

Introduction

THE ISSUES

Much has been written in the past twenty years or so about the so-called special relationship between Britain and the United States.¹ Most of this literature has been concerned with diplomacy and politics, and with the ways in which these may have been, in the post-Second World War, influenced by the transatlantic connections of each country's elite professional classes, public and private institutions that facilitate exchange, and the ever more intricately enmeshed and globalized realms of media, commerce, and finance. This study—more a series of explorations than an attempt at an all-inclusive narrative—examines a more demotic field.

Viewing the special relationship as popular culture involves potentially a vast area of study, and begs large issues embedded in what are now long-standing debates over how “culture” operates across national boundaries—in this case quite specifically across the north Atlantic among English-speaking peoples—and its relationship to both public policy and private subjectivity. It means explicit or implicit engagement with the vast scholarly literature on “cultural imperialism” generally and “Americanization” specifically, on “globalization” and the presumed polarities of hegemonic production and local reception. While this study has, I hope, something to say about these large framing issues, it is not a sustained exercise in postmodern or post-postmodern argument so much as a highly selective excursion. As such boundaries had to be established.

This is largely a study of one side of the “relationship,” Britain, chiefly in the metropolis of London within the twenty years or so from the mid-fifties to the mid-seventies, and mostly among the (largely considered) middle class. Though admitting, in fact insisting upon, a certain circularity of cultural influence, we are not especially concerned with the ways in which Americans might have absorbed aspects of Britishness, except, as in the seventies, when this seems to have had a rebounding influence in Britain. This book is concerned with Britain's reaction to American popular culture, as transmitted through the vast increase in contact in this period—through tourist and professional cross-traffic and in the unparalleled

growth in the density of transatlantic media. The one was facilitated by a great surge in relatively cheap and rapid air-travel; the latter, by radio, phonograph, and television. The period, the two decades, roughly, between the Suez Crisis in 1956 and the American Bicentennial and British fiscal crisis of 1976 encompasses the era when personal and media connection most thickened. Phenomena of special postwar cultural relations that this study will spotlight include the prospect of the Manhattanization of the London cityscape in the late fifties, anti-American protest in the sixties, Anglo-American Pop, rock, and utopian counterculture, the radical politics of liberation in the late sixties and early seventies, and the transatlantic construction of “heritage Britain” in the decade that followed.

White admittedly there are many Britains, the focus here is unapologetically on London, not only because it is more central to national life and culture than any other major city in the United Kingdom can be, and because pragmatically to include provincial life in this study would have risked spinning the narrative out of control, but also because it is necessary to contest a trend in cultural studies that has focused on the eccentricities of local reception while losing sight of the big picture—that is, of the force, persistence, and depth of the transatlantic influences that are most pronounced in the capital. It was in London that the special cultural relationship was most tangibly—though of course not, in the modern media-drenched world, exclusively—available, where the actual presence of American tourists, American residents, and American students was densest, and where the mid-Atlantic financial, commercial, and entertainment institutions were most available.

Finally, some will feel that this study’s focus on America-in-London overstates the influence of but one of a multitude of postwar social factors. Its intention, however, is not to offer a complete explanation for cultural change, but rather to undo neglect, and its rationale lies precisely in the blindness of much of the current scholarly literature to the American presence and its influence. A repeated coda of British responses to implications of American influence throughout the period has been a defensive insistence on the “authenticity” of British (or English) form and content in just those genres where the transatlantic contexts are most obvious—commercial architecture and urban design, protest folk music and jazz, Pop art and psychedelic rock, the counterculture’s alternative press, or the radical late-sixties liberationisms of race, gender, and sexuality. This is to privilege and exaggerate local difference in ways that serve to deny, displace, or trivialize what had once been no doubt too easily assumed—the hegemonic reality of the postwar American cultural presence. It was, and is, a defensiveness that says more about British anxieties over identity generally in the post-Suez era than about how their culture actually operated to absorb and adapt.

One might observe that postwar London did not, as is sometime suggested in postcolonial, postmodern studies, transit from Imperial Metropolis directly to “a

globalized and transcultural ‘world city’” of decolonized migrants and London-born transnational communities.² Mixed into the “transitional and conflicted environment” where models of national identity were challenged and re-examined was not only postcolonial migration but also a quite different presence—that of middle-class American sojourners in the capital, and the technology-driven, consumerist, media-inscribed culture associated with them. This was a diaspora with a difference. It was by and large temporary, often in pursuit of leisure, usually white (though black America left a pronounced mark on race relations and black self-identity in Britain), and generally wealthy enough to pursue habits of conspicuous consumption—a community diffused throughout the capital though occupying most densely certain colonized areas.

The volume of Americans entering Britain in any year after the early sixties is much greater than the annual influx of New Commonwealth immigrants, a fact that has been largely ignored because their migration was, as individuals, a generally transitory one and largely white at a time when popular discourse centered race in the challenge to British identity; for all the anxious talk of Americanization the American presence was more likely to produce sarcasm than fear and hatred. And yet . . . one might argue that the Anglo-American nexus this influx promoted actually did more to subvert traditional British mentality, class relations, and cultural style than did the first and second generations of postcolonial peoples. American presence was more subtly penetrative—exposed only momentarily and episodically, as when Conrad Hilton’s hotel shot above the tree-line at Hyde Park.

