her daughters trailed up and down the verandahs" (5). With her reddish hair and dark skin, her smoking and shocking use of powder, Conchita is the main target of Mrs. St. George's criticism and concern. Conchita's behaviour is described as that of a circus performance and Mrs. St. George even believes her mother to be divorced. "I don't want my daughters associating with that kind of people" (8), she says. This is all a part of the battle for social positions among the new Americans, and time and again we see them criticizing each other as much as the Europeans do and for the same reasons. This internal rivalry again points to the newness and immaturity of the United States. It is a country that has not yet found itself and its people are fighting for positions in the country's highest social circles.

Carol Wershoven claims that the unity of the young American women is an important feature of the novel (210). Both in the rivalry already mentioned and in the relationship between the women in England, though, I see a lack of unity. Although Conchita seems determined to beat "the enemy" by sticking together, is proud of her friends' achievements and shows no sign of jealousy, Virginia St. George and Lizzy Elmsworth are repeatedly described as being competitive and jealous of each other. In their rivalry over Lord Seadown, "those two inseparable friends were gradually becoming estranged" (158). Their beauty, charms and intelligence is repeatedly compared. Even Nan compares herself to her sister and the other women; always feeling inferior and less beautiful. Although they join forces eventually, which is particularly apparent in their confrontation with Lady Churt, I believe there to be less unity between the American women than what Wershoven claims. The internal rivalry and the social ambitiousness can thus be said to appear to be typical features of the morality and behaviour of certain Americans in Wharton's books.

There is no doubt that beauty, flirtation and sexuality is a part of the attraction of several of the Americans girls and they thus confirm the stereotypes of American women at the time. Throughout the book, American women in general are described as dazzling beauties and are compared to the less attractive English girls: "New York society in the seventies was a nursery of young beauties, and Mrs. Parmore and Mrs. Eglinton would have told any newcomer from the old world that he would see at an Assembly ball faces to outrival all the Court beauties of Europe" (66). Although Nan is considered less beautiful than her sister Virginia, they are referred to as "the exiled beauties" (86). Lord Brightlingsea quite amusingly comments on this when he compares the looks of the American girls to his own daughter: "if her upper teeth had been straightened when she was a child we might have had her married by this time" (105). Virginia later refers to his daughters as "those great bony

girls" (110). When Nan comments that people couldn't take their eyes off her sister, Virginia replies "oh, well – if they have nobody to look at but those daughters I don't wonder" (111). It is thus clear that both in the novel and in real life the beauty of the American women caused both male attention and female jealousy and rivalry. Their beauty could help them achieve their social aspirations, and as Mrs. Elmsworth expresses, she "was perfectly willing to let them try their lot in England, where beauty such as Lizzy's (because it was rarer, she supposed) had been known to raise a girl almost to the throne" (127).

The Americans' flirting is described in a conversation between Hector Robinson and Mabel Elmsworth: "Your ways are so friendly, so kind, that a fellow, if he wasn't careful, might find himself drawn two ways at once" (160). Mabel then openly admits that they flirt. "Well, it's in our blood, I suppose. And no one thinks the worse of a girl for it at home. But over here it may seem undignified" (160). Sir Helmsley, after his initial hostility, is described falling for the flirtation and charms of the American girls: "His father could never, at the moment, hold out against deep lashes and brilliant lips, and no one knew better than Virginia St. George how to make use of such charms" (115). Conchita's flirtation with her lover Miles Dawnly is very explicit: "she was "playing" him indolently and amusedly, for want of a bigger fish" (158). There is obviously room for misunderstandings based on cultural differences, and an Englishman may misinterpret the Americans' friendliness as a sexual invite. This is expressed by Lady Churt at Runnymede when she insinuates that the American girls are promiscuous. "I'm dreadfully keen to learn your secrets" (163), she says, startling the girls and making them defensive. Ushant's sister makes a similar assumption in a conversation with her mother: "I daresay, Mamma, they use means in the States that a well-bred English girl wouldn't stoop to" (173). Mrs Brightlingsea compares the American girls dancing the Virginia reel to Native Americans: "remembering the scantily clad savages in the great tapestry at Allfriars, and thankfully the dancers had not so completely unclothed themselves – though the *décolletage* of the young American ladies went some way in that direction" (232). This clearly expresses the view that the Americans behave and dress in an inappropriate and provocative manner and are like savages.

