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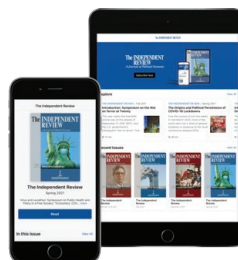
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Holy Matrimony Plus Shipping and Handling

A Libertarian Perspective on the Mail-Order Bride Industry

— ◆ —

JUSTIN S. MERRIMAN

While I am sure that it would take a lot of stamps to ship a Mail Order Bride I think you might have a problem with customs! Which would you like? Many men have found exactly what they desired in a woman from another country. How did they do this and what are the pitfalls involved in this process? This is where Goodwife.com can help out. This site along with our sister sites Planet Love and Russian Women Discussion are all about the search for this woman and how to have a happy and successful and long lasting marriage to a foreign woman. Are there any good women left in the West? Sure there are. Are they easy to find? Not on your life!

—Goodwife.com, home page (February 26, 2011)

In regard to mail-order brides, certain images and connotations—usually negative ones—have been etched in the American psyche. We are likely to think of eastern European women getting married to American men desperate enough to “purchase” a bride. Western society tends to look down on the use of the Internet or any other means to “purchase” a person to be one’s spouse, presumably for the rest of one’s life. Yet modern technologies have indeed made access to such opportunities widely available if one’s bank account is adequate.

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Today's mail-order bride industry is a complicated system, involving two countries, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), fiancé visas, green cards, and—if everything else works—an actual marriage. Because of technology and globalization, this industry has become very profitable in the past two decades, with the Internet spurring the current success of placement agencies.

The industry has vociferous critics. Radical feminists assert that the practice of marriage brokerage, with poor women migrating to developed countries, is exploitative. They argue that capitalism allows Western men to use their financial advantage to dominate women in developing countries. However, this assertion falls short in several areas. The mail-order bride industry, although knowingly contributing to the immigration of women from poorer countries, is not exploitative because the migration offers opportunity for women. These female immigrants enjoy a higher standard of living and more rights for themselves because there are more rights for women—the very things that feminists purport to defend.

The mail-order bride industry dates back centuries, if not millennia. During the Middle Ages, *marriage brokerage* was the term most commonly used. The earliest known operations of marriage brokers occurred in Europe as far back as the thirteenth century in the Jewish community. The Jewish marriage broker, called a “Shadchan,” put Jewish men in contact with Jewish women (and vice versa) for purposes of marriage. Men or women might act as initiators. The Shadchan would often bear the responsibility for finding suitable matches for eligible Jews. The trend of finding a bride in one's own ethnic group remained in place until the twentieth century (Peres, Meisels, and Frank 1980, 475).

Christians also practiced forms of long-distance marriage arrangements. Disparity in the number of women and men in the French colonies of Canada influenced King Louis XIV to take action. From 1663 to 1673, King Louis XIV subsidized the travel of nearly eight hundred marriage-age women to Canada. They were also given money to keep for themselves. The contractual agreement provided that they marry eligible Frenchmen upon their arrival. These women became known as the *filles du roi*, or “daughters of the king” (Library of Congress n.d.). A similar event occurred in the French colonies of Louisiana in 1719 and 1720. Louis XIV transported more than one hundred women volunteers to live and marry in Louisiana. These women came to be known as the “casket girls.” Neither of these events involved for-profit business, and at first glance they may appear to pertain more to procreation than to monetary gain. However, Louis XIV's efforts to increase the French population in the colonies did generate revenue, intended or not. The end result was an enhanced income for the French state, whose ventures in transporting women expanded the colonies' workforces and hence their taxable revenue (Library of Congress n.d.).

The next instance of marriage brokerage emerged during the nineteenth century in the United States. It is notable because it was the initial involvement of the country that would be at the center of “purchasing” brides for the next two centuries. Along with the discovery of gold in the American West came settlers to take advantage of the

economic opportunity. Most of these prospectors were single men. Indeed, men largely outnumbered women in the overall migration westward. Prostitution met the men's sexual needs temporarily, but men grew lonely for female companionship. Their latent demand led to the creation of the first for-profit marriage brokerage agencies in the United States.