*Americanization as Cultural Imperialism?*³

In the postwar era America’s political and military leadership of “the free world,” the dollar’s dominance in the world financial system, its robust and globally expansionist commercial operations, and the rapid global proliferation of its media, especially television, generated journalism and scholarship that was generally, if not always, critical of Americanization-as-cultural-imperialism. European intellectuals were inevitably more concerned about the “challenge” of “Coca-Colonization” and “admass” culture than apparently were the eager consumers of American commodities and American style.⁴ In Britain, though traditionalists (and some voices on the left) might rail at American vulgarity, intellectual objections were perhaps more muted than those in, say, France, where Servan-Schreiber’s mid-sixties warning in *Le Defi Americaine* struck chords of apprehension that had long resonated there.⁵ American influence was, however, much more pervasive—and more familiar—in Britain than in the rest of Europe, and Americanization, as threat or reality, became a cliché of popular British discourse by the fifties. A common language provided easier access, Anglo-American cross-traffic was of longer standing, American commercial, industrial, and financial

penetration was deeper and earlier, and Cold War “American Studies” programs (significantly complicit “in the process of Americanization,” according to one critic) were more extensively entrenched in British universities than elsewhere in Europe.⁶

There was an overheated tone to much of the “threat of Americanization” literature in Britain as elsewhere, moral panics that reflected often a more general unease over modernization, mass “leveling-down” culture, and consumerism, for which America served as both convenient symbol and presumed agent. Even a scholarly exploration like C. W. E. Bigsby’s 1975 collection, *Superculture: American Popular Culture and Europe*, had a breathless character in its enumeration of ways in which “American values, ideals, myths and ideas penetrate the consciousness of a world for whom the modern experience is coeval with the American experience.”⁷ Correspondingly there was often a general neglect of just how, at the ground level, Americanization worked, what were the significant cultural boundaries, and what kind of dialogue actually occurred across them. The term itself was loaded with generally negative, defensive connotations, characterized by tropes of invasion in a binary cultural world of (threatening, mobile) America and (stationary, passive) target peoples. If the issue passed from excited journalism to a more serious, reflective scholarship in the seventies,⁸ it continued often to be dominated by relatively crude assumptions about the coercive agency (of American institutions and practices)—as in, notably, media studies, a critical discipline in the seventies and eighties for issues of Americanization and cultural imperialism. At the same time from other quarters there was an increasingly skeptical questioning of the very concept of a unique and unitary “American” cultural presence and of its efficacy in asserting itself as a model for the world. As Richard Rose wrote in 1974, “What is often called Americanization may be no more than a set of experiences common to all (or most) Western industrial societies.” There followed a scholarly debate, appropriate perhaps to the dystopian seventies, about, not the potency of America as cultural and economic invader, but its limitations and the way the “American model” was rarely simply transferred to other societies but twisted and reformed and hybridized to “fit.”⁹

Although some on the left persisted in an understanding of Americanization as cultural imperialism, and, more eccentrically, some on the right continued to engage in a robust defense of Americanization as a modernizing, democratizing positive force, by the eighties and nineties these fell outside what quickly became the revisionist mainstream.¹⁰ Much of this revisionism has, like the work of Richard Pells, emphasized the “relatively brief” nature of American cultural ascendancy in the fifties and, more important, the circularity (cross-fertilization) and fluidity of cultural contact as well as critical issues of contestation and “reception.”¹¹ The emerging discipline of Cultural Studies re-examined consumption as “social process,” emphasizing specific social geographies and the ways in which

the use of imports—of, especially, American commodities, idiom, and style—is locally negotiated, creating variety rather than a homogenized “flattening out” of global culture. As two practitioners have recently claimed, “[It] has become increasingly apparent that British consumers’ reactions to ‘Americanization’ are in fact locally variable and specific.”¹²

Conceptually valuable as this perspective has been, as an interpretive orthodoxy it threatens, by privileging models of transmutation and adaptation in a pick-and-choose world of cultural choice, to substitute for a crude idea of invasion and coercion an equally simplistic one of easy self-agency. Such anthropology-driven approaches favored by a highly localized cultural studies project have not been wrong in focusing on difference and hybridity,¹³ quite the contrary, but they have—in collaboration with more traditional defensive assertions of the “authenticity” of the national or local—had the effect of shifting scholarly interest away from the underlying reality—namely, that American popular culture was a transformative engine of great power, and away from just how and through what kinds of agents it operated.