Conchita Closson is the *femme fatale* of the novel. With her flirtatious behaviour and dramatic looks, she attracts men's attention. Nan describes her as "a lady with tumbled auburn curls, red-heeled slippers, and a pink dishabille with a marked tendency to drop off the shoulders" (247). She seems to be accepting of behaviour that others find shocking, as when she enthusiastically tells Nan about how a governess in Rio was used as an ally when her

charge wanted to meet a man. Conchita is not aware that this story gives Nan a bad impression of her. What the other girls call flirtation, Conchita incidentally calls love-making, which Nan finds embarrassing (15). Conchita's possible promiscuity is even insinuated in a conversation between Mrs. Parmore and Mrs. Eglinton, when one of them says that "young men are always attracted by novelty, and by a slight flavour of, shall we say, fastness, or anything just a trifle off-color?" (66). It is no secret that Conchita is unhappily married to Richard Brightlingsea. She openly admits that she is looking for a male "friend" with an income that he does not know how to spend. When Virginia expresses her disapproval, Conchita says: "So sorry! I forgot you little Puritans weren't broken in yet" (109). This clearly shows that although all the girls are perceived as being flirtatious, they do have certain standards that Conchita does not live up to. She gets a long-term lover who, as her "chosen attendant," is seemingly accepted by everyone and is invited wherever Conchita goes (231). Ironically, the only openly sexually promiscuous women in the novel, Conchita and Lady Churt are not American, but Brazilian and English and the only one who is revealed to have had a clandestine affair is the Italian Laura. One does feel sympathy for Conchita when she explains why she has comforted herself with a lover: "What do you know about being head-over-ears in debt, and in love with one man while you're tied to another – tied tight in one of these awful English marriages, that strangle you in a noose when you try to pull away from them?" (249). Conchita has sought love elsewhere, because of the coldness of her marriage and "the blameless isolation of an uninhabited heart" (250).

The one character who stands out in relation to beauty, flirtation and sexuality is Nan, who is described as more plain-looking, inexperienced in flirtation and apparently sexually abstinent after her miscarriage. She is by no means asexual, however, like Undine Spragg. Her appreciation for Rosetti's love poems, that were considered inappropriate reading for a lady, and her fascination with the sensuous Corregio paintings, shows that she is a sexual being. The only time in the novel that Nan is accused of inappropriate behaviour that could cause gossip is in fact when she is on her own in the Dowager's former sitting room with Guy, showing him the paintings. She seems to be oblivious to the fact that this situation could be misinterpreted. Her sensuality is not expressed in the same blunt way as Conchita's, but through her love of beauty, literature and art. It seems like Ushant, due to his lack of interest in the poetry and art that Nan loves, does not understand her feelings; they are not compatible emotionally or sexually. This is particularly emphasized in the BBC series, where Nan catches Ushant in bed with a male servant. I cannot see any clear indications of Ushant's

homosexuality in the novel, however; claiming this would be purely speculative. The one who is compatible with Nan is Guy Thwarte, and he is the one who is likely to awaken her sexuality. Whereas Undine is repulsed by physical contact, because she is too busy consuming, climbing and being entertained, Nan's lack of sexual interest in Ushant is more of a grown up woman's protest against being treated like a child. It is a conflict of values; their marriage bed becomes a battleground between England and the United States. He kills her youthful passion with his conservatism, arrogance and lack of compassion. His obsession with clocks could be seen as the opposite of her romantic, emotional and sensual outlook on life. My claim is that the absence of intimacy between Nan and Ushant is not a sign of the childishness of the United States, as is the case with Undine, but a manifestation of the country's democratic values.