Agencies placed advertisements in western newspapers describing various eligible women and their household skills. In a California newspaper, Dorothy Scaraggs wrote about herself in a matrimonial advertisement:

By a lady who can wash, cook, scour, sew, milk, spin, weave, hoe, (can't plow), cut wood, make fires, feed the pigs, raise the chickens, rock the cradle, (gold-rocker, I thank you sir!), saw a plank, drive nails, etc. These are a few solid branches; now for the ornamental. "Long time ago" she went as far as syntax, read Murray's Geography and through rules in Pike's Grammor. Could find six states on the Atlas. Could read, and you can see she can write. Can—no, could paint roses, butterflies, ships, etc. Could once dance) can ride a horse, donkey, or oxen, besides a great many things too numerous to be named bare. (qtd. in Enss 2005, 51)

This era was also the first time catalogs were used, although photography had not yet been incorporated into them. Women in the East who found a match traveled across the United States alone in dangerous conditions to meet their grooms.

Another method employed by men was placing matrimonial advertisements, in which they described themselves and what they were looking for in a wife. Starting in the 1870s and continuing for the rest of the century, a paper called *Matrimonial News* was printed solely for the purpose of placing such advertisements. Both men and women placed ads in the paper, which was printed in San Francisco and Kansas City. Ads would be given a number, and interested parties were invited to send their inquiries to *Matrimonial News* in Kansas City, specifying the number that interested them. One advertisement read: "283—A gentlemen of 25 years old, 5 feet 3 inches, doing a good business in the city, desires the acquaintance of a young, intelligent and refined lady possessed of some means, of a loving disposition from 18 to 23, and one who could make home a paradise" (qtd. in Enss 2005, 25; for another ad, see "Mr. Barnes Wants a Wife" 1889).

At the turn of the twentieth century, male Japanese immigrants on the U.S. West Coast and in Hawaii found themselves in a position similar to that of the American gold prospectors—lonely for female companionship. Their remoteness from their native country made it nearly impossible for them to marry a Japanese woman. In Japan, the Meiji Revolution (1868–1912) was working itself out, and the opportunity to leave the country became attractive to some women. Marriage brokers emerged in Japan, specifically targeting Japanese clients in the United States. This brokerage was the first to use photographs of women in catalogs so that men could view potential

brides. Men selected their brides, and the brides came across the Pacific Ocean to join their mate. American politicians became concerned with Japanese “picture brides” showing up on the West Coast. A 1916 *New York Times* article describes the efforts of Senator James Phelan (D-Calif.): “Senator Phelan gave notice that he would offer an amendment to prohibit the entrance of Japanese ‘picture brides’ into the United States. The ‘picture brides’ are Japanese women who [come] over to marry Japanese in the United States whom they have never seen and who are identified on landing by means of their photographs” (“Senate Safeguard Ban” 1916; see also “Immigration Fight Near” 1916). Senator Phelan went on to lose reelection in 1920, possibly because of his controversial campaign message “Keep California White” in reference to the Japanese population (Irish 1919).

War and genocide have also provoked women to leave their native lands to marry a stranger. After World War I and the Armenian genocide conducted by Turkey, marriage brokers appeared in Armenia seeking to unite Armenian women with Armenian men living in North America. It is unclear whether money was a relevant motivational factor in these efforts. This activity continued until about 1930 (Kaprielian-Churchill 1993).

Filipinas came to dominate the transnational bride scene later, forming the vast majority of mail-order brides from the end of World War II until the 1980s. U.S. troops liberated the Philippines from the Japanese at the end of World War II and thus came into contact with Filipinas. Once many of the servicemen returned home, they wanted to bring these women to the United States. This demand, along with many Filipinas’ desire to leave the war-ravaged Philippines, resulted in the creation of marriage brokers. For the first time, men were “purchasing” brides outside their ethnic group. The mail-order bride industry established a stronghold in the Philippines, attracting many women from other countries in Southeast and East Asia to engage in a transnational marriage to a Westerner.

As time passed, other nations came to engage in the process of “purchasing” brides. Australia became one of the major destinations for Filipina brides. Kathryn Robinson states, “The mail-order bride has become a potent symbol in Australian representations of Asia. ‘Mail-order brides’ is the pejorative image which has come to stand for women who are Philippine nationals marrying Australians. In spite of the fact that these women represent a very small proportion of the total immigration intake, in terms of media coverage and public controversy it is probably the next biggest immigration issue after Chinese and Indo-Chinese refugees and immigrants from Muslim countries” (1996, 53; for more on Filipina mail-order brides in Australia, see also Bonifacio 2009). The West was not the only market for mail-order brides. As Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan became powerful players in the world economy, they also became major destinations for Filipina brides (Belanger 2010, 2).