Richard Pells argued, surely too categorically, that “the ‘Americanization’ of Europe is a myth,” or at least “mainly symbolic.”¹⁴ This of course is to beg the understanding of what Americanization (or modernization or globalization) might mean—concepts not as obvious as many sometimes assume. Hybridity and adaptation aside, the centrality of American influence can hardly be denied in either the form or content of European, and especially British, cultural practice, though no one today would argue that this influence resulted in cookie-cutter duplication. Finally, for our purposes here many such studies of Europe and the United States seem to overstretch to apply to Britain generalizations more congenial to language cultures other than English, and so fail to engage very convincingly just the degree—for Americanization implies degree—to which influence has or has not taken root. In this sense, Britain is a quite special case.¹⁵

This book does not attempt to replot already well-tilled ground—in the subcultural exploration, say, of the use of American rock’n’roll and American style to focus teenage rebellion, the hegemony of Hollywood in British cinema, or the familiar debate over advertising and the importation of American values along with its cornflakes. Structural changes in the media are largely beyond our scope as well. Nor does this study have much to say about another enduring, usually negative topic from the fifties on—the “corruption” of the vocabulary and pronunciation of British English.¹⁶ What it does offer is a thick description and analysis of the transatlantic character of a number of metropolitan locations and “moments” over a critical twenty-year period, with the object of repositioning American culture and its agents as central to any narrative of Britain in this era—and beyond.

Whose Culture?

London was the most important postwar locus for British modernity, as the northern industrial cities had been in the previous century.¹⁷ Central to the reshaping of the subjectivities of mid- and late-twentieth-century urban life, and for much of the postpermissive, postmodern critique of this reshaping, it was also the site of greatest American cultural and physical penetration. With the important exception of the impact of American race relations on black Londoners, this study keeps its focus by and large on the capital's middle class rather than cosmopolitan or traditionalist Establishment elites or (especially teenage fractions of) the working class, where much subcultural sociology and culture studies anthropology has concentrated its exploration. American influence is of course to be found there, but the experience of cultural contact, beyond the bricolage of commodified style, is likely to be subjectively more profound among an educated, individuated middling sort in search of a role, a minority of the nation, but a large, growing, consuming, minority that was, culturally, strategically located.

This brings us to a contested issue of some importance for any historical study of popular culture that attempts to revisit the sixties—namely, whether any narrative of such flamboyant times risks overstating the cultural changes that are so firmly lodged in generational memory. Clearly one cannot take the rhetoric of euphoric countercultural and liberationist self-discovery at face value, nor assume that the majority of the nation, of any class or generation, embraced “permissiveness” and rock-driven rebellion. But to assume therefore that a radical minority culture is aberrant and marginal to the conservative majority and therefore dismissible, as was common among much postparty commentary at the end of the era and among much scholarly revisionism since, begs large issues of historical narrative and how over time change occurs. Majorities are generally conservative, viewed through opinion polls and quotidian practice.

The rewriting of the era was under way—among participants as well as of course those reactionary voices who had never regarded (often American-inspired) generational change as either desirable or inevitable—already before the seventies malaise encouraged a sense of failure and dissipation. In Britain Christopher Booker and Bernard Levin got their cynical demystifying shafts in early. In the United States, William O'Neill's history of the sixties, *Coming Apart* (1971), sounded something of the same disillusion (“I wanted to call this book *Good Riddance*, and the galley proofs bore that title”). Since then scholarship has been torn between two poles—those who, often survivors of a radical left tradition, argue defensively for a continuity of sorts from the paradigm break experienced by the generation of '68, and those who take a more skeptical view that contemporary rhetoric and popular memory greatly exaggerate and mischaracterize the real legacies—for good or ill—of the times. By the eighties and nineties the

negative critique of the sixties in the United States, either at the hands of liberals or culture warriors on the right, clearly had the better running. Subsequently less polemical scholarship, like that of Doug Rossinow, tended to abandon the larger question of legacy for narrower examinations of countercultural communities as localized subcultures.¹⁸

In Britain, the seventies and after saw, on the sociological left, an investment in concepts of working-class subcultures that denigrated the fashionable “middle-class hippy culture” imported from the States, while arguing with some force that the majority of working-class youth, both black and white, though employing the signs of rebellion as style, stayed well within the rules of a reciprocal game that ensured their “outsider” mentality and social exclusion. The main thrust of centrist historical sociology has meanwhile been to emphasize the conservatism of both the large majority of youth of whatever class and the general population. This scholarship, often based on conclusions drawn from somewhat tendentious polling techniques, has greatly informed the general narratives of the postwar period that have proliferated since the beginning of this century. So much so that a new orthodoxy has tended to replace the undoubtedly overblown exaggerations of the sixties “revolution” with a flattened out nonhistory of cultural stasis.¹⁹

When the late Arthur Marwick published his massive history of the sixties in 1998 he was attacked for its conceptual weaknesses (its empiricism), his own liberal animus against both Marxism and much postmodern scholarship, and his persistence in regarding the era of his own generation as culturally revolutionary and its consequences as enduring. Though committed, as he said, to “what happens to majorities, rather than minorities,” his concluding judgment was that “permissive attitudes and permissive behavior continued to spread at accelerating rates [after the sixties] . . . The cultural revolution, in short, had continuous, uninterrupted, and lasting consequences.”²⁰ Such a judgment was certainly open to criticism from those who argued against a radical shift in popular attitudes and that “permissiveness” per se had a much longer history. Less persuasive, however, is the countervailing assumption that no enduring cultural shift in values and mentality occurred at all, that the kinds of cultural change that the flower power children seemed to be importing wholesale from the States were entirely superficial and transitory. These scholars, such as the historian of postwar Britain currently prominent on BBC documentaries, Dominic Sandbrook, prefer to take their cue from Anthony Sampson’s view, in his 1971 edition of the *Anatomy of Britain*, that, rather than drugs, sex, and rock and roll, a “broad picture unfolds of the British living a withdrawn and inarticulate life . . . mowing lawns and painting walls, pampering pets, listening to music, knitting and watching television.”²¹ Such assumptions can lead to truisms of little interpretive value (“During the supposedly radical sixties, the majority of Britain’s fifty million people led quiet and somewhat dull sex lives. . . .”),²² while submerging, as Sandbrook often does,