5.3 Materialism and the Display of Wealth

The materialism and excessive consumption of the new Americans is not a major focus in this novel, as it is in *The Custom of the Country*. In fact, it strikes me that the English aristocrats in the novel seem more concerned with wealth than the Americans are. It is made clear that they are in desperate need of money for the maintenance of their vast estates. "They have to bleed themselves white to keep the place going, and there's not much left for entertaining," Conchita says about the economic troubles at Allfriars (102). Although they express resentment towards the Americans at first, the aristocrats are also drawn to the prospect of the influx of American dollars to the family. Both Lord and Lady Brightlingsea express their interest in the wealth of Conchita's and Virginia's families: "You say these Americans are very rich?" (106). As Sir Helmsley expresses it: "They also say that Papa St. George is very wealthy, and that consideration must be not without weight – its weight in gold – to the Brightlingseas" (188-9). The Brightlingseas are soon disappointed, however, when it turns out that Mr. Closson has run into trouble on Wall Street and is unable to pay the marriage settlement. Sir Helmsley, however, is "no great believer in transatlantic fortunes," and neither is his son Guy, who insists on making his own money rather than marry an heiress (189). Unusually for an aristocrat, he chooses a profession as "a quick way to wealth," and is thus representative of a changing aristocracy (92). Father and son are also both described as being careless with money, which ultimately forces Helmsley to sell an invaluable painting. As Laura expresses it: "The father and the son are both said to be very extravagant, and the only

way for Mr. Guy Thwarte to keep up his ancestral home will be to bring a great heiress back to it (134). Guy has more pride than she seems to think, however.

There are some references to American materialism and consumption in the book. Laura Testvalley is astonished by "the money these American mothers spent on their daughters' clothes" (58). Mrs. St. George is showered with expensive gifts from her husband, but she seems convinced that these gifts are meant as compensation for his adultery. She does accept them, however, and feels entitled to see her husband as a possession. "She had a right to wear him with her head high" (27). This shows the American woman as someone who is purchased, but at the same time she acquires a man she can flaunt and that will improve her social standing. This interestingly counters Thorstein Veblen's claim in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), where he sees women as the "chief ornament" (qtd. in Knights 63). It appears that both Mr. and Mrs. St. George are each other's ornament.

Wharton seems more in agreement with the contemporary social activist and feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her portrayal of both the St. Georges and the American brides in *The Buccaneers*. Gilman focused on the market mechanisms that encouraged leisure-class women to compete for the richest husbands, and men to fight for the trophy wife (Knights 63). Both the husbands and the wives can thus be seen as ornamental. What the transatlantic brides received in return for their beauty, fertility and money was titles and social status. What complicates the marriages in *The Buccaneers* is when either the husband or the wife or both do not keep their part of the bargain. In Nan's case, the "problem" is that she has more to offer than just beauty and money. She refuses to be purely ornamental, as Ushant expects of her. She is also intelligent and has a social conscience, and she ultimately refuses to bear his children. Ushant's part of the deal is met in that he has a title, but the deal is doomed to fail when Nan does not care about his title and certainly when he does not behave in a way that Nan expects of someone with a title. Nan and Ushant's marriage can thus be seen as an unsuccessful business deal. The impression that the transatlantic marriages in the book are business transactions is strengthened not only by the mentioning of settlements, but by the fact that the matchmaker Miss March receives payment in the form of money or gifts for her services.

One reference is made to the concern that the Americans are buying up England. As already mentioned when writing about history, the art expert Mr. Rossiter is very disturbed by the fact that the Americans have bought a marble bas-relief. It is also mentioned that Sir Helmsley sold his painting to an American. These examples could be a comment on

American imperialism – an American takeover, but they illustrate a general trend in British society where the aristocracy was steadily losing economic, political and social power to new and ambitious industrialists and professionals. Examples of the latter groups are Lizzy Elmsworth's husband Hector Robinson, a representative of the English *nouveaux riches*, and the real-life wealthy Americans who invaded London and threatened the aristocracy's status. Among them was Harry Gordon Selfridge, who opened the famous department store Selfridges in 1909. They were generally perceived by English aristocrats as vulgar and brash, buying themselves into the upper class. The Prince of Wales and his "Marlborough House Set," however, were known for their conspicuous consumption and their openness to rich businessmen and attractive, vivacious American women. This made their entry into the English aristocracy easier.