During the 1980s, more marriage brokerage agencies established themselves in the United States. In doing so, they brought about a return to paper-based catalogs. These companies continued to emphasize brides from Southeast Asia, but a significant

number of women from Latin America also participated. Obtaining these catalogs often involved thumbing through the advertisements in the back of pornographic magazines (Belkin 1986). The relationship between pornography and mail-order brides is notable, and at this time the brides began to be advertised as highly sexual women.

The Filipina's reign as the number one transnational bride would soon be shattered owing to the fall of the Soviet Union and the Communist regimes in eastern Europe. In 1992, with the establishment of market economies in eastern Europe, Russian and Ukrainian women began to flood mail-order bride agencies. And the new eastern European brides were not confined to printed catalogs for long: within three or four years, the Internet drastically altered the business, taking it to a new level of exposure and profitability (Zabyelina 2009, 86).

The more recent success of the mail-order bride industry is credited to the Internet and identified with the dot-com boom. The transition from paper catalogs to digital Web sites has allowed businesses to appeal to more men in more ways. No longer are women limited to just one picture; they may have whole collections of photographs. Potential customers have easier access to the Web site than they had to paper catalogs. Steve Lopez of *Time* magazine describes the Web site launch of the company A Foreign Affair in 1995, now one of the largest mail-order bride conglomerates on the Internet: "They ran ads in Russian newspapers asking women to send photos and vital statistics, and several weeks later their website debuted with 300 Russian princesses. Today they are the Manny, Moe, and Jack of love. They have profiles of 6,500 women from 49 countries, dozens of clients have married, and they've hired six more employees in Phoenix and 20 in Russia. 'It just took off,' says Adams, whose love connection was one of the first to go online but who now faces a few hundred competitors" (1999, 10).

Most of the Web sites now offer direct communication with the women, usually for a fee. Search filters also allow customers to find women by nationality and age (Zabyelina 2009, 98). Many of the actual businesses are now located in the Ukraine or Russia. Kristoffer Garin describes one bride agency's services:

Whatever one chooses to call it, the bride's road from Kiev—or Moscow, or Bangkok, or Odessa, or Cartagena, Lima, Krivoi Rog, Manila, and dozens of other places where the women are desperate enough to sign up—begins online, where a lonely man can search a functional infinity of inviting profiles and then purchase the contact information of the women he likes for a few dollars apiece ("ADD TATIANA (77631) TO MY Order"), or at a volume discount ("FIND MORE WOMEN FROM DNEPROPETROVSK"). From there, he can correspond with them via email or telephone, visit their country for the in-person meeting required to begin the fiancé visa process, and ultimately bring his chosen girl back to America within six to ten months. A fill-service outfit like AFA can take a man from

mouse-click to matrimony for less than \$10,000, orchestrating everything from travel and hotel arrangements to legal services to home delivery of flowers and chocolate—complete with digital photos of the woman’s ecstatic reaction—while she waits for her paperwork to go through. (2006, 70–71)

Some companies, including A Foreign Affair, even offer “bride tourism,” which is essentially a weeklong tour of the Ukraine or Russia for the sole purpose of dating potential brides. Globalization has allowed more efficient communication between customer and bride. Approximately one hundred thousand women around the world are now estimated to be listed as available for marriage (Garin 2006, 69, 71).

Radical transformation of marriage brokerage has occurred from the first instances of it to the current practices. First, the maintenance of a certain self-respectability has undergone a metamorphosis. The Jews used the system to promote their continuation as a people. The French used it to benefit the state. American marriage brokers took advantage of a sexual imbalance in the West, as did the Japanese. During the 1980s and 1990s, many, but not all, online mail-order companies partnered with pornographic Web sites. The allegiance of marriage brokerage and pornography was a major factor in giving the business a greater appearance of vice. In this era, the brides also began to be photographed in provocative dress or lingerie. The Internet age continued this trend, with links to pornography Web sites often appearing on mail-order bride Web sites. After all, the Internet is full of free pornography, but there is nothing free about the process of getting married, either online or off.

As the industry changed, so did the brides. In the 1800s in the United States, potential brides advertised themselves as hardworking, family oriented, wholesome, Christian, and good at housekeeping (Enss 2005, 28–31). The level of transactions obviously showed that men on the western frontier valued such attributes. Today, women are usually photographed in lingerie or a swimsuit in a provocative pose. They claim to be educated and to seek husbands who will love them. Most also claim to be Christian and family oriented, so essentially the only thing that they do not share with the potential brides of generations past is the need to advertise themselves as wholesome or sexually conservative in any way.