important agents of change in a welter of misleading rhetorical contrasts: “With more than seventeen million sales worldwide by 1975, *The Sound of Music* easily outdistanced the Beatles’ leading album, *Abbey Road*, which sold just nine million”; or “[A]lthough many historians of the sixties pay a great deal of attention to the International Poetry Festival . . . it was . . . considerably smaller than the typical crowd for a Second Division football match.”²³

By the late sixties, however, mass music festivals, if not poetry readings, were much larger than the largest football crowd, and, as James Jupp observed in 1969, the quarter of a million youth who gathered in Hyde Park that summer were, “Unlike a Cup Final Crowd,” a self-conscious and organized “culture,” while the vicarious participation of millions more in the Pop and rock music scene suggested a mass phenomenon that at least “rivalled” football’s television fandom.²⁴ He might have added what Sandbrook suppresses, the fact that football, the Beatles, and even poetry, were not necessarily mutually exclusive interests.

CROSS-TRAFFIC

Underpinning this exploration of the special nature of Anglo-American cultural relations from the fifties to the seventies is the fact that the density of transatlantic contact increased significantly in this era and shifted critically from the episodic and casual to the continual and routine, at least in the capital. Contact proliferated in three critical areas: the volume of short-stay and long-stay tourism, the back-and-forth of professional (commercial, financial, and academic) travel—often involving significant periods of residency, and virtual connection through transatlantic media, especially television.

Sightseers

Tourism—and especially dollar-rich American tourism—as a growth industry held out a promise of significant economic advantage to every British government anxious about the country’s perennial balance of payments difficulty since the war. The encouragement of tourism became national policy—sometimes in the face of local concerns over traffic congestion, hotel development in residential areas and competition generally for reasonably priced accommodation, swarms of young people sleeping rough in parks (especially a concern in the late sixties), the overcrowding and endangering of historic sites by package tour groups, and an annoyance generally at being “colonized”—that is, losing a sense of local ownership and belonging.²⁵

Attlee’s government established a British Tourist and Holidays Board in January of 1947, and the next year Board of Trade officials presided over an interdepartmental committee on tourism. By January of 1951 the government was sponsoring an official advertising blitz in popular U.S. journals and newspapers. Meanwhile in the private sector, the Travel Association had been concentrating its

own publicity resources on the potential American market as well. In an era when austerity kept the British at home, affluent Americans were bringing an increasing number of dollars into the country.²⁶

According to the *International Tourism Quarterly* in 1971, the golden American core of the general increase in tourism into the U.K. had grown inexorably between 1964 and 1970 (nearly tripling to 1,400,000).²⁷ Labour under Wilson had moved to encourage this money-spinner by subsidizing tourist hotel development, and in 1969 a Development of Tourism Act established the British Tourist Authority to promote tourist attractions and funnel further financial assistance toward the construction and renovation of tourist hotels. Though some thought much more might have been done, perhaps the creation of a Ministry for Tourism, it is clear, however, that the real driving force lay less in British efforts to advertise and increase hotel capacity than in the phenomenal prosperity and mobility of Americans, the increased speed (commercial transatlantic jet travel began in 1958) and progressive cheapening of travel (through charter flights or Icelandic Air's low fares), and, generally, a "democratization of leisure" in the sixties. All in fact that the British had to do was to lie back and think of the balance of payments. The devaluation of the pound in 1967 served further to attract foreign consumers.²⁸

Britain's earnings from tourism nearly doubled during the third Wilson government's period in office, with consistent increases of 20 percent or so a year. The enormous increase in visitors at the end of the decade, and some panic over yet further projected increases, prompted the GLC to generate its own "urgently needed" plans for "management" of the tourist "industry" at the local level. If the rate of growth in fact slackened somewhat after 1971, the numbers of tourists generally, and in particular American tourists, continued to increase as wide-bodied Boeing 747 "jumbo jets" (beginning in 1970 on the New York–London route) significantly increased capacity. "On a typical day," Alisdair Fairley informed the readers of *The Listener* in March 1973, six thousand Americans arrive in Britain.²⁹ Though the 1973 energy crisis stalled growth for a couple of years, after 1975 the trend continued upward. As C. W. E. Bigsby colorfully put it, "Almost certainly, more Americans will visit Europe between the years 1974 and 1980 than Europeans emigrated to the United States in the one hundred and fifty years between 1820 and 1970."³⁰

Just how the great influx of American visitors was regarded by most British, and what role they might have played in Anglo-American cultural relations, is, of course, less certain than the numbers. As there was a general rise in tourism from other parts of the world as well, English-speaking American "cousins" could often be regarded as less awkward guests, though their affluence, accents, and uninformed naivety inevitably made them the humorous butt of jokes and cartoons. Whether this comic stereotyping reflects a deeper anti-Americanism in the post-Suez world depends probably on class and perhaps locale. In 1967 Piri Halasz, in her *Swingers' Guide to London*, offered advice to the more sophisticated

of her American readers on “How Not to Look Like a Tourist” and “How Not to Act Like a Tourist.”³¹