The mass export of American fortunes to European aristocratic families worried critics of transatlantic marriages, and the mentioning of such transactions in *The Buccaneers* can thus, in my opinion, also be seen as an expression of patriotism and not necessarily as criticism of American materialism and imperialism. It is estimated that two hundred million dollars were given to European noblemen as dowries between the Civil War and the turn of the century. In addition, substantial amounts were transferred to support the maintenance of the aristocratic estates. The American Duchess of Marlborough was for example said to have spent fifteen million dollars on the restoration of her husband's ancestral home Blenheim Palace. Americans thus questioned why hard-earned American dollars should be spent on supporting idle European noblemen and an aristocratic system that they were against (Woolf 184-5).

Although it is mentioned that Conchita is looking for a lover who will spend his money on her, she more than anything seems to be in search of love, affection and attention. Virginia appears to be the one to resemble Undine Spragg also in terms of materialism and consumption. Nan points out that Virginia mostly cares about what people wear and the carriages they drive, and she also loves the entertainments of the London season. To both Conchita and Virginia, the lack of money is a constant worry, but that is partly due to their excessive consumption. Nan, on the other hand, dresses very modestly and leads a very quiet life, which does not require as much money. Even the Dowager notices her plainness and lack of elegance, and Conchita suggests that she should spend more money on clothes and her appearance. The only time Nan asks Ushant for money is to help Conchita and she also wants him to spend more money on the well-being of his tenants. Nan is thus the opposite of Undine

in terms of consumption; it is not important to her and she is utterly unselfish. She thinks of others before herself.

The beauty of the American girls can be linked to wealth and consumption. It seems to be no coincidence that the ones that are described as more beautiful, Virginia, Lizzy and Conchita, are also the biggest consumers. Nan is repeatedly referred to as plain and so is Mabel. Although they both marry wealthy men, they are described as being more interested in culture, history and art than the others. At this time, the American beauty had become "the icon of American wealth and privilege" (Knights 67). Being beautiful required time and money, and the beautiful American woman thus became a symbol of the nation's character and prosperity. The marriage of Consuelo Vanderbilt to the Duke of Marlborough was considered "the triumph of American beauty, the summit of American excess" (Knights 68). Wharton's friend, the French novelist Paul Bourget, described the rose "American Beauty" as "the 'prototype' of rich Americans' luxury, refinement and excess, which made him long for the wild eglantine: both natural and aristocratic" (Knights 67). The repeated references to the beauty of the American women in *The Buccaneers*, *The Custom of the Country* and *Madame de Treymes* can thus be a comment on and criticism of the alleged superficiality, materialism and excessive consumption of Americans and the United States.

5.4 Political Anti-Americanism

As in *The Custom of the Country*, there are a number of references to the invading and intruding Americans in *The Buccaneers*, which is a topic that can be classified as political anti-Americanism. The title of the book in itself can be interpreted as a reference to American imperialism, with buccaneers meaning pirates. Lady Brightlingsea refers to piracy and imperialism when she calls the girls a "new band of marauders," who "had come over to look over the ground, and do their own capturing." "It was a novel kind of invasion" (83). Sir Helmsley is initially very sceptical of the "foreign intruders," but as a man susceptible to female beauty he does eventually mellow (115). War terminology is used, as it is made clear that the girls, or "pirates," are planning an "attack on London" (118): "Having come to lay siege to London, Miss Elmsworth was determined, at all costs, not to leave till the citadel had fallen" (123). As I have previously pointed out, Conchita is born a Brazilian, but as an immigrant to the United States she now clearly feels American and is loyal to America. As she puts it: "if we only back each other up we'll beat all the other women hands down" and "we'll have all London in our pocket next year" (128). Lizzy similarly feels that "like their native country, they could stand only if they were united," and this statement indicates that

not only does she compare the girls to their country, she also appears to be referring to the War of Independence (118). Their attack on London may be seen as an act of revenge on the British, and can thus be interpreted as both patriotic from the point of view of the Americans and imperialistic seen through British eyes.