These foreign women, however, are simply adapting to the changing sexual mores of the Western world, just as Western women have done. A current advertisement by a Ukrainian woman on the Web site Ladies 1st Attractive reads: “I’m looking for a family-oriented man, who knows what he wants, who is sincere, open-hearted, caring and not shy to show his affection. A man who likes spending time in the picturesque places, who likes having adventures. It is very important that he should believe in faithfulness. I am a kind and open woman with an excellent sense of humour. I’m friendly and can be funny sometimes, but in the whole I am a rather serious girl with big plans for the future” (Ladies 1st Attractive n.d.). This woman’s ad is adorned with a professional-quality picture of herself topless with only her hands

covering her breasts. She also claims to be Christian and college educated. This ad exemplifies the pattern the women present on a consistent basis: to maximize their sexuality to potential consumers but not to present themselves as economically desperate, uneducated, or “Godless.” Thus, despite the titillating photographs, these women believe that potential husbands want a monogamous relationship, and they assert that they do, too.

More recent mail-order brides have traveled between nations, usually to marry somebody outside their own ethnicity. This tendency is a dramatic change. The *filles du roi* went to French colonies to marry French men. American women migrated westward within the United States to marry American men. Japanese women were the first to go to a completely new country, but they did so to marry Japanese men. The same held true for the Armenians. The Filipinas were the first to leave their home country to marry men outside of their ethnicity, setting the precedent that would usher in a new transnational era for the industry.

Over the past three decades, several trends have emerged. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, men wanted brides primarily to start families. Today customers are often much older than their brides, and therefore reproduction plays a lesser role as men seek (as they always have done) monogamous sexual relations and long-term companionship (*International Matchmaking* 2005, appendix A, 3–5). There is also now an increasing disparity in socioeconomic status between customer and bride. Most customers reside in rich countries, and most brides come from developing countries in the former Soviet Union and Southeast Asia. Brides are now moving into countries with higher gross domestic product and marrying men who typically earn significantly more than the average person in the bride’s home nation (International Monetary Fund 2010).

The debate over mail-order bride industries is dominated by two schools of thought. The radical feminist view asserts that brokering a marriage exploits women. It connects market exchange with male chauvinism, bolstered by globalization. The competing viewpoint is libertarianism, arguing that free will and a desire to better one’s life lead women into this kind of mutually beneficial marriage contract.

Feminists with the anticapitalist view dominate most of the scholarship on mail-order brides. They argue that capitalism has created a system in which dependence on money in a male-dominated society leads women to engage in behavior they otherwise would avoid. Moreover, they assert, men seek women from overseas because they resent feminism at home and view foreign women as docile. Marie-Claire Belleau states: “Indeed anti-feminist backlash is a reoccurring theme in the mail-order bride websites. A closer look at the mail-order bride practices of these introduction agencies—which I will also refer to as MOB practices—reveals multi-dimensional and inter-related inequities that place the bride in a position of dependence in relation to her First World husband. The true result of the MOB practice is a flourishing and lucrative industry involving trafficking of women from the Third World to husbands in the first world” (2003, 596). The theme of Western male consumers intentionally engaging in

the oppression of women because of their hatred for the feminist movement appears consistently in radical feminist arguments. Some authors have gone further to claim that mail-order brides refuse to associate themselves with feminists because they do not want male American men to perceive them as similar to American women. Felicity Schaeffer-Grabiel states: “Many Latin American women I interviewed were aware that men wanted a woman who was more family oriented than U.S. women supposedly are. In fact, many rejected being labeled a feminist for fear of their association with white women popularly thought to be selfish, sexually loose, or too domineering. This did not mean, however, that women were not strong in their conviction that they wanted a man who respected them and who saw their contributions as carrying equal weight in the family” (2006, 341).

Libertarian thought on the phenomenon of mail-order marriage recognizes the role of free will on the part of the brides as well as the potential benefits of migration to the Western world. By way of marriage, this movement allows the brides an escape route out of poverty in the vast majority of cases.

Libertarianism includes a feminist movement known as “individualist feminism,” which focuses on women’s achievement of equality with men within the system, in contrast to other feminists’ rejection of the system. Individualist feminists believe that the state has no business making decisions about sexuality, the family, and other personal matters (McElroy 2002, 14–15). Libertarian and individualist feminist scholar Wendy McElroy states: “Paternalism often results in a form of Puritanism since in order to protect the interests of a particular group, the government must assess what is ‘good’ and ‘bad’ for that group. The good is institutionalized into society while the bad is prohibited. In libertarian theory, however, laws protect rights instead of virtue, and the individual is free to be wrong. To deny this freedom is to take from women, as well as [from] all others, the power of choice in yet another area of their lives” (1991, 25).