Certainly one does not have to look hard to find annoyance and ill-will among at least some of the literary elite and social Establishment, however much the Duke of Bedford might have profited from playing host to coach-loads of Texans at Woburn Abbey. The *Economist* reported that there were “rumblings of British resentment” especially after the leap in the volume of tourism after 1969 (in London some of this seemed fueled—it was not a new sentiment—by the fear that local residents were being squeezed out by the Labour-promoted development of luxury hotels).³² In the summer of 1971 V. S. Pritchett grew sarcastic in a broadcast on Radio 4 about how “startling” it had become “to hear an English voice in the centre of London, which was simply taken over” by tourists who regarded the native inhabitants as “a curiosity,” “simply picturesque.” They represented, he thought, a kind of “offensive private colonialism.” “The tourist is not rare. He Swarms. He is an example of mass human pollution.”³³

[T]he summer ‘American season’ is ending. Knapsacked, Fanon-reading students are returning to strikes and confrontation at Berkeley and Ohio State.³⁴

Antitourism as one form of anti-Americanism had long been a familiar discourse. What was new in the sixties and early seventies was a particular distaste for a striking change in the demographic of tourism in Britain, not just the increase in the more modest, less sophisticated middle-American families, but a surge in the proportion that were unattached youth—less interested in the packaged rituals of the tourism industry than, in the free-wheeling, backpacking style of the era, having a good time. Sixties youth tourists were seen not only as a social problem that raised concerns about care and housing but also as conduits of drug-culture radicalism spreading from a dystopian America. By the end of the decade it was estimated that something like a third of all tourists were “young visitors.” In 1972 the journalist Morrison Halcrow told *Daily Telegraph* readers that the tourist “invasion” had become even more tiresome for many with the advent of the youthful tourist “doing the trip on a shoestring,” even if the countercultural “hordes of penniless young overseas visitors, ‘sleeping rough,’” had proved a temporary problem (though even well-heeled Americans gave cause for irritation, as they put up the price of antiques, theater tickets, and “flats in Belgravia”). The next year Alfred Sherman, a political journalist who had migrated from the Marxist left to the Conservative Party, informed the same audience that “the lower down the [social] scale one goes”—to students and “hippies”—the less the country got out of Labour’s rush “into the scramble for tourists,” and the more they caused Londoners “a loss of amenity and self-respect.”³⁵

Although some unease over the great influx was widespread, especially severe views seem to be, if not eccentric, at least not widely expressed beyond certain

predictably prickly Tory and Establishment circles drawing on their own long traditions of anti-Americanism. Moreover, what anti-Americanism there was was often, it would seem, drawn as much from a familiar “discourse” that had been in place since at least the Second World War and the years immediately following as from actual contact. If one compares, for instance, the views British people expressed to Mass Observation during the war or those recorded in a survey of 1952 (Americans as friendly, generous, and cheerful, though boastful, immature, ostentatious, noisy, and materialistic) with a survey of British university students more than a decade later (who regarded Americans as dynamic, vigorous, and friendly, though vulgar, adolescent, materialistic, shallow, and noisy), the sense is of an ambivalence that was learned and rehearsed. What did arguably change in the sixties was perhaps the large proportion that had believed in 1952 that “the British could withstand any possible ill-effects of American influence.”³⁶

Nevertheless, the image of the American did acquire a deeper experiential context through the sixties and early seventies as tourism became thickly commonplace (and not only in the summer months), rather than exceptional. There was also an emerging infrastructure, at least in London, that serviced American taste as well as Britons in search of American style. This raised the issue of how a host country might expect to attract tourists, not by “being themselves” but by offering an urban environment attractive to tourists who might want to see the iconic sights but expected the comforts of home. Inevitably it led to a sometimes painful discussion of how the growing number of Americans as visitors and residents might come to exert an influence in reshaping the urban landscape and its amenities—toward on the one hand a modern American consumerism that would subsequently see McDonald’s replace Coca-Cola as symbolic of intrusion, and on the other the Disneyfied faux heritage realm of the London Dungeon (1976) or public houses named or renamed to suit American expectations.³⁷

The irony of a Britain in need of (American-style) modernization grounding its search for American dollars in its “quaint” historical character was available throughout our period. In 1959 Colin MacInnes had a character in his novel *Absolute Beginners* observe of Belgravia, site of wealthy American migration:

I see it as an Olde Englishe product like Changing the Guard, or Saville row suits, or Stilton cheese in big brown china jars, or any of those things they advertise in *Esquire* to make the Americans want to visit picturesque Great Britain.³⁸

This had become a more tangible issue by the seventies because of the vogue for nostalgia, heritage, and preservationism—itsself related to the thickening cross-traffic of Americans. In 1971 the *Economist*, a British journal increasingly dependent on a transatlantic readership, observed, only somewhat tongue-in-cheek, that “the Royals are worth subsidising simply as a lure for foreign visitors.” And more seriously, that while “[h]istory, pageantry, and high quality shopping are