Laura Testvalley, the Italian immigrant to England who sees herself as having more in common with the new Americans than with the Europeanized upper-class of New York, seems like their commander-in-chief. "Perhaps because she herself had been born in exile, her sympathies were with the social as well as the political outcasts" (54). Laura, whose name just happens to mean *victor*, is the one that initiates the trip to England and assists them in their marriage plans. By introducing them to Miss March, again a name with military connotations, Laura helps them on their march on London. As Laura describes herself: "Her natural inclination was for action and conflict" (130). Miss March had initially been embarrassed by the crude intruders, but is later eager to assist them. She first wonders whether Virginia will stand a chance against Lady Churt in the effort to marry Lord Seadown, "yet after studying the portrait for a while, Miss March, as she set it down, simply murmured: 'Poor Idina"' (85). Her prediction is that the Americans will succeed in their invasion of England. One of the most dramatic scenes in the novel is the confrontation between Lizzy, Virginia and Lady Churt at Runnymede. I interpret this as a battle scene, where the two enemy forces – the Americans and the English aristocrat – face each other head-on, and the Americans are victorious.

As is the case in *Madame de Treymes* and *The Custom of the Country*, the Americans are not the only ones who are criticized in *The Buccaneers*. In spite of her affection for the country, expressed through Nan St. George, Wharton often ridiculed the English ruling classes and criticized the aristocracy's xenophobia, their love of the trivial and their lack of interest in or knowledge of the outside world, to the great amusement of her American readers. There are several examples of this in *The Buccaneers*, where Ushant and his mother, the Dowager, and Lady Selina Brightlingsea are the main targets of Wharton's satire.

The English aristocrats' ignorance was particularly ridiculed. Ironically, British aristocrats in general at the time often revealed their own lack of knowledge when they criticized Americans. Many seemed to make a connection between barbarism and Americans, frequently referring to "Red Indians" and their culture when describing Americans. An example of this is when the Dowager claims that the Virginia reel was taught to the

Americans by "the Wild Indians," thus labelling both Indians and Americans as primitive, barbaric and uncultured (232). Such misconceptions were often deliberately used to put down American women. In Consuelo Vanderbilt's autobiography *The Glitter and the Gold*, she describes how Lady Blandford appeared to believe that we all lived on plantations with negro slaves and that there were Red Indians ready to scalp us just round the corner" (qtd. in Montgomery 137). There are numerous examples of the aristocrats' ignorance of America and Americans in *The Buccaneers*, many of them so ridiculous that they become the comical highlights of the book. The Dowager not only has her own theory about the origins of the Virginia reel, she also seems to be unaware that Brazil is not a part of the United States, that Spanish is not their native tongue and that many Americans are Christians, and she thinks that the Americans have learnt archery from the Indians. In addition, Ushant believes that there is a shortage of churches in America. Selina Brightlingsea appears to be very confused about the outside world, not surprisingly as no one in the family ever looks at the two globes in their library, and she therefore assumes that Americans are black. Even though Sir Helmsley is initially strongly prejudiced against Americans, he comments on the ignorance of Selina Brightlingsea and the Dowager: "I am constantly expecting them to ask Mrs. St. George how she heats her wigwam in winter" (192).

The aristocratic British ignorance is so striking, that one may wonder if it is contrived. It certainly emphasizes a negative view of Americans and indicates how the English aristocrats view themselves and their country's position, importance and power in relation to the United States. The fact that Lord Brightlingsea does not even remember that he was once engaged to the American Miss March is not only an indication of his lack of feelings for her, but also shows the ignorance and carelessness of this class of Englishmen towards the outside world. It is clearly a way of putting the Americans in their place and can thus be seen as a type of political anti-Americanism. Their behaviour can also simply be explained by the fact that they see the young American women as competition for their unmarried daughters. A contrast to this is Lady Glenloe, who also has unmarried daughters, but who is a globetrotter with great knowledge of the world. She welcomes Nan with open arms and makes her feel welcome.