In their research, libertarians turn to the mail brides themselves for answers. A Russian mail bride gives her explanation for engaging in the transaction:

Of course some of [these women] want to improve their material situation, but women are also doing this because they are looking for companionship and understanding from the partner, and are afraid they can’t find it here. Many women come to me and say that they want to try again, that they want to find love.—I have two children, am not pretty enough, and am not particularly well off. It is very difficult for me to raise my children, and I myself am not yet old. I want my happiness, and good fortune, if it is still there. I would like to try again.—Secondly, in our country we get married very early, and therefore we don’t know the men well enough. But by the time we have gotten to know them, it is too late and so there are many divorces. And thirdly, Russian men can’t provide for the family, and they don’t pay attention to their families.—That really doesn’t agree with us women. Plus, they don’t value what we do for them. And men in our

country are prone to alcoholism. So we want to try to find good fortune and future love in Europe or America. (qtd. in Johnson 2007, 52–53)

Some women in the former Soviet Union have a different outlook on the feminist movement compared to Western women. Suzanne LaFont states:

The entire concept of feminism has been discredited with the term being misunderstood and associated with the most extreme Western feminists. The Eastern stereotype of a Western feminist is a masculine, domineering woman who hates men. Although many women lead their lives in ways most Western feminists would label as liberated (e.g., obtaining high education, achieving economic independence, and valuing their careers), most post-communist women are reluctant to use the term. For example, when Dalia Teiserskyte, one of the founders of the Party of Women in Lithuania told me she would be visiting New York City, [and] I offered to put her in contact with politically active US feminists, she vehemently responded that she was not interested in meeting any feminists. (2001, 215)

American men seeking mail-order brides have often been scammed by the brides themselves. This trickery usually takes the form of leaving the man before the marriage occurs, just after the woman's arrival in the United States. Lopez reports one man's story: "Gerry Williams, a photographer for the Philadelphia Inquirer, brought home a mail-order wife from Russia in November 1997. Six months later, as he was leaving for Russia to do a story on the industry, his unhappy bride bolted. 'She cleaned me out,' says Williams. 'She used me to get to America to meet a younger, richer guy'" (1999, 10). One Russian mail bride explained a friend's motives, saying: "I had some friends in Russia who went to America and then came back. One woman, she went to be with a man and then returned to Russia. 'He doesn't have enough money,' she told me, and so she just left him. 'I will find somebody with money'" (qtd. in Johnson 2007, 135).

The Internet age is not the only time in history when the husband of a mail-order bride did not get what he thought he was buying. In a 1953 article in *Ebony* magazine, Denver Ferguson described how the German mail bride he intended to marry used a fake picture in her advertisement. "Ferguson claimed that Lilo tricked him by sending another girl's picture to EBONY. Recalling the day when he went to meet Lilo at the boat, he said: 'Instead of the beautiful blonde of 27 whom I expected to see, I found myself face to face at the docks with a beaming, middle-aged 250-pound woman who told me in guttural English, "I haf kom to be yor vife!" I had to be helped to a couch,' said Ferguson, who suffers from heart trouble" ("German Mail Order Bride" 1953, 62–63).

Legislation plays an important role in affecting women's migration to the United States. The 1965 Immigration and Nationality Act Amendments created the

visa system the brides must navigate today (“Immigration Reform Timeline” 2010). The International Marriage Broker Regulation Act (IMBRA), passed in 2005, controls modern mail-order bride practices in the United States today. This law, created primarily to protect women from being contacted by potential abusers, requires that before any formal conversations between client and woman begin, the man must provide the woman with a detailed criminal record in her native language (Jehle and Miller 2010, 37). IMBRA was a product of recent high-profile acts of violence against mail brides by their husbands, including two murders.

In 1999, Susanna Blackwell, a Filipina woman who came to the United States as a mail bride, was shot to death by her husband during divorce proceedings (U.S. Senate 2004, 5–6). A similar incident occurred about a year later when in 2000 Anastasia King, a Kyrgyz woman, came to the United States as a mail bride. She was killed in December of that year by her husband. Indle King, the husband, had previously married through a mail-order bride agency, and that bride had filed for protective orders against him because he became physically violent with her. This information was never passed along to Anastasia King when she came into contact with her future husband or when she entered the United States (U.S. Senate 2004, 8–9). These two murders sparked the push for stricter regulation of marriage brokerage. Today, most mail-order bride Web sites have a seal on their home page to signify their compliance with IMBRA.