Britain's main draws," tourists made "an essential contribution to the preservation of. . . British heritage. Many historic houses, villages, old churches and so on could not be kept in a proper state of repair without the tourists' money."³⁹

A much larger and less certain area of speculation is the degree to which tourism might have become a factor in the Americanization of Britain, not through commercial institutions that offered American commodities to both tourists and local residents but at the level of interpersonal experience and connection. Tourism by definition is transitory, and the industry at least at the lower end tends to be organized in ways that probably work to isolate rather than to encourage communication between host and visitor. This may have been less true earlier when many American visitors even in London would have stayed in modest bed-and-breakfast hotels, but by the seventies the majority probably stayed in the large hotels, newly built or rebuilt to cater for a mass market. These proliferated especially during the development boom of 1970–73, when the number of large hotels in central London doubled.⁴⁰

The growth in short-stay tourism between the mid-fifties and the mid-seventies certainly left its mark on British attitudes about Americans. As a GLC steering group on tourism observed somewhat anxiously in 1971, "Walk along Whitehall on a summer's afternoon and the chances are that over half the people you pass will not be Londoners."⁴¹ Many of these of course would not have been from the States, but North America provided by far the largest category of foreign visitor.⁴² The longer-staying among them, like their counterparts among the British professionals, students, and academics who increasingly expected to spend time in the States, matter more for our purposes. Like holiday tourism, this was a demographic that increased very significantly in this era but involved a deeper transatlantic engagement and exchange.

Changing Places

Muriel Beadle traveled from southern California to take up residence for a year in late-fifties Oxford with her husband (a visiting lecturer at Balliol) and son. She later recalled, in a much-republished memoir of her experiences, her embarrassed reluctance to strike up conversations with other Americans when shopping in London: "My own accent would have equated me with them—and they're *tourists*. I'm not. I *live* here." This desire on the part of longer-stay visitors from the States to blend in, to adopt a kind of protective coloration, is familiar throughout our period, though perhaps sharper in the earlier years and in Establishment environments where, as Beadle claims, "class stratifications" made her "uncomfortable." Beadle's account affords a nice view, from an American perspective, of a world of transatlantic experience that would shift in some respects, like British society itself, fairly radically over the next twenty years, and in others remain familiar and constant. Social formality, dress protocol, the exclusion of women from col-

lege social life, the difficulty in picking up class-specific differences in accent (“I never mastered the art”), the apparent indifference of the English to “comforts” Americans took for granted were no doubt especially reflective of the time and milieu, as was the unexpected drabness of their lodgings, the lack of central heating, lousy telephone service, and the common expectation that “Americans are supposed to complain about something.” On the other hand, Beadle’s Anglophilic expectations of “mannered civility” in an England that was a “cultural homeland” endured and indeed, as we shall see, enjoyed a special revival in the “heritage” obsessed seventies.⁴³

Among the increasing number of academic migrants, social isolation and the difficulties of household management would no doubt have been most pronounced among wives, though single women without family or “introductions,” especially in the fifties and early sixties, could feel pretty firmly closed out from even the casual rituals of social life. With the increased migration of professional women later in the period, and the loosening of social restraints generally, things no doubt eased considerably. In the seventies Brenda Maddox, an American journalist for the *Economist* based in London who constantly flew back and forth between Britain and the United States, was perhaps representative of a new generation of professional women who managed successful transatlantic careers. Nevertheless, though married to an English academic, she continued to experience “[her] own transatlantic imbalance.” Another professional woman, Susan Marling, came to Britain in 1973 and developed there a career in journalism and broadcasting. She often commuted to the United States, not always for her work in the media but sometimes simply “for sharp talk, power showers and the guiltless pleasure of valet parking.”⁴⁴

Though the long-staying American visitor, or indeed, intermarrying permanent resident, was distinguished from the mere tourist by his or her attempted participation in British life, it may be doubted whether these became in our period exactly a “cosmopolitan” class floating easily among the “locals” as one scholar has suggested. Transnational occupations—in academia, the media, commerce and finance, the arts—are not necessarily transnational “cultures.” If there was a cosmopolitan class of Americans in London, they were more likely to be “swinging” media celebrities (especially in the sixties) or, as Alistair Cooke suggested (in his Rede Lecture at Cambridge University in 1975), the wealthy retired who “flocked to live in London on the claim that it was the last civilized city.”⁴⁵

By the sixties it was likely, thanks to a network of public and private international programs, that those of the professional and political classes in each country would have had some transatlantic experience—as a student or young careerist. Well before the war, Rhodes scholarships, the Commonwealth Fund (the “Harkness Fellowships,” from 1925), the Rockefeller and Guggenheim foundations, the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace or the American Council

of Learned Societies operated to encourage Americans to study in Europe and British scholars and preprofessionals to have some experience in the States. After the war there was the Cold War–driven Fulbright program (1946) and the State Department’s own Foreign Leader Program (after the passage of the Smith-Mundt Act in 1948), while the Ford Foundation invested substantially in the fifties in schemes for youth and leadership exchange. In 1967, Margaret Thatcher, like many young Atlanticists on the right of the Labour Party, spent several weeks visiting America on the State Department program: “The excitement which I felt has never really subsided.”⁴⁶