Also, the Americans are not the only ones unable to appreciate culture in the novel. Nan sees beauty, mystery and legend at Tintagel, but "of all this, nothing existed for her husband" (206). Ushant, the Duke of Tintagel sees hard work and obligation. In spite of his name, which is linked to British history and literature, Tintagel shows no interest in culture or

history. Nan is shocked to find out that her husband does not know who Dante Gabriel Rosetti is and is later disappointed that he shows no interest in travelling. This is something he has in common with the de Chelles family in *The Custom of the Country*. They also do not see the purpose of travelling and exploring other cultures. The adventurous aristocrat Guy Thwarte, on the other hand, seems appalled by Ushant's attitude and cannot understand that someone can dislike travelling when they have never been out of England. According to Nan, "he says all the other places are foreign. And he hates anything foreign. There are lots of things he's never done that he feels quite sure he'd hate" (236). Ushant thus shows that there is a lack of cultural curiosity and interest on both the American and British side.

As in the other novels, several of the characters in *The Buccaneers* feel trapped and drawn between the lifestyle of the European aristocracy and the individual freedom of Americans. Ushant is secretly longing for a different life, a life where he would have his own clock shop and have the freedom to wind the clocks whenever he likes. This is an indication that the English aristocracy is changing in the direction of the Americans; they also want freedom and the opportunity to enjoy life and express their personality. Guy Thwarte has gone one step further in this respect. By temporarily leaving the family estate in pursuit of a career and money, he is representative of a new type: the Anglo-American, a person who, like Nan, is a merger between the two nations. In addition, fashionable London is increasingly embracing the Americans and their ways. Laura even stresses that the English much prefer the Americans to be natural and to be themselves than when they mimic the English. Simultaneously, Nan has come to realize that the English focus on duty and tradition is maybe not such a bad thing, which is another example of her embracing aspects of English culture.

The conclusion is thus that, again, Wharton both portrays Americans that act according to European prejudices against them and Europeans who express these prejudices. At the same time, however, she portrays Americans who act contrary to what is expected of them according to European anti-American attitudes. Wharton also includes European characters who are positive towards Americans and who in some ways can be said to act and think differently than expected. Although there is a clear presence of anti-Americanism in *The Buccaneers*, Wharton is still balanced and complex in her characterization of European aristocrats and Americans in the novel.

Conclusion

In my introduction, I claimed that *Madame de Treymes*, *The Custom of the Country* and *The Buccaneers* reflect anti-American sentiments that were widespread in European literature and society at the time in which the novels are set and were written. Through my presentation of the attitudes of several contemporary European authors, the prevalent views of Americans among the British aristocracy and the stereotypes held by Europeans at large, I believe that I have shown my claim to be true. While analysing my literature and comparing it to real-life attitudes to Americans, I have come to the conclusion that Wharton had a grasp of her times when it came to reflecting anti-American attitudes in her books.

I would, however, not go as far as to call Wharton herself anti-American. This is a term one should use with care, as it has been a label applied, particularly by the political right, to any American who criticises America and Americans. Attempting to silence a debate about the development of the United States or the characteristics of the nation by calling American critics unpatriotic, un-American or anti-American is, the way I see it, a threat to democracy. Wharton can in some ways be compared to Washington Irving, another American author who was accused of being anti-American. His critics claimed that he had gained popularity because of his fairy tale-like descriptions of the English countryside and its aristocracy. Some even went as far as saying that he had "betrayed his origins" in books like *The Sketch-Book* (1819-20) and *Bracebridge Hall* (1822) (Woolf 43). The similarity between Wharton and Irving can particularly be seen through Nan's romantic view of England's countryside, stately homes, art and literature in *The Buccaneers*. Unlike Irving however, who critics claimed went out of his way to flatter the English aristocracy in order to gain entry among them, Wharton also ridicules and criticizes them. I suggested in the introduction that Wharton passes a harsh judgement on America and Americans in her books and that she saw Americans as inferior to Europeans in general and the French in particular. My research has, however, made me come to the conclusion that Wharton's portrayal of Americans and Europeans is not as simple and straightforward as all that.