The radical feminist argument—that the mail-order bride business allows men in the West to exploit women in the rest of the world—does not persuade me that the end result of transnational marriage by means of a broker is actual harm to women, aside from isolated incidents. The women choose to engage in this activity. Freedom House, in its annual *Freedom in the World Report*, lists the vast majority of former Soviet nations as “not free”; the same is true of Southeast Asia. The Philippines are “partly free.” All of the countries regarded as the main markets for mail-order brides are listed as “free” (Freedom House 2010). So, according to Freedom House, these women are immigrating to countries where they will have more rights and civil liberties.

In hypocritical fashion, the radical feminist interpretation also fails to acknowledge that these migrating women are coming to Western countries that have active feminist movements. Women have resources in the West that they do not have elsewhere. If the marriages fail, the mail brides have the option of divorce. Women’s centers are available if abuse occurs. Social services are available to help them in need. Soon after separating from her husband, an eastern European mail bride in Canada stated, “I was left with no money, empty fridge, nothing, and my lawyer told me to go to social services. It was devastating for me to go and ask the government for help. But I got help within a second. And my fridge was full, daycare was paid, everything was done. I survived. The best point is they won’t let you die here. They won’t let you suffer” (qtd. in Rossiter 2005, 502). Normal marriages and mail-order marriages have no important differences. Abuse sometimes occurs in all forms of marriage.

No evidence suggests that it occurs more frequently in mail-order marriages than in normal marriages.

Radical feminists want to eliminate the mail-order bride industry (Belleau 2003, 607), but what would happen if the mail-bride system were thus criminalized and became part of the underground market? Richard Cowan, marijuana legalization advocate, coined the term *iron law of prohibition*: the more intense the law enforcement for whatever is illegal, the more potent the illegal substance or activity will become (1986, 27). Western societies, by both law and social pressure, protect the life, liberty, and property of women who participate in the currently legal mail-order bride industry. If transnational marriage were outlawed, however, as radical feminists wish, no laws would protect women engaged in this illegal activity, and it would become an avenue for human trafficking.

Many successful marriages have occurred via marriage brokerage. Although abusive relationships get the most media attention, abuse is rare. Some marriages last. In American society, where half of marriages end in divorce, it is difficult to isolate and evaluate the effectiveness of mail-order marriages. The numbers show that the vast majority of war brides, women who were engaged and later married to male American servicemen during an occupation of their homeland, ultimately did not live below the poverty line in the United States. According to Rogelio Saenz, Sean-Shong Hwang, and Benigno Aguirre, “The rate of poverty among war-bride couples (based on all family members) was fairly low; only 3.3% had incomes below the poverty level” (1994, 555).

Mail-order brides have become part of popular culture. As early as 1917, novels offered fictionalized accounts of picture brides. *The Interlopers*, by Griffing Bancroft, set in the western United States, makes frequent references to the Japanese and their picture brides (1917, 124). A more recent novel, *Sarah Plain and Tall* (1985) by Patricia MacLachlan, explores the role of a mail-order bride and her relationship with her new family in the American West during the late nineteenth century. Countless other romance novels and made-for-television movies that deal with the subject have been made.

At the end of the Cold War, the mail-order bride industry went through a radical evolution to become today’s Internet-based, eastern European catering business. Formerly used primarily as a means of alleviating geographical isolation of men and thus for procreation purposes, it eventually expanded into a profitable business as technology improved. Newspapers first allowed for correspondence between potential couples. Cameras and magazines allowed men to see potential brides. The Internet provided a means of easy, inexpensive communication, with more vivid profiles and pictures, and opened up access to the maximum number of potential customers. War and economic conditions also played a role in the migration out of countries by way of marriage brokerage. Most mail brides who married Western men were not beaten or killed, came to a country that provided more opportunities than their home country, and had children who grew up in countries with higher standards of living,

less poverty, and more abundant economic opportunities. The act of brokering a bride seems exploitative on the surface, but the women knowingly engage in the business because they foresee personal, social, and economic gain in it. Anticapitalist feminists may not agree, but the end result is usually in the best interest of the women who seek a better life for themselves and later for their children.

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