The vagaries of the visa system and migration-counting make it impossible to gauge with any precision either the actual number of professional or academic visitors from the mass of sightseeing tourists. It is reasonable to assume, however, that they increased significantly in this period. GLC surveys estimated that by the early seventies some 11 or 12 percent of short-stayers came to Britain for the purposes of education and “business”—including conferences and conventions (the American Bar Association met in London in 1971)—and that the number of foreign (mostly American) business visitors’ bed-nights would grow (from roughly 4.4 million in 1967 to 15 million by 1980).⁴⁷ Transatlantic networks in many fields—academia, the arts, the media—were encouraging transatlantic traffic. In that of British historical studies, say, the period saw the growth of Anglo-American connections in a context of increasing scholarship support for postgraduate travel and research and less expensive, easier access to Britain. The North American Conference on British Studies, which was founded in 1950, had established by the sixties a close relationship with the Institute for Historical Research and the Royal Historical Society.

At the same time, visiting positions at British universities (and especially at the newer postwar universities) proliferated, both in expanding American Studies programs and generally, leading to fear that the “inbred” American practice, complained of by Kingsley Amis and others, of novelists and poets with academic posts churning out promotion-generating books would spread to Britain as well. Amis in characteristically grumpy form claimed, in 1969, that the literary “culture” in Britain was becoming Americanized: “[D]ifferences get ironed out . . . as Kent becomes more and more like California,” a sentiment that resonated closely with V. S. Pritchett’s despairing observation that “it is going the same way with us as America . . . [A] great many of us have been to America, and, although we enjoy ourselves, we are not altogether happy about culture as industry.”⁴⁸

Fears of the Americanization of the British academic and literary worlds, through of the influx of American writers and academics as well as the (American) consolidation of the publishing industry, often reflect the ruffled annoyance of an older generation like Pritchett and Amis at the tendency of many younger British writers to disparage “British” traditions and look, instead, to New York, Chicago,

and San Francisco. But the visibility of American writers and scholars in Britain did rise precipitously from the mid-fifties to the early seventies, a phenomenon that can be tracked through the pages of the *Times Literary Supplement*. The *TLS* had sporadically covered American literature since the end of the First World War, but in the mid-fifties began to devote more sustained, regular attention to new American work. New American publications regularly found reviewers, American publishers ran full-page advertisements, and the paper itself solicited new American poetry. This was aimed not only at the British market but also increasingly at achieving significant sales in the United States—something it was apparently successful at until the *New York Review of Books*, itself modeled on the *TLS*, cut into the American market from the mid-sixties.⁴⁹

Visibility also drew in part from the fact that American literary visitors on holiday or promoting their books—like Norman Mailer, John Updike, or Saul Bellow—were commonly available to the British media for radio and television interviews, as were the growing community of Americans resident in Britain—often visiting lecturers like the poet Robert Lowell—in the late sixties and early seventies, for topics ranging from their special areas of concern to the widest observations on American modernity, the counterculture, feminism, race relations, the war in Vietnam, and the anarchy in American universities. Moreover, younger staff at the BBC were increasingly likely to have visited the States, and their enthusiasm for America was often resented by older managers.⁵⁰

While the cross-traffic in the other direction was also significant, these British scholars-in-residence, though they might be lionized on campus, were not of much interest to the American media—which was rather less curious about Britain than their counterparts in British radio and television were, obsessively some thought, about the States. British academics who spent time in the United States—and by the end of our period it can seem as though nearly everyone on the make or of some eminence did so—were however important transatlantic cultural conduits. Their own research and writing was often informed, positively or negatively, by their American excursions, and back in Britain they were often courted, as were Americans in London, by the media for panel discussions and commentary on the American scene. This was especially true of those British academics in the expanding fields of American Studies and the sociology of race relations, but the media was also interested in the wide range of academic fields—English Literature especially (including the many British novelists who took up visiting posts at American colleges and universities), but also sociologists of crime and youth culture, historians, architectural critics, and psychologists.

Along with the growing academic cross-traffic, there was a growing American presence in London drawn from the arts, in an era when transatlantic communication flourished in the world of theater—both directors and actors, especially in alternative experimental theater—and in music and the plastic arts (with

American exhibitors becoming common in the major private and public British galleries). The most prominent celebrity chef and propagandist of serious cuisine in sixties London, Robert Carrier (MacMahon), came from New York (in 1959), as “camp outsider,” and did, as one obituarist thought, more to broaden the “appeal of fancy food and cookery” than Elizabeth David, “as radical, perhaps, for British mores as the contraceptive pill or the Beatles.”⁵¹ Arguably, the most prominent film director in London was the American ex-pat Stanley Kubrick (most British directors of note having gone in the other direction).