It is beyond doubt that Wharton is critical of certain types of Americans and certain aspects of American society. In spite of this, Wharton's American characters do not all behave according to the preconceived notions of the typical American that European anti-Americanism is based on. Wharton in some ways contradicts the stereotypes of Americans

and American heiresses in her books. They are not all superficial, uncultured, uneducated, materialistic and rich. Many of the characters are drawn between the American and the European and there are many similarities between several of the Europeans and the Americans in the books. Certain groups of Americans and French can in fact be said to have more in common than old and new money Americans. Some of the European characters are also portrayed in a negative manner and even ridiculed by Wharton. This is particularly the case in *The Buccaneers*. As most of the characters are complex and dynamic, Wharton's portrayal of them cannot be said to be black and white. I therefore do not find Wharton to be purely pro-European in her characterization. In this respect I agree with Knights, who points out that Wharton rarely has simple oppositions in her texts (24).

This leads me to the conclusion that the main concern of the books is not simply to portray Americans in a negative manner and present them as inferior in relation to Europeans. I believe that Wharton's novels contribute to the contemporary discussion about what it means to be an American, and in this respect Wharton is clearly inspired by Henry James and other authors who, as Woolf points out, used the transatlantic marriages as a means to describe ideals of American national identity (Woolf 3). Who are we? Who do we want to be? How do other people perceive us? These are natural questions to ask in a relatively young nation and a nation in the midst of a process of immense change when it comes to population, social classes, economy and international influence. In this quest for national self-discovery and identity, comparing and contrasting oneself to other countries and cultures as Wharton does in my primary literature, is a way for a young nation to find itself. The books thus use European anti-American attitudes and the values, opinions and behaviour of the Americans to discuss and establish what it means to be an American. The international novel, or the transatlantic marriage novel, which is a more specific term for my primary literature, is a genre that lends itself to this type of discussion about national identity.

In the introduction, I also claimed that the anti-American sentiments in my primary literature can be divided into four categories: 1) culture, history, domesticity and knowledge; 2) behaviour, morals and sexuality; 3) materialism and the display of wealth; and 4) political anti-Americanism. I believe that I have found ample evidence that this is the case. I also believe that I have, through the presentation of these categories, clarified the types of attitudes and prejudices the American characters are subjected to in these books. There are, however, great differences between the books when it comes to which categories or types of stereotypes against Americans that are emphasised. The category of prejudices connected to the culture,

history, domesticity and knowledge of Americans is important in all the novels. The behaviour and morals of the Americans is less scrutinized in *Madame de Treymes* than in the other books. As opposed to *The Custom of the Country* in particular, where the foreign conceptions of Americans are confirmed by the American's behaviour, *Madame de Treymes* primarily proves these stereotypes to be incorrect. In fact, the Americans keep doing things that the French do not expect of them. Prejudices connected to the alleged promiscuity and flirtatious behaviour of American women play a more significant part in *The Buccaneers* and in *The Custom of the Country*. Conchita Closson and Undine Spragg represent two opposing stereotypes of American women in terms of sexuality; the promiscuous flirt and the cold asexual female. My category of materialism and the display of wealth is to a limited extent present in *Madame de Treymes* and *The Buccaneers*, but is an important part of the criticism expressed against Americans and the characterization of Americans in *The Custom of the Country*.

I did not initially plan to include a fourth category of prejudices, but during my research I found political anti-Americanism to be present in all the books. In *Madame de Treymes*, this is presented in the form of comments on racism and slavery in the United States. In the other two books and in *The Buccaneers* in particular, the focus is on American imperialism. Although *The Buccaneers* is set in the 1870s, I believe that this difference in focus reflects the changing role of the United States in the world during the period when the books were written, 1907 to 1938. The United States was emerging as a power to be reckoned with in the world at this time, and increased American patriotism and expansionism is reflected through references to imperialism in Wharton's books. Her references to the American art collector in both *The Custom of the Country* and *The Buccaneers* can also be seen as a type of American imperialism. As Knights points out, this looting and pillaging of antiques and family heirlooms can also be seen in Henry James's *The Spoils of Poynton* (1897) (25). Although many of the American characters in the books express opinions and act in ways that justify prejudices against them, I believe many of the anti-American attitudes that are voiced in the books are in fact based on the actual political situation at the time and the changing Euro-American relationship. In this respect, it can be said that Wharton is a political writer. Due to the limitations of my thesis, this is a field that I would have found it interesting to research further.