The snobbery that the American presence in London often provoked in the earlier period had been largely an elite phenomenon, tinged no doubt with an element of envy in a postimperial, post-Suez world. It often dwelt, as did Nancy Mitford in *Noblesse Oblige*, on the presumed crass materialism of the American-as-overpaid-consumer: “Americans relate all effort, all work and all of life to the dollar. Their talk is nothing but dollars. The English seldom sit happily chatting for hours on end about pounds.”⁵² Such views did not disappear; indeed they, or some version of them, entered popular culture as American tourists in the sixties became ever more numerous and more visible throughout the year. But it did become more difficult to sustain without contradiction and complication the simple anti-Americanism of the past in a social environment where a much larger number of middle- and upper-middle-class British people had personal knowledge of American friends and associates, and an ever-thickening exposure to American life on television that, as Daniel Snowman observed in 1977 in his extended essay on *Britain and America*, offered “ordinary people” the opportunity “for the widening of their direct and indirect experiences of other times, places, and people.” Not that this impressed V. S. Pritchett, who found that “[p]eople whose blood boiled about foreigners once in a lifetime can bring it to a boil every night by looking at television.”⁵³

The most memorable chronicler of the phenomenon of “Changing Places” in the academic transatlantic world, the novelist David Lodge, famously offered in 1975 a satirical picture of Anglo-American difference that is not free of the snobbery of the earlier era, though of a self-deprecating kind. His contrasting characters—the American English lit. scholar from Berkeley (“thrusting, ambitious, caustic, Jewish”) and his meek counterpart from Birmingham (“diffident, amateurish, decent, white Anglo-Saxon protestant”)—are drawn from familiar stereotypes, though informed by Lodge’s own transatlantic experience (as a Harkness fellow at Brown University in 1964–65 and as a visiting professor at Berkeley in 1969).⁵⁴ Whether they successfully offered, as he intended, types that were “a quintessential representation of each country” depends on whether national character is to be viewed as essential, unitary, and “authentic,” or, as this study suggests, malleable, plural, and increasingly transatlantic.

Transatlantic Television

There has been some debate over the past twenty years or so about exactly how the content of American television programming in a globally expanding marketplace might actually be received locally—that is, how the overt and subtextual messages of its entertainments and its advertising might be “read” by diverse communities. What is not debatable, however, is the fact that American television programming in the fifties and sixties, in spite of attempts at quotas,⁵⁵ saturated British viewing, and American televisual techniques and American genre (crime and police shows, soaps or quiz programs) significantly influenced domestic production.

By the year of the Suez Crisis, the public broadcaster, the BBC, and its recently established commercial rival, ITV, were already providing a wide range of American viewing—from *Amos n’ Andy*, *Burns and Allen*, *Jack Benny*, and *The Life of Riley* on BBC to *The Bob Cummings Show*, *My Little Margie*, *Topper*, *Father Knows Best*, *I Love Lucy*, *Dragnet*, and *Gunsmoke* on ITV. By the end of the decade there was more comedy, the *Bob Hope Show* or *Phil Silvers*, more heart-warming American domestic drama (*Lassie*), and more Westerns (*The Roy Rogers Show*, *Wells Fargo*, *Laramie*). These were sometimes promoted by bringing the actors themselves to London: Roy Rogers rode “Trigger” from his hotel to the Leicester Square Odeon.⁵⁶

Asa Briggs, the authorized historian of the BBC, cautions somewhat defensively that nonetheless “British television . . . remained essentially British, not American or Americanized.” This assertion begs a number of questions about the medium generally and what “essentially British” might mean over time. While the top ratings may have gone to especially popular domestic offerings, American fare was widespread through the schedule and targeted a wide audience of adults, young people, and children. ITV, challenged to fill its schedule without the production backup that the BBC enjoyed, especially relied on relatively cheap imported American filler—and quickly came to seize a commanding lead in audience share—at a time when watching the telly was rapidly becoming “the core evening leisure activity of the home-centred society,” at what Stuart Laing has called “a specific transitional moment in the country’s sense of its own identity.”⁵⁷

Criticism of a feared Americanization of British television was certainly common in, for instance, the pages of the BBC house journal, *The Listener*: “[T]hey export an awful lot to us,” the British author Gillian Freeman observed in 1969. “We may well end up peeling the protective foil from a TV dinner as we watch a re-run of a re-run of *Those Were the Days* which weren’t even our days in the first place.” Raymond Williams complained that “American jokes [on television] were incomprehensible,” while William Hardcastle was repeatedly sarcastic about what he called “mid-Atlantic television” and Philip Whitehead attacked the obsession,

as he saw it, of British television news with the United States and its problems. On the other hand it is probably true that the critics overstated any general unease about Americanization. As Alan Howden observed, "I don't think there is any particular pro- or anti-American attitude in regard to imports. If the British public like a programme, they will like it; if they don't they will call it 'American rubbish.'"⁵⁸

If Americanization implies a wholesale and uncritical appropriation of American style and mentality, then the British were not, exactly, Americanized in this twenty-year period of greatly thickening contact. British people, like others, picked out what appealed to them according, no doubt, to personal class and circumstance. But if Americanization implies a continuous "presence" of the United States in the public consciousness, whether offering hope, mere diversion, or threat (anti-Americanism is itself evidence of presence), then Britain was significantly Americanized in this era. What American television had to offer, like American cinema before it and the easier transatlantic travel of the postwar world, was often, whether the images were of New York's skyscrapers or the streets of San Francisco, a classless realm of flat-accented celebrities, modes of pleasurable consumption, and, above all, a sense of "modernity."