It has to be noted that Americans are not the only victims of stereotypes in my primary literature. There are numerous examples of American scepticism towards Europe and

Europeans. American characters in both *Madame de Treymes* and *The Custom of the Country* openly admit that they have no wish to mix with the French or learn anything about their culture and history. It is also an important point that the Europeans in the books do not see the distinction between different types of Americans. Although their negative opinions and prejudices are aimed at Americans in general, the Americans they are acquainted with through the transatlantic marriages and who behave in a way that the Europeans react to, are in fact *nouveaux riches* Americans. My conclusion is therefore that many of the anti-American attitudes in the books are really antipathies towards a certain type of American that the Europeans believe to be representative of the entire nation.

In the introduction, I claimed that the anti-American sentiments expressed in the books cannot simply be seen as isolated utterances. They in fact play an important part in the narrative of the books and affect the characters, relationships, plots and themes. I believe that I have shown this through my analysis of the three texts. The attitudes to and assumptions about Americans in the books influence the relationship between the European and American characters. The fact that the self-image of the Americans often differs from the Europeans' image of them often leads to conflicts. These conflicts and cultural collisions in turn lead to self-discovery and personal development in some of the American characters. As Knights points out, the meeting of Europe and America in Wharton's texts is an example of narratives of encounter and contact. In these narratives characters and cultures fuse and intertwine and turn into new, hybrid cultures (Knights 24). I partly agree with this view, as two of the heroines in the books, Fanny and Nan, are drawn between American and European culture and change through their contact with a new, foreign culture. This is not the case with Undine, however. She seems incapable of changing and does not evolve or merge with European culture.

The plots of the books are also affected by the differences between the European and American characters and their relationship to each other. Anti-American attitudes and cultural incompatibility affect the outcome of the books; they ultimately lead to the divorces of all three heroines. The Euro-American encounters and the prejudices against Americans raise the question of American national identity and make anti-Americanism an integral part of the themes and message of the books.

I see a clear development in the description of the main American characters in the three novels. In *Madame de Treymes*, the focus is on the innocent, gullible and patriotic American with strong moral values. The American is genuinely good and she is in some ways

the victim of the cruel and heartless European. In *The Custom of the Country*, the American has become the villain. Undine Spragg represents everything that is perceived to be wrong about the United States. She is immature, uncultured and ignorant; she is a bad mother and wife; she is ruthless, selfish and pleasure-seeking; she is materialistic and flaunts her wealth; and she is a representative of American imperialism, an American at war with Europe. This is a development also seen in Henry James's works, and as Pricilla Roberts points out, this changed view reflects the growing power of the United States (Roberts 89). In *The Buccaneers*, we see the assimilation of European and American characters. Both Nan St. George and Guy Thwarte seem to represent the best of the two worlds and they merge into an Anglo-American union with Nan as the independent and democratic American woman with a love of British history, culture and art and Guy as the modern English aristocrat with a profession, who has a strong sense of roots and traditions. Through the development in the portrayal of the main American characters in these novels, I believe Wharton eventually presents us with her ideal American: Nan St. George, a perfect mix of the United States and Europe. This is another area in which Wharton appears to be influenced by James, who was a strong believer in close Anglo-American ties (Roberts 91). Even though *The Buccaneers* is set in the 1870s, I believe it to also be a comment on the time of its writing. In spite of growing concerns about increasing American power and expansion, my interpretation is that this new Anglo-American union reflects the improved relationship between Europe and the United States in the aftermath of World War I and in the build up to World War II.

My study of anti-American attitudes in the context of transatlantic marriages can be linked to the focus on 'types' which was a typical feature of the period. This was part of a general interest in classifying people according to race, ethnicity, morals, intelligence, personality traits, attractiveness, etc. (Knights 37). From this classification stem new terms like "The Gibson Girl" and "The American Girl," and visitors to the United States studied and compared American types as opposed to European types. This study of individuals led to generalizations about larger groups. In my thesis, I hope to have contributed to clarifying the typology of Americans that is present in *Madame de Treymes*, *The Custom of the Country* and *The Buccaneers*. It is, however, a possibility for future research to focus further on how observations of type are a part of Wharton's works.

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